

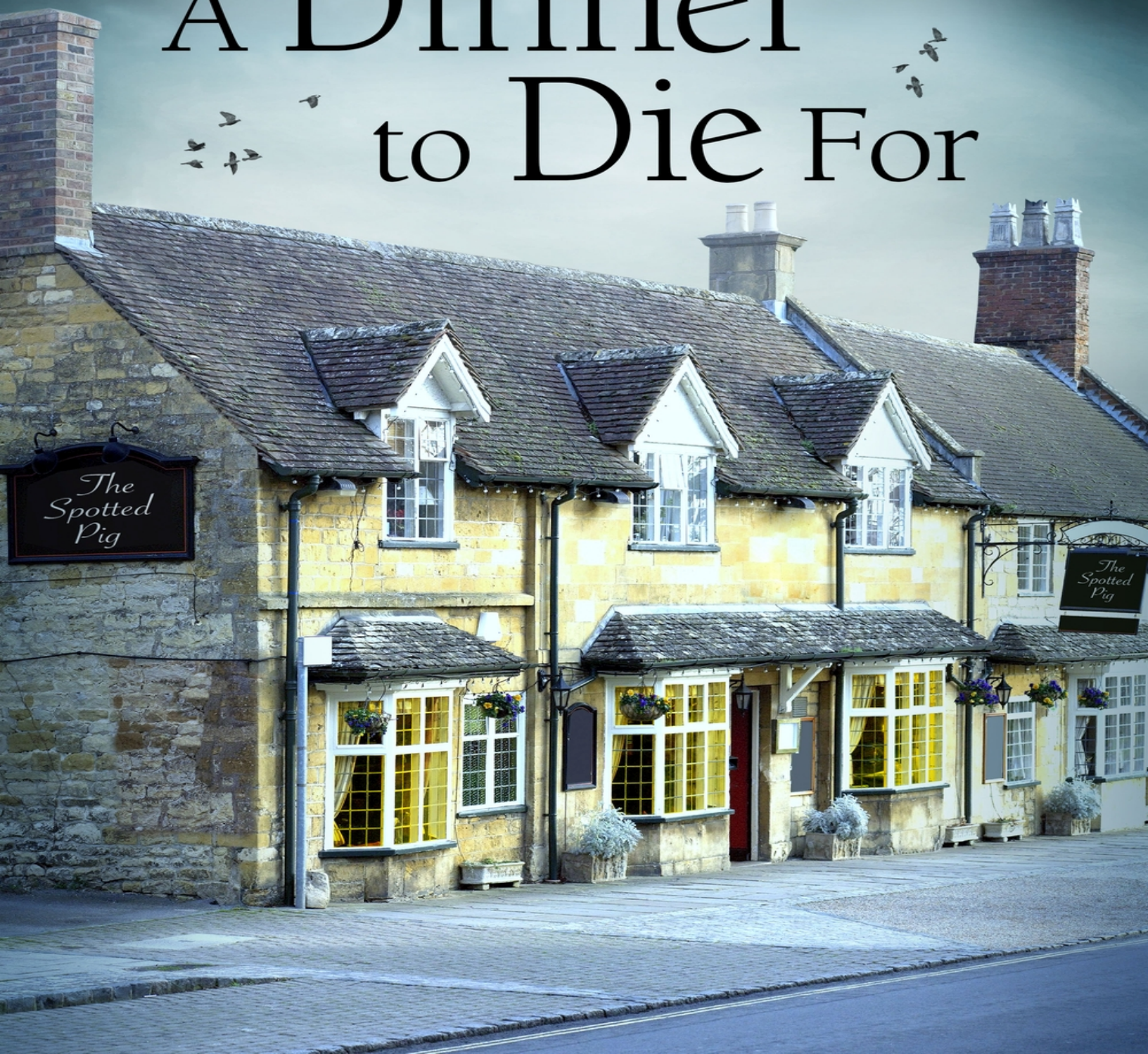
Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

A Dinner to Die For



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Cherringham - A Cosy Crime Series

“Cherringham - A Cosy Crime Series” is a series made up of self-contained stories. The series is published in English as well as in German, and is only available in e-book form.

