

Murder in The Resort

Murder in The Resort

A Special Detective Chau Novel

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Author: Walkees

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Police novel

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INTRODUCTION

'He was floored by a well-executed taekwondo move of Special Detective Chau. With the perpetrator on his back, on the floor, it was now a little easier for Jack to get control of him!'

The third novel in the Special Detective Chau series

Murder in The Resort

In this edition, Special Detective Chau, her family and her boss, Detective Chief Inspector Sam Archer, and his fiancée Sophie, are going on holiday. The trip is a reward, given by the village and the county police force, for their exquisite work in solving the murder of the village pub owner, and his sister.

The holiday already becomes a new murder investigation on the first day of the holiday.

The story will ensure that the reader constantly changes its supposed killer, because in this case there are again many suspects and many new clues.

Special Detective Chau: You love her more, with every page you read.

1. HOLIDAY

“Chau”, her mother yelled from the bottom of the stairs. “Hurry up, everyone is waiting for you!”

“As usual”, Minh, Chau’s younger brother stated, standing in the door, ready to get into the car. “Minh, get in the car”, his father told him, also a little bit irritated, because everybody was ready to leave, except Chau.

This was a usual ritual, whenever the family got ready to leave for a trip, or to go elsewhere. Chau always needed the longest time to get ready, as she always wanted to look perfect, when going out. Today it was not only the family members waiting, because today was the day of their holiday, together with Detective Chief Inspector Sam Archer and his fiancée, Sophie. They got this holiday, 10 days in a well-known Spa resort, near Kent, as a reward for solving the 2 murders, happened in their little village Highfields, a few months ago. The reward was handed to them by the Commissioner of the county Police Force and the Mayor of Highfields. The two families chose the Christmas holiday period of the children as the time to go, and because the father of Special Detective Chau drove a 7-seat car, they decided to go in the family’s car. Sam Archer, the Chief Inspector was already seated at the passenger’s seat, and Sophie, his fiancée was waiting at the seat behind him. Minh climbed in too, and seated himself at the window, next to Sophie. He knew his mother would come soon and would sit in between. Chau always took the back row for herself, and the dog, Meow. Finally, the waiting people saw movement again, at the door.

Then the mother came out of the house, with Meow, their dog, and after she yelled one more time for Chau, the Special Detective finally also stepped out of the house. The waiting got explained by her perfect looks, how could anyone get angry or stay irritated at such a lovely looking girl?

When everyone was seated, dog in the back with Chau, Sophie held the father from driving away, because she wanted to say something to all. “Again, a really good morning to all. How nice it is to go on this holiday with you. Sam and Chau; special thanks to you both, because it is your hard work that gave us all, this lovely reward. Now, I would like to say one thing; Let us enjoy, and do not talk about murders or police ranks, until we are back home again”. Everybody laughed and understood the message. And then they were on their way.

Just 45 minutes after leaving from the house, they reached the resort. Already from the outside it looked impressive and very luxury. When they stopped at the reception office, a man in uniform came to them, and asked for the keys of the car. I will give it a secure parking space Sir, and I will have all your luggage brought to your bungalow. You just go into the office to check-in; I will get the information I need, from them. Only one is enough, for checking in, the rest of you can take place in the restaurant, at the right, where you will get a welcome drink from the resort. The father and Sam decided to go into the office together, and the ladies and Minh, with Meow on a leash, went into the restaurant. Stepping into the office they saw a wide counter where 2 beautiful young ladies were acting as receptionist. The room itself could have come from a movie scene. It was all luxury, and it gave the feeling of stepping into the garden of Eden, in the Christmas period. One of the ladies greeted the two men and showed right away the class of the resort and its workers. She had already guessed who they were, and she also seemed to know what they were.

“Good morning, gentlemen. It is a real honor for our resort to have you as our distinguished guests for the next 10 days. I am Diana, and I will be your personal guide, during your stay. We will make sure your stay will be your best holiday ever, at least, that will be our top goal. I have everything already prepared for you. You are staying in our VIP bungalow, which is situated at the south side of the lake.

