

The Three Crowns

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Special Detective Chau

Book # 2

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Cozy crime

Police detective

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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 second book about Special Detective Chau, *The Three Crowns*.

In this edition, Special Detective Chau becomes the apprentice of Detective Chief Inspector Sam Archer, and gets involved in the murder case of another local resident of the village, and even a second related killing.

Chau is becoming more experienced by the day and is as sharp as any other detective of the police in the idyllic village of Highfields. In this edition, Special Detective Chau uses all her skills again, and it will turn out that she has even more than before. In this sequel, she and her dog are again of significant importance for solving this crime.

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

'Special Detective Chau and her dog Meow. You love them more, with every page you read.'

Chapter one.

W*ith one blow, Chau blew out all the candles on her birthday cake.*

“Make a wish now, Princess,” her father told her. “My wish has already come true, Daddy. On Monday I will start my apprenticeship at the police station, with Detective Chief Inspector Archer,” she replied with a broad smile and twinkling eyes. Everyone in the room laughed and clapped their hands, but Chau only looked in one direction: The smiling face of Chief Inspector Sam Archer. He was also one of the visitors at Chau's birthday party. Of course, Archer noticed her gaze, and decided to say something.

“How nice to hear, Special Detective. You know? I had the same wish. I am incredibly happy to be here to celebrate your sixteenth birthday, along with your family and friends. I am really looking forward collaborating with you again and guiding you through this internship period. You really deserved it and you earned it for your extraordinary performance during the terrible drama that occurred in our little village, earlier this year. It was your help, intelligence and fearlessness that helped our police unit solve the sad murder case we had to endure. Of course, I am not saying we would not have solved the case without you,” he said with his familiar big smile. “But I am also not ashamed to say; It would have been much harder, and it would have taken a lot more time without you.

This brings me to the point I want to make now, for your sixteenth birthday.

Dear Chau, as I said, you have helped us tremendously. But, not just like that, you did it in a very mature way.

This is the moment we must give you an official title when you work with us. So, from now on, we will use the title Special Detective, or SD for you, so that everyone can address you with that title. Keep in mind however, that it will not be long before your colleagues use other names. However, I have already announced that they cannot use your last name, as we are used to. This for safety reasons. But for now, just enjoy your party and know that everyone in our little village would have liked to be here today. They are all immensely proud to know you and to have you and your family in our midst.” Then he raised his glass. “Let us toast to Chau and wish her all the best in life and in health. But let us also toast to her mother and father, and her younger brother Minh. Together they make this such a special family, a valued and respected family, as our fellow citizens of Highfields.” All the people in the room raised their glasses, said ‘cheers’ and applauded. They laughed and clearly showed their respect. It caused Chau to blush and hide behind her father’s back.

At the end of the party, when everyone had left and the family started cleaning up the room, Chau looked at her parents. Again, with a big smile and twinkling eyes, but now also with a kind of dreamy look.

“Mom, Dad, this was the best birthday I have ever had!”

That Monday was a special day, not only for Chau, but for the whole village of Highfields. After all the hectic, during and after the murder of the music teacher Grace, Detective Chau was honoured for her help in the investigations. But also, the mayor had thought, it was such an important part of their village's history that he announced a special one-off holiday for the whole village.

The Monday, after which Detective Chau turned sixteen years old, and it was legally allowed to 'work' at the police station, all people in the village were free of work or school. There were all kinds of festivities planned for that day and in the local pub all consumptions were half the normal price. The other half would be paid for by the village. All the houses had been given a village flag and everyone was hanging it out from the moment the sun came up. It was a day of happiness and laughter throughout the village and of course the pub had its best day ever!

Chapter two.

***T**he Three Crowns', the only pub in the village, which also serves as the only restaurant in the village, is a meeting place for many people of the village.*

There is another restaurant, the restaurant of the only hotel in the village, but that is mainly used by guests who stay at the hotel. Several clubs and groups of local villagers use the pub as their weekly meeting place and of course there are the typical daily customers, who you can find almost every day, at the bar or at the tables in the public area of the pub. In the warm months of the year, the pub also has a large terrace in the garden in front of the pub, and in the back rooms there are all kinds of weekly meetings of villagers to talk about their special interests or hobbies. The owner of the pub is one of the most famous people in the village, because he owned the pub for more than twenty years and because he, Roger Hills, is a special person, who is respected by most of his customers.