About the Book

When a new restaurant with a starred American chef opens in Cherringham, it seems the Spotted Pig has a worthy rival. But a series of disturbing incidents turns that rivalry into something dangerous – perhaps even fatal. Jack and Sarah get involved and soon discover dark secrets about the new chef Anna ... Can they uncover what is really happening before both restaurants go belly-up?

Main Characters

Jack Brennan is a former NYPD homicide detective who lost his wife three years ago. Being retired, all he wants is peace and quiet. Which is what he hopes to find in the quiet town of Cherringham, UK. Living on a canal boat, he enjoys his solitude. But soon enough he discovers that something is missing – the challenge of solving crimes. Surprisingly, Cherringham can help him with that.

Sarah Edwards is a web designer who was living in London with her husband and two kids. Three years ago, he ran off with his sexy American boss, and Sarah's world fell apart. With her children she moved back to her home town, laid-back Cherringham. But the small town atmosphere is killing her all over again – nothing ever happens. At least, that's what she thinks until Jack enters her life and changes it for good or worse ...

The Authors

Matthew Costello (US-based) is the author of a number of successful novels, including *Vacation* (2011), *Home* (2014) and *Beneath Still Waters* (1989), which was adapted by Lionsgate as a major motion picture. He has written for The Disney Channel, BBC, SyFy and has also designed dozens of bestselling games including the critically acclaimed *The 7th Guest*, *Doom 3*, *Rage* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Neil Richards has worked as a producer and writer in TV and film, creating scripts for BBC, Disney, and Channel 4, and earning numerous Bafta nominations along the way. He's also written script and story for over 20 video games including *The Da Vinci Code* and *Starship Titanic*, co-written with Douglas Adams, and consults around the world on digital storytelling.

His writing partnership with NYC-based Matt Costello goes back to the late 90's and the two have written many hours of TV together. *Cherringham* is their first crime fiction as co-writers.

Matthew Costello
Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES



A Dinner to Die For



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1. The New Season

Helen Edwards looked up as Julie placed a tiny plate with an ice-cream-cone-shaped *thing* on the table in front of her.

Helen knew – without even trying it – that it would be a totally delicious start to this special “tasting menu”; key to picking “plates” for the upcoming Cherringham Opera Society Charity Dinner.

Tonight, she dined with the society’s patron, Lady Repton.

Always an entertaining dinner partner.

For a woman with so much money, she had hardly any airs at all.

As the small plates alighted on the table, she took a sip of her Cotswolds Gin and tonic – the slice of grapefruit, a revelation.

Lady Repton, meanwhile, enjoyed a Manhattan, a drink unknown to Helen but – by reputation – pretty strong.

And Lady R’s sips... none too dainty.

Lady Repton had already agreed – once again – to serve as host for this year’s event, which would also include a live broadcast of “*Turandot*” all the way from the Metropolitan Opera house in New York.

“Well, Lucinda, what do you think of the *amuse bouche*?”

She watched as Lady Repton tasted the tiny cone, let it linger on her lips, then allowed herself a smile.

“Well, my dear. It certainly amuses me!”

“Me too,” said Helen, savouring the flavour too. “I can’t imagine how Sam makes the pastry so light!”

And at that moment, watching from the side, Julie – co-owner with her husband Sam, the chef – came bustling

over.

“Enjoy that, ladies?”

Helen smiled – she and her husband Michael were regulars at the Spotted Pig, even though it often required booking weeks in advance.

She knew Lady Repton was a frequent visitor too, though she had her own chef back at Repton Hall who was more than proficient.

She let Lady R go first.

“I did indeed, Julie. Goose-liver mousse I imagine? Capers... hint of... sherry perhaps?”