The bungalow has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. There is also a small kitchen with everything you need and there is a small bar in the living room, which we have already stocked with drinks and snacks. Outside there is a nice terrace, solely for you all, at the side of the lake, and there is even a jetty on the water where you will find your own boat for this stay. I will call the bellboy, to escort you to your bungalow, when you are ready. First you can join your family in the restaurant and enjoy a nice welcome drink of your choice, from the resort. Saying that may sound a little overdone, because your total stay is free of course, and you can eat and drink what you want and use any facility we have to offer in the resort. In your bungalow you will find all the documented information you need. I wish you a very pleasant and unforgettable stay in our resort, and I will contact you regularly, during your stay, to see if we can do anything for you. It is now 9:30, let us say, I will come to your bungalow at 11 and then we can talk in detail about what we have to offer you, and I will answer any question you have. Is that ok, gentlemen? Sam was first to answer.

“That all sounds great to me, Diana. Thanks very much for the warm welcome. We will be happy to see you again in about one and a half hour from now”. Then the men said goodbye and walked into the direction of the restaurant. Coming through the entrance door they were immediately welcomed by a female host, who also seemed to know who they were. Sam thought he had to find out how they did that.

“Good morning gentlemen. Welcome, I am Sasha, your host in this restaurant. Your family and friends are waiting for you, I will bring you to your table. While following the host, the men saw that also the restaurant showed only class and luxury and already had a huge Christmas tree in the far corner in front of the glass wall at the side of the lake. As soon as they reached the table, where the others were already enjoying a drink and all kinds of snacks, they sat down with them and after the host took their order, it was Chau who right away started to talk.

“Daddy, boss, it is.....” “Stop, Chau”, Sophie interrupted, with a smile. “Here and during this holiday you do not call anyone boss, ok? Archer reacted. “Yes Chau, I know this will be difficult for you, but you know what, let us just do what we did one time in ‘VIP’, the restaurant in Kent. Just call me Uncle Sam and Sophie; just Sophie, ha-ha”. Everybody laughed and Chau just went on.

“Daddy, Uncle Sam, do you see how restless Meow is? Normally he is quiet in a strange location, but now he constantly wants to pull me away from here. Her father took over the leash. “Maybe he needs to go out? I will have a look, where he wants to go. The father stood up and Meow pulled him right away in the direction of the exit door at the side of the lake. From the table they had an exquisite view over the lake, but at this moment Meow, the dog, took everyone’s attention.

The father walked outside with the dog, which kept pulling and going in the direction of the waterside.

2. BYE BYE, HOLIDAY

Chau, her mother, Minh, Archer and Sophie followed the two with their eyes and when they saw the father and the dog reach the waterside, they saw him suddenly stop, bend over, and then bend back and turning again in their direction. He almost ran now, and it was him that had to pull the dog with him. Back at the table he gave the leash back to Chau. "Chau, you take care of Meow again, do not let him escape. I need to talk to Sam for a moment. Sam, could you follow me please?" And then he left again, with Sam, in the direction of where he just had come from. At the table everyone was looking very curious and surprised.

While the men walked up to the waterside again, the father began to talk. "I am deeply sorry, Sam, but I think Sophie's plan is not going to work. At the waterside I found, or Meow did, a dead body. It is a young woman, and I know she is dead, because I checked her pulse. I think she got murdered".

By that time, they reached the scene with the body. Archer looked around quickly, and then turned to his friend. "I am sorry, Kees, but you better go back to your wife and Sophie and the children. I must call my people and the coroner. Since I am the first on the scene and I am the leading Detective of the county, outside the City of Kent, this will be our case. Please try to keep everything as normal as possible if that is ever possible. I will come to you as soon as I can. Could you please ask Chau to call me on my mobile? I need to ask her to do something for me. "Ok, Sam, no worries, this is just bad luck, terrible bad luck. I will go and right away tell Chau". Then he left the scene and Archer first called his troops and the doctor. Not long after, his phone rang, and he heard Chau on the other end.

“SD, I am sorry, but it is ranks and policework again, as you will have understood by now. Please, first try to find the leading person of the restaurant, and then maybe a manager of the resort. They need to close the exits, to this terrace and to the lake. When our people are here, they will take over from you, but now we must make sure this place is secured. The answer from Chau was short and simple; “Yes boss”.

