

Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

A Death in the Family



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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.

About the Book

When a doddering Harry Platt tumbles from the top of his stairs in a deadly fall, it looks like an unfortunate accident. But solicitor Tony Standish's suspicions are aroused when he meets the beneficiaries and discovers the immense size of the estate.

Jack and Sarah investigate and find that nothing is what it seems when it comes to families — not when money and secrets are involved.

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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Written by Matthew Costello and Neil Richards

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1. A Step in the Dark

Harry Platt woke suddenly, thinking for a second that he was under fire, looking for a muzzle-flash, reaching for his tin hat, heart racing, mouth open, gasping for air.

Then he realised he was at home. On the sofa.

Safe.

The war was over.

He breathed a sigh of relief and sank back against the sofa cushions.

Click, click, click ... the things he knew settled gently into place like dominoes being stacked: one — the war finished long ago, two — he was alive (still), three — his name was Harry Platt, four — he lived in ... Cherringham, yes the village of Cherringham.

He looked around the sitting room.

He knew it was the sitting room — that was good. It was good that he knew this room, that he could name it. Always easy that one — it was the room he was sitting in and it was called the sitting room.

Ha! Ask me another!

No flies on Harry Platt!

I am in the sitting room. This is the house I live in. It is called Bramble Cottage. I am ninety-two years old. I live on my own.

No, that last bit wasn't right. He lived with someone. He was married.

But who to?

"Peggy!!"

He heard his own voice shouting out the name of his wife. And wasn't that the damndest thing — as if his voice knew more about him than he did!

My wife's name is Peggy. I have children. Two? Or is it three? Their names are ...

But he couldn't remember the names of his children, and anyway what the hell did that matter?

Buggers never came round to see him, so who cared what their bloody names were? They could go hang.

Anyway, there was more important stuff to think about. For example ...

It's too dark and I'm hungry and what the hell is going on around here?

"Peggy! Where the hell are you?" he called into the darkness.

He fumbled at the side of the sofa and found the switch for the special reading light. He clicked it on and the white light dazzled his face. He looked away — the damned thing was so bright! You could pick out a bomber in the night sky with that!

"Peggy! I'm hungry!" he shouted again in the general direction of the door.

He peered at the clock on the mantelpiece — nine o'clock, it said. No wonder he was hungry — he hadn't had his supper. Or had he? He looked over at the little plastic table that the carer put on his lap.

The carer.

Hmm. That foreign woman. Spy probably. *Careless talk costs lives.* He didn't say much to her.

The plastic table seemed clean enough. And there was no left-over mug of tea.

But who was to know? Maybe he had already had his supper and they'd cleared it all away.

Hmm ... the place smelt of fish.

Whatever. Didn't matter. Didn't matter how many times he ate. If he was hungry he could damn well have supper again! He could have as many suppers as he wanted.

It was his bloody house — wasn't it?

And he had to put up with enough crap from everybody. People wiping his face, his hands, his ... everywhere.

Need something to eat — now!

He waited for someone to come. But nobody did. Maybe Peggy had gone to bed. Maybe she'd died! Popped her clogs! Ha! That'd teach her to leave him sitting on his own in the dark!

Hmm, if that was the case, he was going to have to get his own supper. He fumbled around the sofa for his walking stick, then levered himself up into a standing position and got steady.

His toes hurt, his feet hurt, his knees hurt, his hips hurt.

It was like taking a roll call. Easier to ask what didn't bloody hurt.

Slowly he edged away from the sofa, and making sure to take small steps, headed out of the sitting room into the hall.

Well, he *guessed* it was the hall — because the lights were off here too and he couldn't see anything.

Damned strange, this. Nobody about. No lights on anywhere.

He shuffled over to the light switch on the wall, flicked it on, and looked around.

Yes, this was the hall.

It was empty — just the phone table and chair and a rug on the wooden floor. The hall had smooth banisters and broad stairs that curved and went up. Harry remembered sliding down those banisters when he was a boy.

He'd come off once and banged his head right there against that wall ...

Ooh, that had hurt.

To his left there were three doors that led off the hallway — and each one was closed.

For the life of him, he couldn't remember what lay beyond each door. He had a feeling one of them was his