

THE CASE OF THE GROOM TO BE
Walkees

The Case of the Groom to Be

A Special Detective Chau Novel

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Police novel

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INTRODUCTION

Christmas Eve, 11:50 PM.

Special Detective Chau, her brother Minh, her parents and Superintendent Sam Archer with his fiancée Sophie, have just returned from the Christmas Eve celebration at 'The Three Crowns', the local pub in the village where they live. They are sitting on the terrace in front of their bungalow, in the resort where they spend their Christmas holidays. The holiday at the resort was a reward for their extraordinary efforts in solving the murder of the local pub owner and his sister, a few months earlier*. However, on the first day of their stay at the resort, they were already confronted with another murder. This time it was the daughter of the owner of the resort**. This morning they had successfully closed the investigation into the killer, but in the afternoon, while Superintendent Sam Archer and Chau's father were having a beer at the resort bar, they were faced with yet another murder. As a result, they were forced to extend their stay at the resort and the investigation into the groom-to-be's case began.

* See book # 2: The Three Crowns

** See book # 3: Murder in the resort

NOT GOING HOME

Here we are again.” Archer opened the conversation, looking at the people at the table with a resigned look. “Dear people. I am most sorry for you that the developments this afternoon will ensure that the remainder of our holiday and our Christmas celebration, will again be seriously disrupted. However, what I promise you is that I will make sure that Christmas does not pass us all by. The positive thing about this case is that we will extend our stay here a bit, the length of course depends on how quickly we can resolve this new case. I will seize all the moments where we can make time for a little fun and moments of Christmas celebration together. I think, to be quite honest, I do not have to worry about our Special Detective Chau with any of this.” Chau responded as expected. “No, boss.”

Everyone laughed at her response, and it was Chau's father who responded. “Sam do not worry. We all understand your duties and responsibilities, and for us it is simply an extension of the holiday at this beautiful resort. You do not have to worry about us, I am sure you will come up with something to be able to be together every now and then.” Archer could read on the faces of the others that they agreed with the father's words. “Okay,” Archer continued. It is midnight already, but how about one more drink before bed? I have already arranged everything for early in the morning. Because you are always out of bed early, I have arranged that a delicious breakfast will be waiting for us on the terrace tomorrow morning at six o'clock. We then will have a Christmas breakfast together before Chau and I go back to work. At a quarter to seven our detectives and our fresh advisor, Sam, will be waiting for us in the command room.

The three suspects will be brought there at 07:00 o'clock, and then our investigation will really begin." Sophie, Archer's fiancée, responded. "Yes, Sam. Can we finally hear a little more about what is going on? Of course, we also understand that another murder has been committed, and Chau did tell us something, but otherwise you have been able to keep everything a secret. I also just heard you say that you already have three suspects?" Archer smiled, picking up the glass Chau's mother had just filled. He saw that Chau's father and mother, and even Minh, were looking at him with a curious look.

"Of course, my dearest. You are entitled to ask. But first this," and then he stood up and raised his glass. "I want to make a toast first, and then I will tell you what is going on. Oh wait, I see Sam coming, just wait a little longer, he is supposed to toast with us." And there came Sam, Archer's namesake, already on the terrace. Sam had clearly contributed solving that crime in the previous murder investigation at this same resort. At the time, he was still a guard at the resort, but his special input and accomplishments had him being offered a job with the force, as a consultant, and he had gladly accepted it. Archer took his glass again and addressed the people. "You are right on time, Sam, take a seat, but first a toast. To all of us, to a speedy investigation, and a merry Christmas. Cheers!" Everyone gave a loud "cheer" but then Chau's father spoke up.

"Yes, and a toast to the new Chief Superintendent Sam Archer." "Ho-ho-ho," Archer interrupted immediately. "You are going a little too fast, it is still only superintendent", but immediately afterwards the father made himself heard again. "No, it that is not it. I meant after you have settled this matter again."

Now everyone laughed loudly, for they understood the hint very well. Sam had just been promoted to superintendent this evening, because of his special qualities and leadership. Of course, it made him react again. "Yeah, okay, we could go on and on, but it will be hard to find any kind of reward for our Special Detective, because being knighted at such a young age, there is not much more to be earned, ha-ha. But for now, all kidding aside. I still owe you an explanation." And then Sam told everyone about what happened in the resort bar this afternoon, when a young man was found dead in the bathroom. The man turned out to be in the bar with three friends to celebrate his bachelor party. He was supposed to tie the knot the day after Christmas. Sophie was the one to respond again.

"Oh, how awful. That poor man, and that poor bride. Well, that is enough now. You, Sam, and Chau need to get some rest. In a few hours, another nerve-racking and exhausting period will start for you. Empty your glass and go to bed. We will take one more, hihi!" Then there was another loud laugh, but the advice was taken seriously by Archer, Chau, and Sam. They finished their glasses and left the terrace.