“Vin Santo,” Julie said.

Lady Repton beamed. “Yes, of course! That nutty, honey taste. And the flaky cone? So thin! Perfect.”

And Helen saw Julie beam. High praise indeed from Lady Repton, who was notoriously difficult to please.

“How was it for you, Helen?” said Julie.

“Oh, delightful. Can’t wait for the rest of the plates.”

Julie smiled and turned away to resume her duties, but Lady Repton reached out, a light touch to her arm.

“Julie – if it’s not too busy tonight, might Sam come out and discuss a few of the items as we progress?”

Julie smiled and nodded, but Helen saw a slight cloud cover her face.

Perhaps the idea of a special tasting menu, even for just two people was just a bit daunting for the small restaurant?

Though the Pig had certainly tackled such things before.

But Helen thought: *Too much pressure tonight?*

She knew Julie had told a few people she was pregnant. First baby! But babies mean expenses, and then there was obviously the question of who’d run front of house during those first months.

Julie left. Lady Repton turned to Helen.

“By the way, have you tried that new place, the Bayleaf?”

“Not yet. When Michael and I do go out for a proper meal, we always like to come here.”

Lady Repton nodded.

“I agree. *But* I wanted to try it. And you *know*,” she lowered her voice, “it was absolutely marvellous. The duck confit? World class.”

Helen saw her friend and the society’s patron look away. “I’m afraid, our friends here at the Spotted Pig have some serious competition on their hands!”

Helen nodded. Maybe that explained Julie’s seeming a bit tense?

“So,” Lady Repton said, “shall we discuss the dinner?”

Helen took a sip of her gin and tonic. “Absolutely.”

*

“All’s set for the live broadcast. Those tech people from Chipping Norton know their stuff. Sitting in our little ‘theatre’ we’ll feel like we’re in the front row of the Met itself! Imagine: Puccini’s *Turandot*, *live* from New York – right *there*, at Repton Hall!”

Helen knew that people were indeed excited. Even her daughter Sarah, who was no great opera fan, was determined to attend, both for the experience and what promised to be a great dinner.

Sarah was bringing her American friend Jack who Helen was aware certainly did know his opera.

“We’re sold out, you know,” Helen said. “And with contributions part of the gala ticket...”

“Yes. And not to mention the added donations, the silent auction... well, our little Opera Society will be stronger than ever.”

Helen picked up her glass to clink, and Lady R followed suit.

“Cheers to that!”

But then Lady Repton shot up a finger.

“And that has given me an idea.”

Lucinda Repton leaned forward, as if about to pass secrets involving enemy troop movements.

“An idea...?”

Lady R nodded. “A rather daunting one.”

Helen kept her eyes on her, even as she spotted the server in the back hurrying over with two more small plates.

Helen waited as Lucinda Repton looked around.

“What if next year... instead of our regular schedule of seasonally themed selections,” she proceeded slowly, “what if, for one of the dates, perhaps in the summer, we actually mount... a full opera?”

A full opera.

Helen knew that had never been considered. With their small group, well, it was beyond their reach.

“Now, hear me out, Helen. I mean, with the chorus at its current, healthy size and all – we might just be up to it!”

A dozen reasons that screamed *impossible* popped into Helen’s mind.

“But, Lucinda, you know what it takes to mount an opera. The resources needed, the lead singers, the hours of rehearsal, costumes, scenery... And, as much as the idea seems wonderful, for our little Opera Society here to take it on – and to do it within, what, six months? – well...”

Lady Repton smiled.

“I *know*, but here’s my plan. We pick a one-act opera. Something within the limits of the stage at the Little Theatre, and also our musical resources. Something within the reach of our dear Cherringham Philharmonic.”

Though dubbed a “philharmonic”, Helen knew that the Cherringham orchestra – which, on occasion, mutated into a band – really more resembled an expanded chamber group, with a few brass instruments and a big bass drum thrown in.

Fortunately, it also featured some players of real talent.