

FIRST MURDER

Special Detective Chau

First Murder

Book # 1

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Cozy crime
Detective novel

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Introduction

'It was actually Chau, our Special Detective, who seemed to have effectively caught the man. She seems to have used some kind of martial arts move to stop the man from escaping'.

The first of a series of books about Special Detective Chau, a beautiful fifteen-year-old Vietnamese girl. Chau is the daughter of a Vietnamese woman and her Dutch husband. The family moved from Vietnam to England and live in the small country village of Highfields. Chau is a highly intelligent girl with special hobbies. It brings her to help the local police when a murder takes place in the village. The complex murder case brings several suspects throughout the story. Chau's help and clever observations, as well as her special talents, become essential in finding the real killer. The lead Detective in the case, Detective Sam Archer, will become Chau's greatest admirer, and resolving this case will result in a long-term partnership to solve crimes. Special characters in the book, such as Chau's dog and Detective Sam Archer, bring joy and admiration. Special moments in the book, and Chau's special character, make this a book that, when read, will increase the reader's impatience for the next adventure of Special Detective Chau, until that next adventure is published.

1.

Chou!!" the mother shouted for the third time from the bottom of the stairs. As usual she started to get irritated and usually this resulted in her running upstairs to tell her daughter in a loud voice to come down immediately.

This time however, she did not have to. Chau tiptoed down the stairs and circled her mother, asking her mother what she wanted. Chau is a beautiful Vietnamese girl of fifteen years old, lives in a nice country village in England. Her mother married her Dutch stepfather six years earlier, when they were still living in Vietnam. Then the family, including her twelve-year-old brother Minh moved to England. Her mother, an equally beautiful Vietnamese woman of forty-two years old, took care of the family after having a career in Vietnam as a human resource manager and businesswoman. Chau's stepfather, aged sixty-one, after a lifelong career in logistics, retired before moving to Vietnam, at which point he had started writing. The family moved from Vietnam to Highfields, England, to give the children more opportunities for a bright future, starting with good education.

Both children attended an international school, where Chau was preparing for university. In this first year, both children had become fluent in English and had become accustomed to Western culture in a comfortable and happy way. Highfields is a quiet village south of Kent, but everything in and around Highfields is different from city life. In this small, quiet, but beautiful village, it seemed as if the clock had been set, years back.

Highfields has a very close-knit community where people know everything about each other and where there is a lot of community spirit.

Characteristic of Highfields are the old square, the heart of the village, with the church, the town hall, the police station, the music school, and the pub, all situated in historic buildings. The rest of the village contains detached houses and winding roads and streams.

Chau and Minh were loved in their village for their looks and their humble yet cheerful disposition, where Minh, Chau's little brother, always ran or cycled nearby, and Chau was soon known as the special, very smart, and intelligent girl, always nicely dressed, and always busy with her books or her experiments. The children did well at school and also had their own outdoor activities, where Chau was a highly active girl. She studied to play the piano at the local music school, and in the previous year she took taekwondo lessons, very fanatic and very frequent, which resulted in the right to wear a black belt. Minh had his share in one of the youth teams of the local football club. Chau also had another talent. She was exceptionally good at drawing people and faces. Chau's 'experiments' were well known to the locals in the area and at her school and had already given her the nickname 'Special Detective Chau'. "Chau, when are you ever going to respond immediately when you are called," the mother asked. With her always innocent look, Chau answered her mother in a soft but enthusiastic voice. "I was busy Mom, and I could not stop. I am learning to get fingerprints from objects, and I just managed to get my fingerprint off a glass and here is the print, look!"

Her mother sighed but smiled. "Oh girl, you and your experiments, what's the point of all that? You spend all your free time doing that, even the neighbours gave you that silly nickname. Why not play or do fun things with your friends, like Minh? You should also stop your night-time activities.

Too often I hear that you are awake in the middle of the night and doing something. You need your sleep, otherwise your school results will suffer. But enough for now, that is not the reason I called you.

Today is Saturday, and tomorrow you have your special concert because of the end of the music school season. Are you ready for that?"

"Oh yes Mom, I am ready. I studied hard for it, but you know what?" She replied in her well-known mysterious way of talking when she once again had one of her suspicions of danger or mystery. "I am ready for the concert, and I will play well, I am sure, but I have the feeling that our teacher is not ready at all. She has been acting very strangely lately, and it also feels like she is busy with something else, and that is not something nice and has nothing to do with our concert. She seems nervous, she forgets things, is always looking what happens outside, and when the phone rings, she even shivers, and she is clearly afraid to pick up the phone. Also, lately, after I get in, she locks the door, which she never did before. Last Saturday, just as I entered the school for my piano lessons, a man running out through the exit bumped into me. When I entered the classroom, I saw that the teacher had cried. She wiped her tears quickly and her hair was all messed up. There were also a number of chairs and tables scattered around the floor. I also saw her, quickly, put a sheet of paper in her purse, as if she did not want me to notice. I asked her if she was okay, but she said nothing was wrong, just a cold, which I know was not true. Something is wrong, I am sure."