The next half hour, Archer carefully investigated the area around the body. He already knew, by only looking, that the woman was strangled, and that the perpetrator had used a belt or other kind of ‘tool’ to perform his crime. The woman, somewhere between 25 and 35 years old, was wearing sportive clothes, but strangely enough, she was not wearing any shoes. Archer had a look around but did not find any shoes, anywhere. What he did find was a lighter, a zippo, so he secured that in an evidence bag. Then, Chau approached him and told him that she had already called for assistance from the station in Kent, who sent a few uniforms to secure the roads to the lake, and that Inspector Jack Savage was 5 minutes away, together with Sergeants Jim and Susan. Also, I have arranged to have one of the meeting rooms of the restaurant available for us, Boss. We can use it as command post and briefing room. “Smart thinking, SD, great”, Archer responded. He gave Chau the evidence bag with the lighter. “Here SD, you take care of collecting all the evidence we find so that we can give it all to the lab technicians, before they leave again, for examination at the lab. How is your family, and Sophie? Are they ok?”

“Yes boss. I told them to settle in at the bungalow and just do what they like. My father told me that they understood that we will be occupied for a while and told me he would take them for lunch somewhere, so we have our hands free”. Archer smiled. “You are lucky to have such a family SD, and I am lucky to have Sophie, all totally understanding our duties, without complaints”.

At that moment also Doctor Harris arrived at the scene and went straight to the corps to do the preliminary examination. Then the crew of Detectives arrived at the scene and it was Jack who made the first remark. "So, nice start of your holiday, boss?" Archer did not respond and got right to it. "There you all are. Come, let us go to the room Chau has had set up for us. I have already done the preliminary research, so we can let the doctor do his work, and come back later. SD, go ahead, and we will follow you".

Everything was perfectly prepared. The room looked like a luxury version of their own briefing room. A big publication board with a small table in front of it, at the back of the room, and two rows of chairs in front of it. When Archer looked at the small table he saw with delight, there was coffee and tea, but he knew that they, unfortunately, would not have time for that now. Susan, Jack, Jim, and Pete (who also had just arrived) took place on the chairs. Chau was already busy with filling the board, and Archer took place next to it. "Ok, it is already the 4th murder this year, we will be dealing with, having had no murders at all, in the years before. Luckily now, it is not one of our villagers, but still, it is our responsibility to also solve this one. I already looked around at the scene and found not much, but still there are some things already to mention. First of all, we do not have the name of the victim yet, all I can tell you is it is a young woman, between 25 and 35 yrs. old, sportively dressed in rather new clothes, but not wearing shoes, nor socks or any kind of stockings. I found nothing on her, but since I had to be careful, I hope the doctor will come with something. If not, we will need to use a picture and ask around. As far as I could see, the victim has been strangled, possibly with a belt, or something likewise. I did find a cigarette lighter near the body, which looks to be from a man, or else, it could be a souvenir she bought".

Then Chau interrupted. “Boss, there is a shop here, next to the restaurant. I saw they sell all sorts of things, also souvenirs. Maybe we could have a look there and talk with the shop assistant”. “Excellent remark, SD, Archer took over again. We will do that together, after the briefing, and after we talked with the doctor and with Harry, from the tech team. Susan, Pete, Jim, you get some uniforms to assist, and start asking around. Start with personnel from the restaurant, reception, and Spa, but keep a low profile, until we know more. Jack, SD, you come with me. Let us go people, oh, uh, I want this killer to be captured sooner than soon, because it is my holiday, and I would appreciate it when there would be a few days left, to enjoy with my fiancée and friends”.

Archer, Jack, and Chau reached the scene with the corps, just, when the doctor had finished his examination. Archer right away asked the question. “And, doc, what can you tell us?” The doctor looked a little annoyed and the reason for that came with his report. “Well, Archer, this is a worse crime even, then what it looked like at first sight, and I am sure the story behind it is bigger than we first could have thought. Whoever left her here, made sure we will not be able to identify her easily, at least, when we cannot find anyone who knows her. There was not any kind of identification to be found on her body, and now come the horrible details. She has not one tooth anymore in her mouth, they were all pulled out. Also, her finger tops have been treated with some kind of acid, to make fingerprinting impossible. We may hope that she is in one of our police systems, so that we can identify her on DNA results, else it is going to take a while”. Archer interrupted.

