

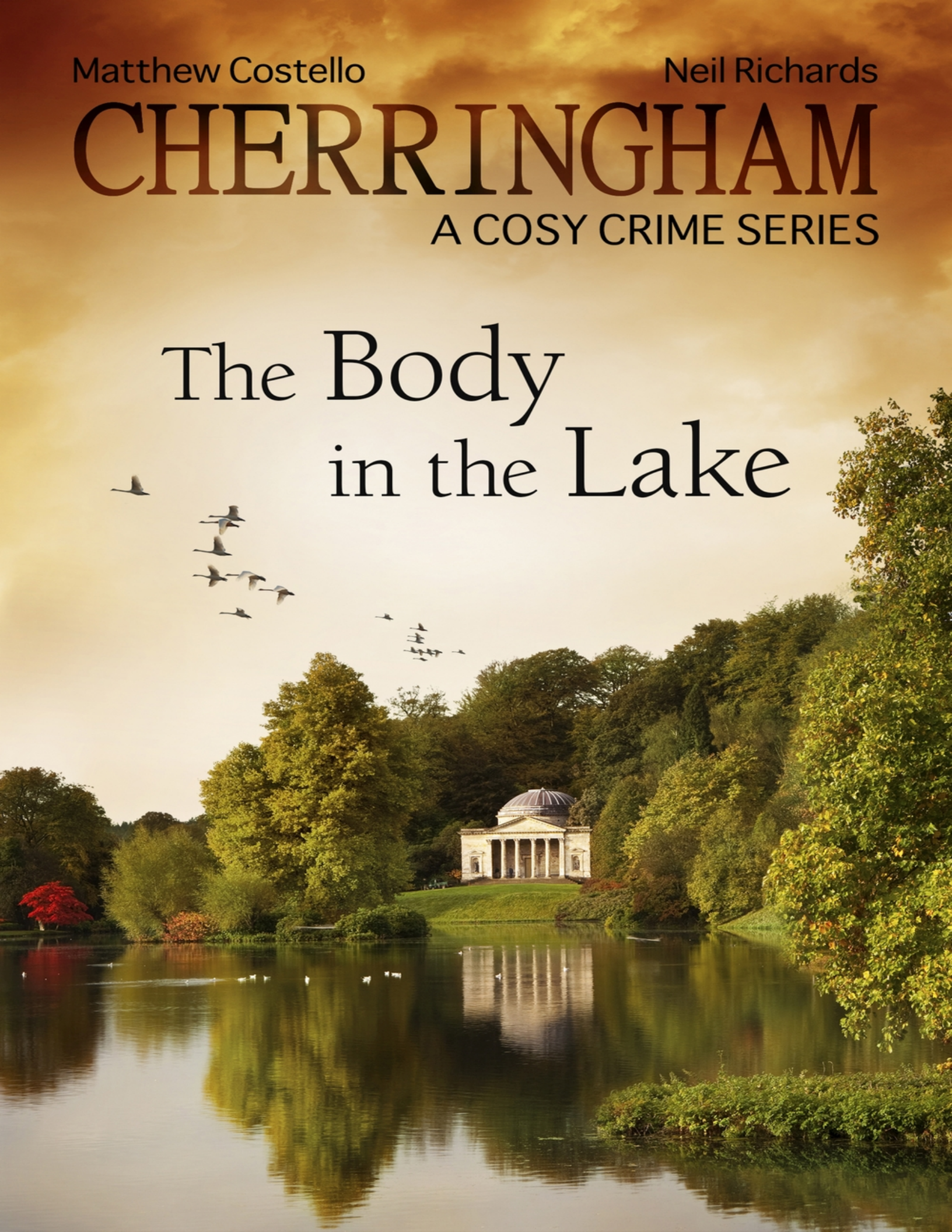
Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

The Body in the Lake



Contents

Cover
Cherringham — A Cosy Crime Series
The Authors
Main Characters
The Body in the Lake
Copyright
1. Gracious Hosts
2. Entente Cordiale
3. The Island on the Lake
4. The Morning After
5. The Body
6. Simon
7. The Second Boat
8. A Party of Suspects
9. Talking Turkey
10. Smooth Operator
11. Dinner and Questions
12. Simon's Story
13. The Truth
14. Secrets of the Hall
15. Afternoon Tea
16. Entente not so Cordiale
17. Met by Moonlight
18. A Little R & R
Next episode

Cherringham — A Cosy Crime Series

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

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.

Main Characters

Jack Brennan is a former NYPD homicide detective who lost his wife a year 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. Two 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 ...

Matthew Costello
Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM
A COSY CRIME SERIES



The Body in the Lake



»be« by BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT

Digital original edition

»be« by Bastei Entertainment is an imprint of Bastei Lübbe AG

Copyright © 2014/2017 by Bastei Lübbe AG, Schanzenstraße 6-20, 51063
Cologne, Germany

Written by Matthew Costello and Neil Richards

Edited by Victoria Pepe

Project management: Lori Herber

Cover illustrations: © shutterstock: Buslik | David Crosbie|Lsaloni

E-Book-Production: Urban [SatzKonzept](#), Düsseldorf

ISBN 978-3-8387-4839-9

www.be-ebooks.com

Twitter: [@be_ebooks_com](#)

1. Gracious Hosts

Sarah turned off the main road and pulled up at the pillared gatehouse to Repton Hall. She looked up at the stone columns: on each stood a bronze stag. The tall wrought-iron gates that stood between them and protected the Estate were closed but as she prepared to get out and...