"Chau, you are not going to mingle or even start one of your famous investigation projects again, do you hear? In everything you see adventures and mysteries." "Yes mom," Chau replied with her innocent look. The mother was unaware of the crossed fingers Chau was holding behind her back.

This Sunday morning it was a bright and sunny day, at the end of May, just before the holiday season. The children would be free from school for two months, soon, so it was the last day of the season at the music school.

On this last day, the school organized a performance each year, by their students, for parents, and the local population, in an effort to garner sponsorship and new students for the school, and, of course, to show the students' progress. A large stage had been built for the occasion in the garden, in front of the school. It was built partly in front of the entrance door with a small staircase leading from the door to the podium. In this way, the students were able to change clothes and prepare inside before it was their turn to perform. A high curtain hung around the stage to prevent the audience from seeing the pre-show activities. The food and drink preparations were also done indoors by a hired catering company and the teacher was able to give final instructions to her students, go through the preparations, and ensure that the program was followed in the correct order. It was the second time that Chau participated with this yearly event, the first being shortly after they had moved into the village.

Yet, Chau, who was one of the first to attend that day, immediately noticed a different mood with her teacher. The woman, an elegant woman in her early thirties, with dark blond hair and sparkling blue eyes, seemed strangely nervous. She kept walking back and forth to her office, next to the classroom. She walked faster than Chau had ever seen. She also spoke in a high-pitched voice and had a constant flush of red on her cheeks, while she normally was as white as blank paper. Chau even noticed a strange look, less sparkling and with a sort of dread, and eyes blinking more often than usual. Chau got disturbed by the many voices she heard coming from the garden. Parents and other audiences came in and talked while looking for a seat in front of the stage.

For the small village, it was a major annual event with over a hundred spectators, including senior officials of the village, as there were; the mayor, with his fat belly, red face, and large curled moustache; the detective chief inspector, with his strict, observant, yet friendly look, and some of his detectives and some headmasters.

The president of the university in the neighbouring town and some of its professors were also in attendance, and last but not least, there was press coverage from the local, and even the city newspapers. There were about six journalists present and just as many cameramen and women. Chau noted that the journalists were easily identifiable by their clothing, and they all had their phones in hand, ready to record whatever they wanted to keep in order to prepare their reports for publication. Background music came from the large boxes at the sides of the stage. At the right side of the stage, next to the closed curtains, was a DJ/technician with his equipment to provide the music and sound for the students' speeches and performances. He and his equipment faced the crowd. It was a young man, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, a pair of old sneakers, with a seemingly eternal cigarette in the corner of his mouth. The curtains were drawn, and all the seats were taken up. The hum of people talking began to rise even above the sound of the background music. In the school all students were present and busy with clothes and make-up, in preparation for their performance.

You could see the catering people walking back and forth with trays of food and drinks, which they brought into the garden, where there was a long row of tables at the side, serving as a buffet for everyone present. They did not have to serve and did not disturb the show by walking through the audience with their trays. The catering people could leave the school to the garden via a narrow path next to the stage, without having to use the stage itself.

This special day was to be officially opened by the mayor of the village. He was known for his funny way of talking, always with some kind of joke at hand, to make people laugh. There was a movable tripod with microphone, in front of the stage, in front of the closed curtains. The teacher had provided a number of assistants to assist during the program and to assist with certain tasks. One of them came in front of the stage and showed a sign to the audience, with a message.

‘Five minutes before the start of the program’.

This was clearly to give the audience a friendly sign that it needed to be quiet.

Five minutes later, the mayor came behind the microphone and tapped it a few times to see if it worked. The music was muted, and the audience went silent. After the mayor shouted "test" into the microphone several times, he took a sip of water and cleared his voice to begin his opening speech. But before he really started, he took both ends of his moustache between his fingers and twirled them around, something he was known for.

“What a bright and sunny day we have for our famous annual event of our beloved music school,” the mayor began, already with a big smile on his red face. "Good morning, everyone. It is a great pleasure to open this great event and to welcome you all to this special day. Special welcome to our distinguished official guests and the press, who also show how important this event has become for our community. Our dear music school owner and teacher, Grace, has made this event an irreplaceable part of our society and has once again done everything to make this event a huge success, even before it starts, ha-ha.