“Wow, that is new for us. So, we need to be very inventive”. With these words, it was Chau, who again had a remark. “Boss, I have an idea about that. I gave the lighter you found near the body to Harry, the lab technician. If we are lucky there is a fingerprint of the victim on it. That would be faster to identify”.

“Again, a splendid remark SD. We will see what comes from it”. Archer returned to the doctor. “Do I understand correctly; You think the body has been placed here, and the actual murder took place somewhere else?” The doctor was fast and resolute with his answer. “Yes, Archer, I am sure about that, else we would have found more blood and other traces, because of the teeth and fingers treatment. Also, worth to mention is, that the lady died not more than 6 to 8 hours ago. To be more precise, you will need to wait until after my autopsy. One other thing. There is a deep scratch mark at the back of her neck, and now it comes; this fake nail I found in the collar of her shirt, I have already bagged it for you. It is not for me to draw conclusions, but if I were you, I would keep the possibility open, for a strong female killer. This is if it turns out the nail is not from the victim. We can find that out through comparing the DNA we will certainly find on the nail, with the DNA of the victim. I think that should be enough for you to work on, until you get my final report”. Archer was pleased with the doctor’s findings.

“That is indeed a lot off useful information, doc. Thanks, we have at least a few directions to go at. I will hear from you after the autopsy, please contact us on our mobile phone numbers”. Then he saw Harry, the lab technician coming, followed by Jack, who already went to him when Archer was talking with the doctor. Harry started to talk; the moment Archer looked at him. “Boss, I think we have a not so simple case here. No signs to be found on the victim, except for what the doctor has told and given you. He informed me about that before we could start our own investigation. Also, no signs around the victim, except for the lighter you had found and was given to me by the SD. We will take everything to the lab for further investigation. But now back to what I said earlier, about not having found any traces around the victim’s body. That really is a puzzle to us, knowing that our victim has not been killed here. There is a lot of sand around the crime scene, but no trace at all.

It almost looks like she was dumped from above, but even that would have left some traces. So, this puzzle is for you and your team. We go back to the lab now and I will inform you as soon as possible about any result". Archer was thinking, just nodded his head, and Harry and his team left. Archer then looked at Jack, and SD Chau, while they also saw that the body was being removed for transport to the morgue.

"Well, Jack, SD, what do we have here? Not really simple don't you think?" It was Chau who reacted first. "Boss, is it ok when I go around a bit, and maybe talk to some people? I have some ideas and would like to try to find some leads". Archer responded with a smile. "SD, I have no problem with that, whatsoever. Please go and let us meet in our new briefing room at 2pm. I will have a uniform inform everyone" With these words Chau had something else. "About that boss. Since we are not at our station with all facilities and people, would it be an idea, to post a uniform in the briefing room permanently, to act like the desk officer at the station and to be the central contact person. Make the briefing room a command post, actually?" Archer's smile got bigger. "Smart thinking again, SD. I will arrange that immediately, I have an extra phone with me and will give it to our new local desk officer, to make that our central number, and I better make the first call to our ever so friendly Commissioner. Jack, please look for the manager of this place, and ask him to meet us at the command post at 3. You then go to the room and after my phone call I will join you there, please wait for me". Chau smiled and, same as Jack, left. Archer went to do his things.

3. THE FIRST REAL LEAD

Chau's first aim was the shop. When she entered, she right away noticed that the crime had already become public knowledge. A few people were standing together and were clearly talking about the murder. Chau just walked around, close enough, to hear what they were saying, at the same time looking at the souvenirs and other things that were sold in the shop. The talks seemed just to contain guesses and gossip, but then Chau's eye fell on something interesting. She saw the same lighter as the one they had found near the body. But the lighter was in a box, together with a cigarette holder in the same design. Chau took one and went straight to the shop assistant, who was standing in a corner of the shop, observing the people inside. Chau addressed her.

