

THE DEATH OF ROBIN HOOD

It was no day to be finding dead bodies. That's what was going through Luke's mind as he stumbled back home through the pouring rain. It was no day for walking an obstinate spaniel either but he'd foolishly agreed to help out more in exchange for an increase in his pocket money. If only he'd kept Sally away from the water. If only he'd gone in the opposite direction. If only.....

The call to Nottinghamshire police was logged at 7.37 a.m. Detective Constable Joe (Tubby) Dale was sent to investigate at 7.50. The overweight D.C. was not best pleased at missing breakfast, let alone going in the rain to find what he felt sure would turn out to be a prank. A man dressed in Lincoln green and wearing tights found dead in Clumber Park close to the weir? They were pulling his leg, surely. If only.....

Detective Inspector Ian Valiant from Worksop was heading up the investigation. He called his team together for a briefing at 9.30. A tall, good looking man of 41, whose hair was beginning to thin on top, he had a habit of raising his heels off the ground whenever he was nervous or worried. He was doing it now.

"Right Dale," he said. "What have you got for us? Do we have any I.D. for the victim?"

A titter went up from his assembled colleagues.

"Did I say something funny?"

Dale stood. "No sir, it's just that the deceased, a man of about 30, was wearing an outfit of Lincoln green, including tights, so, naturally, everyone is calling him Robin Hood."

"Did he have anything on him?" asked Valiant.

Another titter.

"Just a quiver full of arrows, sir."

"I hope you're not winding me up, Dale."

Dale shook his head.

"He was found by a lad, walking his dog first thing. Luke Enright, aged 14, from Hardwick Village."

"In Clumber? At that hour?"

“Hardwick village is *in* Clumber Park, sir. Easy walking distance to the weir.”

“Is Enright a suspect?”

“No, sir. He was pretty cut up about finding the body. His parents are keeping him off school today if we should want to interview him again.”

Ian Valiant began raising his heels.

“Not much to go on,” he admitted. “What do you suppose Robin Hood was doing in Clumber. Re-enacting the fight scene with Little John?”

More tittering from the assembled officers, but this time, the inspector knew he’d made a joke.

He continued. “We shan’t know how he died until after the post mortem. How did he get into the park? Anyone looking for a vehicle?”

“Uniforms are scouring the park as we speak,” Dale replied. “Although it may take a while. There are two camping sites in the park so plenty of vehicles to check on.”

Detective Sergeant Angela Scott raised her hand. In her late twenties and blonde, she would have been very pretty but for a port wine birth mark which covered part of one cheek and ear.

Valiant turned on what he considered his most charming smile.

“He could have been to a fancy dress party, sir,” Scott suggested. “We ought to check that angle, perhaps.”

“Best idea I’ve heard all day. Well done, Angela. Get onto it will you. I’ve a post mortem to attend.”

At four that afternoon, Valiant called in his detectives once again. The post mortem had puzzled him. Robin Hood had two wounds, a blow to the head with a blunt instrument, and a piercing through his heart with a sharp pointed object. Either one would have killed him. The inspector needed to know who the man was so he could learn about his lifestyle and associates. Was he involved in criminal activity, drugs for instance?

“Any news on a vehicle, Dale?” he asked.

“Nothing yet, sir. Uniforms are still making enquiries, but the security firm which checks the park at night haven’t reported seeing anything suspicious. Unless he came with his assailant, he or she must have driven his car away.”

“Nothing *suspicious*? A man lay dead and it wasn’t suspicious?”

“To be fair, they’re only required to check the park by van, sir. I had to walk to the point where the body was found.”

“I suppose Hardwick Village isn’t missing a resident?”

“No sir.”

Then DS Scott piped up. “Surely he couldn’t have been home otherwise he would have changed out of his outfit, wouldn’t he?”

“Never,” said Valiant, raising his heels. “Underestimate the strange behaviour of the human race. Anything to report on the fancy dress angle?”

“Yes, sir. There was a party last night at the Clumber Park Hotel.”

Valiant gave her a glowing smile. “Wonderful, Angela. Was our Robin Hood a resident?”

Angela Scott combed down one side of her lopsided hair so it covered her birthmark, before deflating the inspector’s balloon.

“Only six of the partygoers were, I’m afraid. The party was some sort of charity do, a gathering of local business people to raise money for the Hospice.”

“And I don’t suppose you’re going to make my day by saying they had a list of all the people who attended this charity bash?”

“No, sir,” she replied. “But of those who stayed overnight, one of them was a name you’ll recognise. Cornelius Ryan.”