Dear parents and other audiences, fans of this school, I welcome you and wish you all here, a special day. I will not bore you with a long speech. I know that the students are very eager to show their progress and their talent.”

The mayor began to smile again, in his famous way, and his eyes began to sparkle in a mischievous way.

This was the moment that everyone knew that, at the end of his speech, he would launch one of his jokes. The mayor looked around as if demanding everyone's attention, then moved his mouth closer to the microphone and started to speak again.

“As you can see, I have brought my chief inspector and his detectives so that you can completely relax and feel one hundred percent safe on this beautiful day. If a crime is in the making, the criminal needs to know that my detectives are on top of it, haha.” The mayor’s smile grew even bigger, and he raised his hand to do what he always did at times like that. He took the tips of his moustache and curled it between his fingers.

The audience rose from their seats, laughed, and began to clap their hands. The mayor now raised his arms in the air again and spoke the last words of his opening speech. “No, no, please sit down and be prepared for a magnificent show. When I say the words, the curtains open, and the show begins. DJ, start the opening music, and open the curtains!” Then the mayor quickly left the place in front of the stage, while an assistant took away the tripod with microphone and the music began to increase in volume. The curtains began to open, creating a sense of excitement that went through the audience as the curtains moved.

The audience started clapping again, but as soon as the curtains were fully open, the audience suddenly stopped clapping and there was an even, sudden, numb, cold silence. Everyone was silent, staring towards the stage, mouths open, and a terrifying look in their eyes. There was a chair in the middle of the stage. On the chair sat the teacher, Grace, but with closed eyes and a black rose in her hands, resting on her lap.

Behind her, attached to the chair, was a sign, saying, "The End." Her white blouse was drenched in what certainly looked like blood, making it clear to everyone that they were looking at a dead teacher.

It was completely silent now. For a few minutes no one made any noise. In fact, it seemed like no one was breathing anymore.

2.

T*wo weeks before the murder took place. "Minh, go get your sister, dinner is ready," the mother urged her son.*

"I don't know where she is mom, she is not in her room," he replied, without taking his eyes off his phone for a second, drawn into the game he was playing. The mother sighed and went back to the kitchen, as if she were just giving up. It was certainly not the first time that Chau had been absent from dinner without notice. At the same time, Chau burst in. She seemed incredibly happy and excited about something, and immediately went into the kitchen to see her mother.

"Mom, mom," she began with a kind of excitement in her voice. Her mother interrupted her, ignoring Chau's urge to tell her mother what had happened. "Girl go freshen up; dinner was ready half an hour ago. You know that your father likes to eat on time and together. Where have you been that made you lose track of time again?" The mother had no idea that Chau wanted to hear that very question, because it gave her the perfect opportunity to tell all about her last experience in all its glory. Just as she took a deep breath to begin her story however, her mother interrupted her again. "No, wait, and do what I told you to do first. Go freshen up and be back in five minutes. You can tell your story while we eat, come on!" Normally this would not have really helped Chau to do things faster. It was more normal for her to take all the time to freshen up. But not this time.

When mother entered the dining room to put the food on the table, Chau was already sitting at the table and still had the same excited and eager look in her eyes. She was visibly impatient to tell everyone what was on her mind.

When all were ready to eat, she waited in anticipation for her father's daily question.

"So, how was your day, Chau, new adventures or mysteries to solve?" Almost along with his last spoken word, Chau began to speak in a hasty and excited voice. "Yes Dad, I had a very special meeting," she answered mysteriously, not waiting for an answer but immediately going on to tell everyone about her so-called meeting. "After school I walked past the police station and just then Chief Inspector Sam Archer walked out of the police station, and you know what happened next?" She looked at her father, then at her mother, then at her brother, seemingly waiting for their immediate response. It took too long for the, at that time, impatient Chau, who would have liked to add even more mystery to her story.

"He winked at me with a smile, and started talking to me, and you know what he said?" "Come on Chau, just tell us. How can we know what he said to you?" her father replied. Chau looked at everyone separately again and waited only a few seconds before finally, figuratively, almost throwing it on the table. "The chief inspector greeted me with, "Hello, Special Detective Chau, how are you today? Is there an experiment or mystery going on?" Chau went on, faster, with excitement, speaking in a high-pitched voice. "I greeted the chief inspector and told him about the research kit I had made, and then I told him I am trying to learn how to collect and print fingerprints and you know what he said?" She leaned forward and looked back at everyone; her eyes opened wider than you would ever see from a Vietnamese. Her mother interrupted her again, telling her to eat first and to stay calm, but her father was probably more curious.