"Miss, I am SD Chau, from the Highfields police. We are investigating the matter from this morning. Can I ask you some questions?" The woman nodded confirmatory. "First I would like to ask you; with how many people do you work in this shop?" The young woman first introduced herself politely and then started answering. "I am Sandy. We are with 3, for this shop, we work in shifts. The shop is only open from 10 to 6, every day, and there is only one of us present in every shift, as this is not a busy shop". Chau went on. "Ok Sandy, thank you". And then she showed the box with the lighter to the woman. "This gift box, with the lighter and cigarette holder, could you check how many of these are sold, and is there a way even, to find out to whom it or they are sold?" Sandy had an answer right away. "Well, that is a new product, just came in last week, so there are probably not many sold yet, also because it is quite an expensive product, as you can see. One moment, I will check the register". It took just a few minutes when Sandy came back. "Maybe you are lucky, we only sold one box and it was paid with credit card.

The name on the credit card is Laura Dent, and as a matter of fact, now I suddenly remember. She is working in the Spa, as a masseuse and she told me she bought it for her boyfriend. I cannot tell you who her boyfriend is, I do not know". Chau was incredibly happy with this information and asked the shop assistant to keep one box behind the counter. After taking the credit card slip from the shop assistant and thanking her friendly, she left to see Archer. She went straight to the Command room, as she had named the room.

Entering the room Chau saw a familiar scene, only in a different location. Archer, Susan, Jack, and Pete were sitting at a table in the far-left corner of the room, with in front of them, coffee, tea, and snacks. "SD", Archer began, "Come, sit down and take your coffee and any of the snacks you like. This is just what we could arrange on short notice, but I ordered the head of our canteen at the station to come here, with an assistant, to make sure we will be fed when needed". Everybody smiled and Chau sat down, looking straight to Archer, as if she were asking for permission to talk. Archer noticed and understood. "Come on SD, I can see there is something on your mind. Come on, spit it out, or maybe better, what did you find out?" That was indeed the question Chau was waiting for, and she immediately started to report and told everyone about her visit at the shop and what she had found out. She gave the credit card slip to Archer and waited for his reaction, which immediately followed.

"SD, that is great information again. So, the first to talk to now is that Laura Dent, we will pick up that box at the shop, to take with us for reference. Then Archer's phone went, and he picked up. The others could hear because of his answers, it was the doctor. A few minutes later Archer ended the call and informed everybody.

"As you already noticed of course, this was the doctor, telling me he had no new facts to report, except for the time of death.

Because the weather was stable the last days, he was able to give a close time of death. He is sure the murder took place this day, early in the morning, between 6 and 8. So, we now have something to go with when we are checking alibies. After our coffee, Jack, SD Chau, and I will bring a visit to the Spa. Susan, Jim, Pete? Did anything come out of your questionings of the people in the resort?" It was Susan who took the word. Well, boss. This is a bit strange, but I will have to answer this question with a fat no. Nothing at all came out of it, but we were not at the Spa yet". Then Jack had something to say.

"There might be one more thing to mention. When I was looking for the manager, I went to the reception to ask where I could find him. Then the receptionist told me he was not at the resort. She had seen him leave this morning around 11 and she could not tell where he went. She told me that was not a normal behavior, because normally when he left the resort in worktime, he always informed the reception about his whereabouts". Archer responded to that.

"Ok, Susan; Find out where this man lives, how and with whom. Find out which car he drives and try to locate him. If you do, inform us and we will have a talk with him. Jack, SD, you come with me. We are going to visit the Spa, unfortunately not for a treatment. The rest of you go on with talking with people around. But first finish your refreshments. SD, have you had any contact with your family, or Sophie?" "Yes boss. I phoned my daddy on my way back here. They are fine and enjoying the stay. They are probably in the Spa right now, and they are getting a treatment". Everybody smiled and Archer stood up from his chair and with that making the other move too.

And then there was paradise! When they walked into the Spa, Archer, Jack, and Chau, all stopped walking for a moment, to observe and absorb all the beauty they saw.