Valiant’s heels went up again. “I was hoping for the name of an ex-con, not the upright and immovable Mr Ryan, solicitor and magistrate of this town.”

Scott continued. “One of the waiting staff said there were two Robin Hoods there last night but she couldn’t say who they were.”

“Two Robin Hoods!” cried an exasperated Valiant. “Oh the joys of living in Nottinghamshire.”

“I’ve got the names of a couple of Fancy Dress shops, including one called Fancy Pants in Retford,” Angela Scott went on. “I was hoping to check them out tomorrow to see if they’d hired a Robin Hood outfit to anybody, especially one who hadn’t brought it back.”

“Good idea,” said the Inspector. “And I’ll go and see Cornelius Ryan at his home. Dale?”

“Sir?”

“You’re with me.”

Valiant and Dale were driving down the A60 heading for Southoaks, where the splendid home of Cornelius Ryan was situated. It wasn’t long before a tailback of traffic told them there was a tractor on the road ahead. To take the inspector’s mind off the 15 miles per hour speed he was forced to endure, Dale asked him about Ryan.

“You said he was upright and immovable. Why?”

“Have you ever had to ask him for a search warrant to go through some toe-rag’s possessions?”

“Can’t say as I have, sir.”

“You will,” Valiant assured him. “And when you do, be sure you’ve got a cast iron, double padlocked, waterproof reason for suspecting said toe-rag or you’ll not get your warrant. We expect our magistrates to be upright but also reasonable. Cornelius Ryan isn’t.”

“Must be his legal training, sir.”

“Maybe. But he doesn’t handle criminal cases in his practise because he sits on the bench. Can’t act for the defence. Conflict of interest, see?”

Before Dale had a chance to reply, Valiant turned his Peugeot off the main road down a country lane, its verges made more lush by recent rainfall. Another right turn and they were pulling up at the magnificent front door of Aysgarth Cottage, where Cornelius Ryan lived. Detached and set in grounds of about half an acre, the image it presented to the world was that of a successful and well-heeled man.

‘Some cottage,’ thought D.C. Dale.

The door was opened by an attractive woman of middle age, wearing a dressing gown and with a towel wrapped around her head. “Yes,” she said rather abruptly. “What do you want?”

“Detective Inspector Valiant and Constable Dale,” said Valiant as they showed their warrant cards. “Is Mr Ryan at home?”

“Who is it, Betty?” asked a man’s voice from within. A door opened and there stood

an impressive man, late sixties, tall and slim with a full head of grey hair. He was much older than Valiant but taller and with more hair.

“Oh, I know you, don’t I? Inspector Intrepid, isn’t it?” Ryan offered his hand, which Valiant reluctantly shook.

“Valiant, sir. D.I. Valiant.”

“Yes, of course. Knew it was one of those blasted warships.”

He took them into a spacious, airy conservatory overlooking an extensive garden. The roses were looking a bit bedraggled but the lawns were immaculate. Betty drifted away into another part of the house.

“Search warrant, is it?” asked Ryan. “Do take a pew.”

The two officers sat on a luxurious, wicker sofa, well padded with cushions. A glass-topped wicker table stood between them and Mr Ryan.

“No, sir. We’re making enquiries about an incident that happened last night in Clumber Park. We believe that the man who died had been to a fancy dress party. I believe you were at such a party last evening.”

“Yes. Fundraiser for the Hospice. Of course, I didn’t go in fancy dress myself. Can’t retain suitable respect by prancing around as Napoleon or an Indian Chief. What’s the fellow called?”

“That’s just it, sir. We don’t know yet and thought you might be able to help us. This is a photograph of the man. It was taken after death, so it’s not very flattering.”

Ryan studied the photograph. “Looks like Robin Hood,” he joked. “That’s the costume of course. Now I seem to recall there were two Robin Hoods at the party last night. One was a young farmer, good county stock. Name of Greenhalgh, Bobby Greenhalgh.”

“Is this him?”

“No,” said Ryan, giving the photo back to Valiant. “I don’t know this chap at all.”

“But he was at your party!”

“Not *my* party. I was just a guest, same as this fellow. The organiser was that doctor chappie from Tuxford. Eagle, that’s his name. Doctor Eagle.”

Dale, who’d been making not very copious notes, turned to leave, but Valiant hung

back. "Were there any people carrying sharp knives at your..... sorry, *the party?*"

"I don't know about sharp knives. Those costumes are only make believe, you know." Ryan laughed. "There was someone dressed as a Scotsman. He'd a dirk in his sock. That the kind of thing?"