THE FIRST INTERVIEWS

Boxing Day, 06:45 am, in the command room, at the resort.

Susan, Jim, Pete, and Jack were already sitting in the corner of the room on the low chairs when Archer, Chau, and Sam entered. They did not have to go to the counter as everything they could need was already on the table. When everyone sat down, it was Archer who began to speak. "Good morning, folks, merry Christmas, ha-ha." Before he could say another word, someone came in and immediately approached Archer. It was Axel Brown, the resort owner, and the father of their previous murder victim, the case they had just successfully closed on Christmas Eve morning. "Good morning, chief inspector, detectives, ah, and Sam. Sorry to hear that you have left us, Sam, but of course I understand that this is a great opportunity for you, and I wish you every success and satisfaction in your new job." Sam saw an opportunity to bring something to the attention of his ex-boss.

"Thank you, sir. But just to inform you, it is now Superintendent Sam Archer. Our boss got this promotion yesterday." Axel Brown looked at Archer and continued. "Oh, okay, superintendent, congratulations, you certainly deserve it. But now the reason for my visit, I do not want to keep you from your work any longer than necessary. I hope you understand that, especially after the terrible family drama that we have had to endure, it is extra dramatic for me that we are now again facing a murder at our resort. Of course, it has nothing to do with the resort, but guests do not see it that way.

This is certainly going to hurt us, but I do not want to put any pressure on you with that. I just want to inform you that I will make sure that everyone here at the resort will cooperate fully with your investigations. I also understand very well, after all it is Christmas, this must also be far from pleasant for you, to now have to be separated from your family again, so soon. That is why I have also made sure that you all will get the best accommodation and all costs are for the resort. You can use all facilities, food, and drinks, wherever in the resort, everything at our expense. I hope you can enjoy a little Christmas celebration in between, whenever you can. I have indicated to my staff that neither expense nor effort should be spared. I have instructed the new manager, Patrick Morse, to accommodate your every need or wish. And now I leave you alone and wish you all success. Superintendent, I am at your disposal at all times. You know where to find me.” Archer stood up and held out his hand to the man. As they shook hands, Archer thanked the man for his words and actions, whereupon Axel Brown left without another word.

Just then, four uniforms from the Highfields station brought in three young men. Archer immediately ordered the desk officer to book the men in, take one of them to the interrogation room, and have him guarded, and the other two to the two cells. At first there was only one cell, but Archer had already asked the day before to convert the empty room into a cell as well. “Okay folks,” Archer continued. “Let us just summarize for everyone what we know right now about the murder. From the doctor’s examination at the scene, we can assume that the victim got killed just minutes before his dead body was found.

It appears that there was a brief struggle between him and his killer, and that he died because the assailant got him on his back on the floor and then hit his head against the floor several times with great force. Then it was Chau who had a comment.

“There are not many real clues at this point, so we will have to start with these three men here. Boss, my father told me about something that happened after you determined that we were charged with murder again. He told me that Meow, my dog, had barked at one of the young men in particular, even wanting to jump at the man. Would it be a clever idea to start with that young man?” Archer smiled again. “Of course, our Special Detective wakes up earlier than all of us. Excellent idea SD. Well noticed. But which of the three was that? I could not say one, two, or three. Do you remember, Sam?” The newly appointed advisor Sam now stood up too and had a satisfying answer. “Yes, boss. It is the young man who is being booked now, with the red jersey.” And again, a smile appeared on the superintendent's face. “Nice, it pleases me that you are all so sharp again. All right, Sam, tell the uniform at the desk to have this young man taken to the interrogation room. And after that, I would like you to resume our old habit. Have a coffee with the guard at the gate. You understand why, and what the purpose is. “Yes boss.”

Archer continued, with another smile on his face. “Jack, you and Chau are doing the interrogations again, together with me, in our usual positions and roles. Susan, Jim, Pete, you all first of all try to gather as much information as possible about our victim and the three suspects. Also, find out who exactly the bar lady was, and ask her to be here at 11:00 this morning.

I have already noticed that the bar does not open until 3pm today and the restaurant at 4pm, so you may need to get her home address or phone number from the resort administration. You will find the administration, next to the manager's office. I have also already arranged for lunch for us. Sophie and Chau's mother will take care of that.

You are all expected at 12:30 pm, on the terrace in front of our bungalow. And now let's get started!" Everyone got up, happily surprised by the announcement about lunch, so the mood was good. Archer had just signaled Chau and Jack to follow him to the interrogation room when another noise came from the door. Now two men came in, one of whom walked right up to Archer.