... do what? Ring a bell? Do places like this even have doorbells?

... they magically opened.

She glanced up at the stuccoed entrance walls. Nestled discreetly beneath one of the stags she spotted a camera. Somewhere within the Estate, she realised, a security guard was watching her on a monitor.

Clearly her tatty old Rav-4 had passed the test — and now she understood why Simon Repton's secretary had asked for her registration number.

As she drove through the gates, past the tasteful steel sign — 'Repton Hall: Country House and Conference Centre' — she remembered how, only a couple of years ago, there had been rumours that the Repton family, house and all, were heading for bankruptcy.

This was quite the turnaround.

From the looks of it, the long driveway had recently been re-laid, and as she travelled along it towards the imposing Queen Anne mansion which glowed in the afternoon sunshine, she could see they'd also spent a fortune on the gardens.

The trees were shaped and pruned; the rolling meadows trim; fences freshly painted — and to one side of the house the famous ornamental lake sparkled.

Last time she'd been here — to a rather sad agricultural show two summers ago — the lake had been stagnant and green. But now its waters were clear and on the little island at its centre, the Georgian folly — a classical temple — stood proud again.

Sarah smiled to herself. In part she and Jack must have been responsible for this miraculous turn-around. Some time ago they'd solved the mystery of a missing Roman artefact on Repton land — the successful case had benefited the redoubtable Lady Repton to the tune of half a million, so the rumours went.

But now as she drove past the side of the house towards the 'conference car park' she guessed that the Reptons must have picked up at least another million elsewhere to complete this transformation.

For, behind the graceful mansion, a low brick-and-timber extension had been added, with cool clear lines that suggested the work of an expensive architect.

This was the conference centre — where in a couple of hours she was going to deliver her little performance...

The car park was nearly full but she found a space, grabbed her MacAir, locked up, and headed to the side entrance.

"Hey, nice timing," said a voice behind her.

She turned to see Simon Repton himself walking round the side of the house. Lean, tanned, in a charcoal hand-made suit, Simon exuded money, confidence, charm, and success.

At least that's what he thinks, thought Sarah.

Slimy Simey — that's what her assistant Grace had called him, and Sarah had to work hard not to say the name to his face.

"Simon," she said. "How lovely to see you again."

Simon approached and gave her a kiss on each cheek, lingering just a little longer than was quite necessary.

“We’re still at the champers stage, so you’ve got plenty of time to set up.”

“Everything going okay?”

“*Absolument parfait!*” he said with a faux-Gallic shrug, his boyish fringe swinging across his eyes. “Our guests are having a *tres bonne temps!*”

“How wonderful that you speak French,” said Sarah, guessing that she should acknowledge the performance.

“One of the benefits of an awfully expensive education, Sarah,” he said. “Though to be honest, I do believe the esteemed delegation representing St. Martin sur Mer has a better grasp of English than most of our staff.”

“That’s good, because the presentation’s going to be entirely in English — some of it Cherringham English too.”

“I’m sure you’ll make it clear as day, babes.”

Slimy Simey indeed.

“And I wouldn’t worry over-much,” he continued. “I’m told we’re a shoo-in. Your little PowerPoint’s just the icing on the cake.”

“Terrific,” said Sarah, thinking about the hours that she and Grace had slaved over it, hoping it was worth more than just the *icing*.

“Not that we can do without it, of course,” Simon said hastily, obviously spotting the dismay on Sarah’s face, “After all, it’s the official reason they’ve flown over here to see us!”

Sarah was impressed with his quick recovery.

“Why don’t I show you to the media room and you can get yourself all Wi-Fi’d and ready to go?”

He put an arm around her shoulder and steered her towards a door in the new block. She pulled away a few inches, letting the unwanted limb dangle in air before falling.

“I think, by the way, you’ll find the whole thing pretty damned state of the art,” he said. “Cost Granny a fortune!”

They entered the building and Sarah could see the long corridor that led back to the main house — impeccably decorated, with cedar floors, soft-toned wood panelling, and fabric walls.

On one side of the corridor was a line of oil portraits of grim-faced Reptons past and present. On the other, framed black-and-white photos showed armies of house staff, standing to attention on the steps of the house.

“Family tradition,” said Simon as Sarah leaned in to examine one of the photos. “Every Boxing Day for a hundred years the grateful Estate workers grabbed their bonus and lined up for the team photo.”

“Quite a collection,” said Sarah.

“Daddy’s archive,” said Simon. “I’ve been digitising it. Yanks love it.”

Then, with a tap to the shoulder, Simon steered her the other way towards the ‘media room’.

“Lots of break-out areas for brainstorming,” he said on the way, pointing out rooms off to the side, each filled with sofas, cushions, and low tables. “And through here we’ve got the leisure centre.”

“Very impressive,” said Sarah.

“Isn’t it? Pool and gym aren’t open yet, but the hot tub, steam rooms and sauna block is up and running. Hope you’ll join us after dinner for a little fun?”

“Ah, hmm,” she said quickly. “You know how it is — working mum — got to be home by midnight.”

Simon looked disappointed.

“Pumpkin time, huh?” he said. “Shame. I was hoping you’d stay over. Anyway—”

Dream on, she thought.

He stopped by one door and opened it to reveal a small lecture theatre with cinema style seats, a screen and a presentation area.

“And here’s the media room. Get yourself sorted — and I’ll bring the mob through in an hour.”