"Exactly. Take this down, Dale."

Ryan continued. "There was an Indian Chief. He may have had a dagger. Robin Hood had his arrows, of course. Couple of cowboys and a uniformed policeman, but they wouldn't have anything like that. Doctor Eagle was a Cavalier, would you believe? He had a sword. Of course, in real life, a couple of them were surgeons. Access to all manner of sharp instruments."

'Oh goody,' thought Valiant. 'This case has more angles than Pythagoras dreamed of.'

"Just how many people were at the party?" asked Valiant.

"Fifty, sixty at the most," replied Cornelius Ryan.

"So we've got sixty potential suspects?" Valiant sighed.

"Unless the attacker was someone who wasn't at the fancy dress party, Inspector. Have you considered that possibility?"

"I have considered all possibilities, sir," was Valiant's parting shot.

"Back to the station, sir?" asked Dale, whose stomach was beginning to rumble.

"I suppose so but I'd have liked to identify Robin Hood before we finish for the day. Someone's reputation is on the line. Namely mine. You can drive."

Dale took the proffered keys in silence. The Inspector's mood was just about as gloomy as the weather.

As they covered the few miles to Worksop, Valiant asked "What did you make of Cornelius?"

Dale coughed. "He seemed pleasant enough. Getting a bit forgetful though. He got your name wrong."

"That wasn't forgetfulness," Valiant said. "That was his way of getting the upper hand. Think yourself lucky he didn't call you Constable Hill."

“Was the woman, Betty, his wife? She’s a lot younger than him.”

“She’s his second wife. The first one died, and before you jump to conclusions, it was cancer she died from. Betty came as a Nanny to his children while she was ill. Three years later she married him. Of course, they were both much younger then. The boys must be quite grown up by now.”

“What are your plans for tomorrow, sir?” Dale asked.

“A trip to Tuxford is well overdue. Let’s see what Doctor Eagle has to say for himself. As soon as the morning briefing is out of the way, we’ll head to his surgery.”

At the early morning briefing, D.S. Scott had much to report. She’d caught Fancy Pants before they closed yesterday and had some success. One Robin Hood costume had been borrowed by a Robert Greenhalgh who’d returned it that morning. The other had gone to a Mr. Robin Hood.

“You’re joking. Did he give an address?”

“An unlikely one, sir,” Scott replied. “Green Trees, Sherwood Village, Forest Town.”

“As you say, an unlikely one but check it out anyway. I’m off to meet the organiser of the fancy dress party, Doctor Eagle in Tuxford.”

Angela was tempted to say that Eagle seemed an improbable name as well, but thought better of it.

By nine thirty Valiant and Dale were on the road for Tuxford. They hadn’t got far when it began to rain again. Then Valiant’s phone rang. It was the station. They’d had a complaint from the National Trust about part of the park being out of bounds to the public. They wanted to know how long it would be before it was opened up again. Valiant was tempted to say that it took as long as it took, but relented.

“Tell them we’ll be out of there by tonight. Any clues will have been washed away in the deluge by now. But don’t tell them that. O.K?”

He hung up, whereupon the phone immediately rang again.

“What now?” he yelled, but it was Angela Scott’s voice on the line

“I’ve just heard from another of the hotel staff, a part-timer who wasn’t there at the original interview. She says she saw a fight between the two Robin Hoods. She didn’t know what it was about but it was stopped by a Cavalier who drew his sword and told them to stop it or he’d run them through.”

“Really?” said Valiant. “How interesting. “Well done, Angela.”

Once they’d got past his receptionist and apologised for disrupting her schedule of patients, they found Doctor Eagle to be a jovial, middle aged man, almost as round as Tubby Dale. He hadn’t heard about the gruesome find in Clumber Park but was quite willing to provide the names and addresses of all the guests at the fancy dress party. He pulled them up on his computer screen and printed off a copy for the detectives.

“Could you tell us what outfits they were wearing?” asked Valiant. “We’re particularly interested in the two Robin Hoods. We know one was Robert Greenhalgh but the other is a bit of a mystery.”

“Ah. Well,” the doctor prevaricated. “I didn’t really want him to be there as he wasn’t quite one of us, but he asked me as a special favour.” The doctor squirmed. “He said he’d give me a discount on my conservatory if I’d invite him to the party. He has a bit of a reputation, you see, with the ladies. Rumour has it that he’s been discovered giving a few wives in the area more than just double glazing, if you get my drift.”