"Yes Princess (his way of addressing Chau), do not forget to eat, but tell us what happened next." Chau took a quick bite and went on with her mouth full, almost choking with chewing and talking at the same time.

"He said ... he said," she could hardly get the words out of her mouth, from excitement.

"He said he would be happy to help me with that and invited me to come to the police station on Saturday afternoon. Can you believe it? The detective called me Special Detective Chau and is going to teach me the secrets of the police investigation." "Well, well, Princess, do not go overboard, you do not know what he will do more. Eat now and be quiet for a while. It is now Minh's turn to tell us about his day." "Yes Dad. But does that mean that you give permission to go there on Saturday? Because the detective has told me that I must bring a note from you in which you give him your permission for this appointment." "It is okay Princess," the father replied. "If we cannot trust the detective chief inspector, then we cannot trust anyone, I suppose. Now, eat, and for the last time, be quiet!" "Yes Dad, thanks, Dad," Chau replied, and started to eat, with a big smile on her face.

For the rest of the week, Chau was with her head in the clouds, barely able to wait to go to the police station. But she had an idea to impress the detective even more. Last week there was a photo in the newspaper, reporting a solved investigation into many stolen cars in the area and the article featured a clear photo of the detective. Every night, before she went to sleep that week, Chau worked on a drawing of the chief inspector's face, and by Friday she was done. It had probably turned out to be the best drawing she had ever made.

That Saturday, Chau was up early and ready to go, sooner than ever before, and although she always loved going to her piano lessons, this time, she actually did so with a bit of reluctance, because the only thing she was constantly thinking about since they had met, was her appointment with the detective at the police station.

However, she knew her dad would not like it if she skipped lessons for that reason, so she packed up and headed off to the music school. Chau felt happy that day and the weather was beautiful, so she hopped all the way to the music school.

The family lived in a small village near the town of Kent, with narrow country lanes, streams at the sides and many trees leaning over the stream. They lived outside the centre of the village where there were only detached houses with front and back gardens. The people were friendly, and the family was known to everyone. Probably mainly because of Chau and Minh, both of whom received a lot of attention from the villagers. Everyone greeted Chau as she walked past, and many smiled when they saw the happily hopping girl. Chau always replied, waving her hand, and greeting. Then she arrived at the music school, an old but beautiful large and historic building, located between the church and the bakery at the main square. Just as she entered the school that day, she was suddenly blocked by a man, who nearly ran her over as he ran out of the school. For a moment, their eyes met, and Chau saw a dark-haired face, with very thick black eyebrows and a slightly unshaven chin. In that split second, she also noticed the man's big and wide nose. The man pushed her aside and just ran away. She began to rush now, curious as to why the man was so hasty and rude.

She thought she might be able to find the answers inside, so that is where she went. Chau immediately went to the classroom and was sure that her piano teacher was the subject of this mystery. When she entered the classroom, she immediately noticed some sort of disorder. Some chairs and tables were definitely not in the correct position, one chair was even upside down, a bit too far from the table. At the same time, she saw her teacher turn her face away from Chau, as if she did not want Chau to see what condition she was in. Chau, however, was kind of an expert at observing details very quickly.

She immediately had noticed that her teacher's hair was a total mess, and in a split second, turning her face away from Chau, the girl had noticed that she was trying to wipe and hide her tears. She clearly also tried to hide from Chau that she was putting something in her bag.

"Are you okay, teacher?" Chau asked, as she walked over to her teacher. The teacher turned to Chau and tried to smile, but that clearly seemed like a failed attempt. Nonetheless, she replied.

"Yes Chau, I am fine, just a little cold, nothing to worry about." She clearly had no intention of telling Chau what was really going on and started rearranging the tables and chairs while telling Chau to sit at the piano, as if nothing special was going on. Chau decided to let it go for the time being, but also decided that this might need to be investigated further at a later stage. For now, she just did what her teacher asked her to do and for the next hour she had her normal lesson, although it was perfectly clear to her that her teacher was struggling with something mentally. Another thing that had caught her attention was that after rearranging the tables and chairs, her teacher locked the classroom door, something she had never done before.

Regardless, it was clear that her teacher no longer wanted to pay attention to the incident, so Chau decided not to put any further pressure on her and after class she rushed home for lunch to prepare for her appointment with the detective. She decided to remain silent about the incident for the time being to her mother, fearing it might jeopardize her post-lunch appointment. As soon as she had lunch, Chau ran to her room, took a shower, chose the clothes she would wear and changed, and packed the things she wanted to bring. Of course, she also took her research kit. She put the letter of consent her father had given her in her purse and, of course, the drawings she had made in her bag.