"You are Superintendent Sam Archer?" The man spoke with a deep voice, and Archer immediately understood from the way he spoke, this was a lawyer. "That is me," Sam replied. "How can I be of service to you, gentlemen?" "My name is Frederick Blake, and this is Mr. Arthur Foster. I am a lawyer and Mr. Foster is the father of one of your detainees, young Mr. Marc Foster. I am here, as you will understand by now, to assist Mr. Foster junior, and his father is here to support his son." Archer had his answer ready. "Well, that is a coincidence.

Mr. Marc Foster is the first of the three suspects we will be questioning. You may of course be present, in fact, I can have you brought to him right now, so that you can have a talk with him. We will follow you fifteen minutes later to start the interrogation. Mr. Foster here, is allowed to attend your interview, but not the interrogation. Foster junior is of age so I can forbid the father's presence during this interrogation."

Then Archer looked at the suspect's father.

“I am sorry Mr. Foster, but that is our way of working. However, you are most welcome to wait here for the return of your son's lawyer after the interrogation. You can take a seat there in the corner and while you wait you can of course use the services of our kitchen brigade. You will see the counter there.” The attorney nodded briefly at Arthur Foster, then an officer came to take the two gentlemen into the interrogation room. Archer smiled again. “Well folks, we still have fifteen minutes to have another cup of coffee.”

Now it was Jack and Chau's turn to smile for their boss's fun. They walked past the counter to pick up a cup of coffee or tea, then settled back into the low chairs of their favorite seating area.

“Okay folks,” Archer started again. “This gives us some time to sharpen the knives, ha-ha. It will be necessary because I know this lawyer by name and deed. I can tell you that it is a hard one, but realistic and not unnecessarily difficult. I already know how to impress him, not that I think this is necessary, but really just for fun. We will bring him a cup of hot chocolate as he is known to drink it all year round instead of coffee or tea.” Then the superintendent called to the counter to place his order. He continued again. “Well, it is almost time. Just this. SD. Of course you sit on your usual place, and after the interrogation please take the tape with you and put all the data into our new query system.” Chau responded immediately. “I only need a few minutes for that boss, I can even do it right after the first interrogation, when we will surely have a cup of coffee again. I now have an app on my tablet that allows me to convert speech into text in just a few steps and entering written text into our system already is also a piece of cake, now.” Now it was Jack who responded.

“I sometimes wonder where the hell you get the time from, Chau, with everything you do. Do you ever sleep?”

Now there was actually a smile on Special Detective Chau's face. “Yes, Jack. Do not worry. I get enough sleep, most nights.”

That word ‘most’, aroused some suspicion with the men, but Archer thought it was time to begin the interrogation, so he signaled both of his detectives to follow him. When they entered the interrogation room, the suspect's father immediately stood up and left the room. The detectives sat down, Jack did the formalities, and started the audio recording, after which Archer wanted to start.

But it was Chau who interrupted before he could say a word. “Mr. Blake. Before we really get started, may I ask you a question?” Chau saw the man look directly in her direction and simply asked the question. “How did you know that our boss has been promoted to superintendent?” They all saw that the man had not expected this question, and he clearly took his time before coming up with an answer. “Ahem, yes, uh, I happened to have a conversation with your Chief Constable, Mr. Daimler. We have been friends since college.

We, and two other fellow students at the time, have the tradition of having breakfast together on Christmas Day. He told me this when he mentioned the special night you all had last night. Can we start now? I am not here to discuss my private affairs with you, but thank you for your kind gesture towards me,” and then he took a sip of his hot chocolate. However, Chau made it clear that she had another question, but this time for the suspect. “Mr. Foster, do you like dogs?” Now everyone saw both the lawyer and the suspect looking up in confusion, but after some thought, the suspect answered anyway.

"I really do not understand why you are asking me this, but yes, I like dogs, always had one, until I went to university, of course. Now I do not have time for it anymore."

With this, Chau left it at that. Archer returned to the conversation with a smile, but not before looking back at his SD and winking at her. "Okay, Mr. Foster, let me start with my first question. Do you have any idea who might have been targeting your friend, Jeffrey Tabbot? Or do you even have a more explicit idea about what happened?" The young man was briefly stopped from answering by the lawyer. "Superintendent, I have consulted with my client, and it is ok to be on first names, with me too, by the way. Go ahead Marc." The suspect straightened himself and began to speak. "No, superintendent, I have no idea. It is an incredible drama.

He was supposed to get married the day after tomorrow, and I would be his best man. It is terrible, and it is even worse that you see me as a suspect, me, his best friend." Then the lawyer took over the conversation again.

"Marc, I told you this. Given the circumstances in which everything has taken place, this is usual routine, but I assure you, you will just walk out of the building with me." Now it was time for Archer to make his voice heard again. "You are right about the first, Mr. Blake, the latter is yet to be seen. But let us move on. Marc, how long have you been friends and what do you do for a living. I simply assume that you all have work, in the case of our victim, unfortunately in the past tense." Marc Foster replied immediately. "Yes, we all work for the same company. To be precise: our company. Jef, Paul, Oswald and I have an organization office. We organize music events, and we specialize in outdoor concerts.