“He got into a fight with Greenhalgh at the party. Was that over Mrs Greenhalgh?” Valiant probed.

The doctor said it probably was.

“A fight which you broke up by threatening to run them through with your sword. Is that what you did after the party? Get your double glazing fitter on his own and run him through?”

Doctor Eagle was shocked. “Absolutely not. I’m sworn to preserve life not to destroy it. I told the men to keep their disagreements for outside. Reminded them that we were raising money for a charitable cause and didn’t want to get a reputation for raucous behaviour. I may have jokingly said something about running them through, but I’d no intention of doing it. When the party broke up, I came home with my wife.”

“What did she go as?” Dale piped up.

“A puritan lady,” Eagle replied, recovering his composure. “We’re both in the Sealed Knot, but on opposing sides.” He smiled.

“And which of these honourable gentleman,” Valiant said, tapping the list of attendees. “Is the Casanova of the conservatory?”

“His name is Littlejohn, David Littlejohn.”

The D.I. could not have been more surprised if he’d said it was Friar Tuck, but he’d work with what they’d got - which wasn’t much - for the time being.

“At last,” Valiant said triumphantly. “We have a name!”

After learning that the doctor’s costume was his own, Valiant asked for the sword so it could be forensically examined. Eagle had to ring his home and ask his wife to bring the sword round to the surgery. He begged the detectives to wait outside for it, which they did, getting wet for their pains.

“Funny, isn’t it,” Tubby Dale said, as they drove back into Worksop. “A man called Littlejohn, dressing up as Robin Hood.”

“Let us hope,” said his boss, “that Doctor Eagle has not also been deceived.”

A message from the pathologist was waiting for Valiant when he arrived back at Worksop police station. A black thread had been found clinging to the green material of Robin Hood’s suit, at the edge of the heart wound. It definitely wasn’t hair unless it came from a wig. It hadn’t been visible at the time of the post mortem with all the clothing being so wet. Under the microscope, traces of blood were observed at one end of the thread.

“I don’t know what that proves,” said Valiant. “We have neither means, motive nor opportunity so far, but put it on file, Dale.”

Dale was on his computer, checking the electoral register for a David Littlejohn.

“Found him, sir. It’s a Worksop address right enough. Nobody else registered there, so we should be safe to go in and have a poke around.”

Sergeant Scott had returned from her foray into the world of fancy dress.

“You wouldn’t believe the range of outfits they’ve got. Everything from an archbishop’s vestments to a body-hugging Lady Godiva suit.”

“Yes, well, let’s move this investigation on, shall we?” Valiant said. “Angela, you’ll come with me. Dale, I want you to check DVLA with Littlejohn’s name and address. See if there’s a car registered to him. It may well contain his keys and a mobile phone. Either of those would be useful.”

Angela Scott was in a talkative mood, as they drove to Littlejohn’s house.

“Don’t you think it’s odd, sir, Littlejohn becoming Robin Hood. Most people would want to be somebody totally different.”

“Such as what?”

“I don’t know. Buffalo Bill perhaps, or King Arthur or.....”

“Or Rin Tin Tin,” Valiant finished her sentence. “But what was it that Robin Hood was best known for?”

“Robbing the rich?” she suggested.

“Exactly. But how did our man do it? Sleeping with their wives wouldn’t make him rich and we have no reports of thefts at the party, even though they were mostly well off. There was nothing on him when he was found. Unless.....”

“Unless what, sir?”

“There is one kind of theft which often doesn’t get reported.”

“Blackmail, sir?”

“Blackmail, sergeant. But who and why, and why did they kill him rather than pay up.”

They were met at Littlejohn’s door by several uniformed officers with a battering ram. After searching around for a key in the usual places, and not finding one, Valiant gave the order to go in.

The small terraced house had, not surprisingly, been fully double-glazed. Inside they found the rooms unexpectedly tidy. The living room contained a sofa and large screen T.V. Upstairs, along with the bathroom there were two others, one with a double bed and wardrobe, the other empty.

“Where’s his computer?” Valiant wanted to know. “Find it, pronto.”

“If it’s a laptop or an ipad it won’t take up a lot of room,” Scott observed, returning downstairs and peering under the sofa. She moved on to the kitchen, searching cupboards and the fridge. Finally she turned to the washing machine and opened it up. “Eureka!” she yelled.

She extracted a Compaq laptop, which she placed in an evidence bag. “I’ll take this back so we can check all his files and folders. He’s a tidy kind of guy. I’m sure, if he is into blackmail, he’ll have kept records.”

