

Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

A Fatal Fall



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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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A Fatal Fall



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1. A Step in the Dark

Dylan McCabe spun the wheel of the mini-dumper truck and reversed out of the frozen mud onto the gravel track. He could hear the wheels crunching shards of ice on the hard ground.

Jeez, is this weather never going to end? he thought.
This has to be the coldest bloody village in England.

He looked across at Kyle and Scotty who were already shovelling the sand he'd just tipped straight into the cement mixer.

"What time you make it lads?"

"Time for one more load, you lazy sod, Dylan," said Kyle, not looking up.

"Not if I can help it," said Dylan. "Sure it must be nearly four already."

"Brickies are clocking off at four-thirty, done a deal with Gary," said Scotty.

"So we have to work late without a deal, eh?" said Dylan. "Lucky us. I tell you lads — we *gotta* organise if we don't want to get shafted all the time."

"Don't give me a hard time Dylan, I need the work."

"Hey — we *all* need the work, just that some of us don't like to have it shoved up our—"

But Scotty and Kyle weren't listening.

Dylan watched them head over to the big pile of bricks in front of the half-finished house, their backs to him now as they picked and sorted for the brickies up on the scaffold.

He shook his head. Was a time when you could have a bit of banter on sites, laugh with your mates. These days it

was all — do this, get this, don't answer back, and jump when I say jump ...

And this week was worse than ever. Word had come down from the Almighty that they were a week behind and they'd have to hit every Saturday until Christmas if they were to get their bonuses.

Bonuses? So what? Fifty quid cash in hand so's you can doff your cap and act grateful?

He reached into his pocket and took out his baccy tin, started to roll up a quick one. Ten seconds later he had it in his mouth and lit.

One of the few advantages of taking up smoking at twelve years old, Dylan my son, he thought to himself. Can do a roll up one-handed and blindfolded.

He looked around in case Gary, the site supervisor, was lurking.

Don't want to get caught having a fag, with that bastard itching to kick me off the site.

But then he relaxed. Gary would be in the warm site office at this hour, working on his spreadsheets, calculating just how hard he could work his band of not-so-merry men

...

Dylan leaned back in the bucket seat, tipped his hard hat, pulled his jacket tight around his neck and puffed on his roll-up. He knew from experience just how long he could sit here before some primeval instinct in his foreman's brain would kick in as the silence from the dumper truck began to register.

He looked around. Five new-build houses sprouting in a sea of rock-hard mud and ice. And dotted among them a couple of old cherry trees, a crab apple, a dying willow.

Shame. Even on a miserable cold day like today, he guessed that once upon a time this must have been a pretty garden attached to a big house. But these days who wants a pretty garden? Much better to tear down the old houses, put up new ones, make an obscene amount of cash.

Three months he'd been here, scratching around to put a few hundred quid together. Another month or so and the job would be done. The concrete was long ago poured, and the walls of all the houses were going up at some lick.

Brickies hard at work on each one, racing each other, racing to get to the next job, and then the next.

Too fast really. People were cutting corners. Leaving piles of rubbish around. Building crap spread all over the site. Dangerous.

Still, at this rate, in just a few more weeks they'd be working inside the houses under cover, out of this damned English weather.

He felt sleet on his face.

Oh, just what we need, he thought. *Sleet on top of ice.*

Ah well, look on the bright side. It was Friday. And he had a cracker of an evening planned.

First off, a few beers down the Ploughman's with the lads. Nice bit of craic. They were good lads — mostly — and you couldn't finish the week without sharing a pint your mates, now could you?

Then back to the caravan for a shower, slip into the old sexy jeans ... Tidy the back of the Love Machine — clear out them shovels and that dodgy jenny which Ray had liberated from the site — and chuck in a duvet and pillows.

Nothing beats a Ford Transit for a cosy love-nest on a cold night.

Then meet up with the special lady herself and bag a couple more drinks at the Angel followed by a Chicken Tikka Masala at the Taj over in Chippenham.

Then — let's skip dessert, shall we? — and off up into the woods in the Love Machine, crank up some good sounds then jump in the back for a couple of home-grown smokes and a bit of how's your father.

Dylan my old son, you've landed on your feet at long last.

He flicked his roll-up into the mud, then started up the engine of the dumper and roared off towards the sand pile to pick up one last load for the day.

*

It was dark by the time Dylan locked up the truck and headed over to the office to clock off — a big cabin parked up in one corner of the site.

As he climbed the steps, the door opened and he saw a bunch of the lads bundling out.

“Mine’s a pint of Guinness, fellas,” he said, stepping back. “I’ll be right behind you—”

“You better had be, Dylan, it’s your effin’ round pal!”

“No way Jimbo, you sly beggar — you owe me from Tuesday. Get me a bag of nuts too, will you?”

Dylan watched them heading off to the site gate, then he turned and entered the office, taking in the familiar smell of stale sweat, wet socks, old food, and off milk. It was the same smell in every building site he’d ever worked on. And that was a few ...

He saw Gary Sparks at the desk, head bent over a laptop.

“All right boss?” he said making his voice cheery, though in fact he hated Gary Sparks.

And he knew Gary Sparks hated him. But he hadn’t put a foot wrong on this site and they both knew it. They also both knew that Dylan got the job done too.

But Dylan’s talk of organising — standing up for the poor bastards who work here — wasn’t popular.

Always some snitch who liked blabbing to the boss.

But, so as long as they were all under the cosh like they had been these last two weeks, Dylan was confident he still had a job come Monday.

Dylan took off his hard hat and stepped towards the door which led into the mess room.