We all know each other from university, and we all studied business economics. We started the company right after university, about two and a half years ago. The company is called ‘Majestic Events’ and we have an office in Kent, in the center, next to the big church.”

Chau broke in. “Marc, do you all have an equal share in the company?” The young man was clearly surprised by this question, and even blushed.

“Well, no, not really. Actually, it is a bit complicated. In fact, when we wanted to start the business, of course, none of us had the necessary capital. My father, and Jef’s father, did. They gave us financing, and because Paul and Oswald could not bring in any money, we jointly decided that they would have a fifteen percent share each, and Jef and I a thirty-five percent share, each.” Now it was Jack who had a question ready.

“And did you all take a salary from the business, and if so, was this also under a stipulation such as the shares, or did you live on a possible dividend?” Marc replied directly to this again. No, we do not take a dividend, the profits of the company simply remain available for whatever needed to grow the company. We all have the same salary. The distribution of the shares only comes to life in the event of a sale.” Now it was Archer who took over again.

“And how is it arranged if someone drops out, or if someone wants to stop?” Now the young man got a little nervous, and the lawyer took over from him. “You can see that Marc is still very emotional, superintendent. I will answer this question for Marc, but after that I really want to end this interrogation, provided you come up with actual facts or evidence that might entitle you to keep my client here any longer. As you have heard, these gentlemen also have a business where they cannot be missed.

The answer to your question is that in the event of the death of one of the shareholders, his share will be distributed among the other shareholders, in a similar distribution to that at the start of the company. A key has even been devised to simplify it, and it has been agreed between the four shareholders that in the event of a marriage they would marry under prenuptial agreements. If someone is married at the time of death, the widow will receive a one-off amount of hundred thousand pounds, to be paid or financed by the company. In this case it means that the thirty-five percent of the victim, in the company, will be divided between the three remaining shareholders, and, because Jef was not yet married at the time of death, no payment will be made to his partner.

Paul and Oswald each get eight percent of the shares added, and Marc gets added nineteen percent, so there is now a split of twenty-three percent each, for Paul and Oswald, and Marc fifty-four percent.” Archer responded right away. “Well Mr. Blake, I am sorry, but now I have to come back to your comment earlier, where you told me we do not really have anything to keep your client here.

Surely you should also know that the fact that his friend's death puts him in control of the company could be an obvious motive for murder.” The lawyer was visibly unhappy with these words, but before he could put it into words himself, Archer stopped him from speaking.

“Never mind, Mr. Blake. I am going to make you happy. We know enough for now, and I do not see any real flight risk in the interests of your client, so with this I end the interrogation, and you may take him with you. You will understand, however, that he will only receive his clothes, which he was wearing at the time of his arrest, after our lab has finished their investigation, and that we require him to remain available for us.”

The lawyer just nodded and left the interrogation room, together with his client. Jack and Chau also knew what was coming next, so they got up and without Archer having to say a word, they walked together to the counter for coffee, tea, and a snack. When they were back in their usual corner, Archer told them how he wanted to proceed. That is when Sam Forrester came in. He went straight to the detectives. "Boss, good to see you here.

I have something. The guard at the gate told me of an incident there, yesterday afternoon, at a quarter past four. A man reported to the gate, in a black Audi A3. He asked where the bachelor party was taking place and wanted the guard to open the gate. Now we have fairly good safety procedures here at the resort. There are even special procedures for parties such as a bachelor party. When such a party is organized, the organizer must leave a list at the security, stating the participants and, separately, any expected late or special guests, with the name and reason for their visit. If someone shows up at the gate for such a party and he or she is not on the list, that person will not be allowed access to the resort. This man was not on the list and was therefore refused entry. He seems to have raged violently, but eventually left. The guard checked him in and saw that the car parked on the side of the road a few hundred meters from the resort, and the car had been there for a long time. The guard could not keep watching, because of other guests trying to get through the gate, but saw that the car was gone at 5pm. Now this is also a good guard, so at least he wrote down the license plate. Here it is," and then Sam handed a note to Archer, who immediately set off.

"Great, good job Sam. By now you have understood that the name of your new position, advisor, is only a name to make things formal. In any case, I am just going to see you as one of my detectives." Sam looked proudly at his Superintendent and again reacted as usual. "Yes boss, thank you, boss."

Archer quickly moved on. "Okay, we have to go to our second suspect. Sam, you join Susan and ask her to check the license plate, then accompany her to trace the man and get him here.

Please also inform everyone that we will have our first briefing at 11:30 am. Jack, SD, come on, we are going to question our second suspect."