Just then Valiant’s phone rang.

“Dale here, sir. We’ve found Littlejohn’s car burnt out in a layby on the A614. Do you still want his keys?”

Littlejohn’s laptop hadn’t much in the way of security and his files were soon being scrutinised by Sergeant Scott and Tubby Dale. There was a list of people he’d installed

double glazing or conservatories for over the past two years. Doctor Eagle was a name they expected to find, but not Cornelius Ryan.

“He said he didn’t know Littlejohn,” Dale exclaimed. “He lied to us. A magistrate and he lied!”

“Perhaps he was honestly mistaken,” Valiant said. “I don’t suppose he’d see much of him while the conservatory was being built. He’d certainly never seen him dressed as a Sherwood outlaw before, or dead for that matter.”

“He stayed the night at the hotel next to Clumber Park. He had the opportunity to kill him,” Dale protested.

“Opportunity perhaps, but means? Or motive?”

Angela Scott pointed to the screen in front of her. “What do you make of this, Sir?”

She indicated a list of initials with dates next to them, followed by a number, some had 50 or 100 or even 1000 next to them.

“Have we found our blackmail victims, d’you think?” she said.

“We’ll need to check his bank account or accounts. See if any sums of the same value were paid in shortly after the dates given here,” Valiant said. “If there are, then we can be sure he was blackmailing the people whose initials appear in this list. The trouble is we have only their initials, not their full names. Who, for example is VE?”

“Valerie Eagle, perhaps,” Dale suggested. “I’m sure he called his wife Valerie when he phoned her about the sword.”

“Well spotted, Tubby,” said Angela Scott. “And I’ve had another thought. What if the murderer wasn’t a man but a woman? There was a geisha costume hired out by the other firm, Party Party. You know, the Japanese style with dark hair piled on top of the head, held in place by pins that look like knitting needles. If one of them were sharpened, it would make a dandy weapon. And the one from Party, Party in Newark was loaned to Valerie Eagle and returned with one pin missing.”

“But Valerie Eagle’s a red-head,” Dale protested.

“Not if she was wearing a wig,” added Valiant. “Bring her in, Angela.”

While Sergeant Scott went to Tuxford with a uniformed officer to request Mrs Eagle’s presence at the station, Dale was still trying to process the fact that the doctor must have lied to them. If his wife hadn’t worn the costume of a Puritan lady but went as a geisha, then he couldn’t have driven them both back home after the party. Perhaps he was

her accomplice, the one who'd bashed Littlejohn's head in, just to make sure he was dead.

He turned back to checking Littlejohn's bank statements. He'd been very up to date had this Robin Hood, with internet banking and everything. Yes, the figures were there. They couldn't be denied. He turned back to the list of initials. One who'd paid £2000 to Littlejohn was E.R. 'I bet he wasn't sorry Robin Hood was out of the way,' thought Dale. 'Whoever he was.'

Valiant was pacing the floor. He hated interviewing women for serious offences, putting pressure on them until they cracked. It went against his nature. He stopped pacing and began raising his heels. It was beginning to annoy Dale.

"Go get yourself a cup of tea and a bun," the D.I. said and sent Tubby scampering off in the direction of the canteen.

"What's this all about? I've done nothing wrong," Valerie Eagle protested as she was led into the interview room, where Inspector Valiant was waiting. Scott sat beside him opposite her. Mrs Eagle looked frightened and worried. If she were innocent, what was she worried and frightened about? At least she hadn't asked for a solicitor. That would just about have nailed it.

Valiant began the questioning. "We know you were being blackmailed by David Littlejohn. Why was that?"

"We had a fling," she began. "My husband was away at a conference and we met, just a couple of times. When I told him it was over, he demanded money not to tell Greg, that's my husband, what we'd been up to. I was shocked when he turned up at the party the other night. But I didn't kill him."

"You hired a geisha costume from," Valiant consulted his notes. "Party, Party in Newark. You returned it with a pin missing. You said you'd lost it. That wasn't true, was it?"

Mrs Eagle was wringing her hands in obvious agitation. "No," she said.

"You'll have to elaborate on that," Scott said. "Otherwise we shall be forced to assume that either you or Doctor Eagle used the missing pin to stab David Littlejohn through the heart. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Yes, but that wasn't what happened."

"Was it you who hired the geisha outfit?"

"Yes, but in the end I didn't wear it." She seemed calmer now, as though the crisis was past. "I passed it on to a friend."

