

Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

A Lesson in Murder



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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 ...

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»be« by BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT

Digital original edition

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

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Cologne, Germany

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Cover illustration: © shutterstock: /1000 Words/Radek Sturgolewski/set

Cover design: Jeannine Schmelzer

eBook production: Urban [SatzKonzept](#), Düsseldorf

ISBN 978-3-7325-0845-7

www.be-ebooks.com

Twitter: [@be_ebooks_com](#)

1. Sink or Swim

Sophie White raced up the back stairs of Florence House, her footsteps on the worn stone echoing in the cold space as she climbed the three floors.

Damn, damn, double damn, I'm going to be late, she thought. Prep's never supposed to over-run on a Saturday, this is so unfair ...

At the top of the stairs she pulled open the heavy fire door that led to the Sixth Form dorms, ran past the crowded common room, and the kitchen where she glimpsed the usual weekend breakfast crowd.

Oh, cheese on toast, if only I could join in ...

But even if she had time, she wasn't sure she'd be welcome. Freya and her crowd would be in there.

And since the new term started they'd been blanking her.

She reached the end of the corridor, pushed hard on the door to her own room, and in one move flung her laptop bag onto her bed.

"Walk, don't run," came a voice from the other bed.

Sophie looked over: her roommate Hannah was lying back against the pillows watching something on her iPad, her hand hovering over the shared biscuit tin.

"Walking's for Year Sevens," said Sophie digging into her wardrobe, clothes flying. "Can I borrow your tracksuit? Mine's covered in mud."

"Gross," said Hannah with a shrug, munching on a biscuit.

Sophie didn't need a yes — after six years of school together it was unspoken.

What's yours is mine, mine yours. Live fast, die together. Friends till the end. No lies, no secrets.

Each time they moved up a year at Cherringham Hall School for Girls, she and Hannah had bound themselves tighter to each other with a new motto. And now they were in their last year, full-on Sixth Formers, just three terms to go before ...

Sophie stopped herself thinking about that. About leaving. It made a pit in her stomach. Way too scary.

"So what's the rush? Seeing someone?" said Hannah. "Secret admirer?"

"As if ..." said Sophie. "I'm running the Minnows club for Ms. Braithwaite."

"Tough," said Hannah. "Duty calls."

"Exactly."

"Hey — did you know you're late?"

"Very funny."

She grabbed her swimming costume, Hannah's tracksuit and a pair of trainers, then reached over, and pulled out a handful of biscuits from the tin.

"Seventy calories each," said Hannah.

"Doesn't count," said Sophie heading for the door. "It's breakfast."

"That make a difference?"

"Duh, yes. Latest research."

"Gotta love science."

Sophie raced out. "Later ..." she said, over her shoulder.

"Still on for Oxford this afternoon?" she heard Hannah say, as she turned into the corridor.

"Can't wait!" she shouted back, then she was off heading for the stairs again.

She checked her watch. Three minutes — she might just make it.

*

Being late — for anything — was a cardinal sin at Cherringham Hall. Sophie knew the ethos back to front and upside down, it was drilled into all the girls from their first term:

‘Cherringham girls will be bright, independent, free-thinking, creative, confident, resourceful, tolerant — and above all, reliable.’

And the teachers made it clear that while most of those qualities might take a while to develop, the bit about ‘reliable’ — being on time — was one that had to be acquired *immediately*.

She wheeled off the main school corridor and took a short cut through the Dining Hall.

As she slalomed past the formal tables, she glanced up at the portraits of Cherringham alumni on the walls — explorers, poets, politicians, novelists, Nobel-prize winning scientists, businesswomen, International sportswomen.

Sophie and Hannah used to joke that the reason they’d all succeeded was that they were *never late*.

And generally, now that she was a laid-back Sixth Former, Sophie wasn’t that bothered about being a few minutes late. But today was different.

Just a few days ago, on the very first day of term, Ms. Braithwaite had called Sophie into her study and told her that she — yes, *she*, Sophie White — was to be this year’s House Guardian. Short of School Captain, House Guardian was the most responsible position in the whole school.

Now Sophie was terrified of letting Ms. Braithwaite down.

Ms. Braithwaite was the most ... *perfect* teacher in the whole school. Everybody loved her. And she in turn knew everyone in the House, knew all their problems, all their fears and struggles.