“And went to the party as a Puritan Lady instead?” Valiant asked.

“Yes.”

“So who was the friend who wore the geisha outfit and ‘lost’ one of the pins?”

“She wouldn’t have killed him. I know she wouldn’t.”

“Who, Mrs Eagle?”

A full minute’s silence followed before she said, in a whisper, “Betty Ryan.”

“Louder please, for the tape recording,” Valiant said.

“I passed it to Betty Ryan.”

Valiant asked if Mrs Ryan were also being blackmailed by Littlejohn, but Mrs Eagle claimed she didn’t know. Suddenly it dawned on her that they might both have been in the same predicament. The look of surprise and horror which crossed her face was enough for Valiant. He said she could go home but must be available if they should want to ask her more questions. She stumbled from the interview room, assisted by a female officer.

Back with Dale and the computer, they told him what Valerie Eagle had told them.

“I knew it wouldn’t be her,” Dale boasted. “But Betty Ryan? She’s not even on his list.”

Sergeant Scott, leaning over his shoulder, pointed to the screen. “Yes she is.” Her finger was on E.R. “Betty’s an abbreviation for Elizabeth.”

“I was afraid this might happen,” Valiant said. “We’ll have to tread very carefully with this one. Angela, can you get hold of that geisha outfit and wig? I want to check it against the thread that was found on the body.” He rubbed his hand across his face. “If it matches, we’ll arrest Betty Ryan for murder. She had the means, motive and opportunity.”

The Inspector cursed himself for not asking Cornelius Ryan whether his wife had gone to the party in fancy dress. He’d denied doing so himself but had avoided telling them about his wife. Did he know Betty had been involved with David Littlejohn? Did he know she’d killed her lover? Was he even involved with the killing? One thing Valiant knew for sure. He would need to have a cast iron, double padlocked, watertight case against one of them or he’d be looking for another job before long.

Betty’s demeanour was very different from that of Valerie Eagle, when she was brought to the interview room later that day. Dressed in a smart aquamarine dress and jacket, and flawlessly made up, she was as cool as the proverbial cucumber. In spite of the

fact that the black thread matched the wig she'd worn, despite the fact that the police knew she was being blackmailed and despite Valerie Eagle telling them that she'd supplied Betty with a list of all attendees to the party along with the geisha outfit, she remained unflustered. She'd seen the way all the officers in the station had looked at her and knew she still had the power to attract men, just as she'd attracted Cornelius eighteen years ago. Just as she'd attracted David Littlejohn two years ago.

"It wasn't the money, you know," she told D.I. Valiant, when he'd run through the list of incriminating evidence they had on her. "I had money in my own right before I went to work for Cornelius. I didn't even care if Cornelius knew of the affair. He's an old man and knows he can no longer satisfy my needs, in the bedroom, you understand. He wouldn't have told a soul. What rankled was when I saw David lusting after younger flesh, like Jackie Greenhalgh. I couldn't bear the thought of him telling tales about us, about me, all over the district; what games we used to play and where we used to make love. So I put a stop to it, permanently."

"Are you admitting that you killed David Littlejohn in Clumber Park?"

"Might as well, hadn't I? I knew he was coming to the party, so I sharpened the pin at home beforehand. I arranged to meet him in Clumber for a farewell cuddle."

"Where in Clumber?" Valiant asked.

"The car park in Hardwick," she said. "We walked to the lake as it was a fine night. It didn't start raining until later. He had the gall to say I was too old for him. So I stabbed him and pushed him into the water. He wasn't dead and tried to climb out again so I picked up a log and hit him with it. Then he slipped back into the lake. I threw both weapons into the water and drove back to the hotel. Cornelius is such a heavy sleeper when he's had a lot to drink, and I made sure he had a lot to drink that night."

"Who moved his car and torched it?" Valiant asked.

"Torched? Where?"

"Further down the A614"

"I didn't know about that. I paid somebody to take it away and lose it." Betty shook her head. "You can't trust anybody these days, can you?"

D.S. Scott escorted her to the cells, and Tubby Dale greeted Valiant as he was coming out of the interview room.

"Satisfactory conclusion, sir?"

"If any murder case can be said to be satisfactory," Valiant replied.

“Cheer up, boss. I’ll buy you a pint to celebrate.”

“A whole pint?”

“Yes, sir. Nothing’s too good for D.I. Intrepid.”

“Why you.....” But Dale had anticipated his playful punch, and ran off down the corridor, laughing.