Roger is a tall, well-build, strong-looking man, mid-fifties, always friendly, but strict for people who do not follow the pub rules. Roger has an open mind and is not afraid to show or mention his opinion, and that, without worrying about who is in front of him. For him, everyone is equal, young or old, rich or poor, and authority or respect has to be earned in his eyes. It sometimes makes him a little offensive and even unruly against people who showed a certain power just because of their job or title. Under Roger's leadership, the pub had flourished over the years and had grown enormously.

Started twenty years ago, with only a cleaning lady, while he himself took care of everything outside of cleaning, the pub had become a well-oiled machine.

Now it gives work and a salary to more than twenty people. From just a small pub with a bar, which used only a small part of the historic building and its grounds, it expanded to full use of the building and the grounds. Currently it has six rooms on the upper floor for travellers or other overnight guests, and downstairs, beside the big public room with bar, it has party and community areas and a large professional kitchen for preparing the famous pub meals. The organized parties and the use of the terrace in the summer months, with a potential occupancy of more than sixty people, also gives work all year round for another ten to fifteen part-timers. The only fact that is the same from the beginning was the leading bartender behind the large oak bar; Roger, himself.

Today it is the Friday of the second week of November. In the kitchen, the chef is already making a special menu for the coming busy period. Abel, the chef, is, like his boss, a well-known and special person for the people who knew him. He started in the kitchen when the kitchen was built, about fifteen years ago. Now, in his fifties, people know him as a great cook, who only, every night after nine thirty, comes out of the kitchen to take a seat at the right corner of the bar, to drink his whisky until the closing time of the pub. Every night, when the pub closes, he must be assisted to his room at the back of the pub, to lie down on his bed and snore until the next day. Every evening, just before nine thirty, the person who would occupy the bar stool at the right corner of the bar would be asked, without possibility to refuse, to change seats to another place at the bar or in the pub.

It is the time the chef finishes cooking, and so it is the time when the bar stool would be his, for the rest of the evening. Abel sits there, chatting to the one who asks for his attention. He observes everything that is happening in the pub and drinks his whiskey from the glass that is always refilled before it is empty. This evening is no different than any other weekday, with almost every night the same people, on the same stools at the bar, and the same people at the tables.

In the weekends it is something else. More families to eat and on Friday there is more youth around the bar and at the tables. Also, on working days between five and seven it is a bit busier. Men and women who come for an aperitif, after work, and of course some people from the local police to have a drink and get together at the end of the day.

This day it was around seven in the evening, the time when it was time for a few men and women to go home for dinner. Roger had to get out from behind the bar to calm some men down. They had become a bit drunk and therefore a little more aggressive in their words and movements against each other. It was not a strange situation for anyone, because it happened regularly. Many of the visitors did not even look up that day and just went on with their own business. Roger, as always, picked out the loudest person in the group, took him by the arms and led him to the exit- telling the man to come back the following day to pay his bill. As always, that night the other men in the group made sure to approach the bar, where Roger had already returned, to pay their bill and also leave the pub to return home. Every regular guest of 'The Three Crowns' knew; it was better not to really upset Roger. That would mean that they would not be allowed in the pub for a certain amount of time- and when repeated, forever.

Because it was the only place in the village where they could have a drink and have an enjoyable time or a nice meal, it was that which made Roger a powerful man in the community, not to mention the fact that he was the largest employer of the small village. He was also the biggest sponsor of dedicated events and thus all together, the largest provider for many families in the village.

When the family people returned home, normally around seven, the pub was full of regulars, most singles, forty+ years old, and some people coming from the back rooms, guests from the upstairs rooms and some others who did not have the urge to be at home.

The kitchen stopped taking orders from the menu at nine, as Abel had to be able to take his place at the bar every evening at nine thirty. Also, this evening, Abel took place at exactly ten thirty, and took the already poured whisky in his hand for the first sip. He never had a bill, because there were always people in the pub who ordered him a drink. In fact, Roger often had to ignore such an order because too many had already been placed. No one ever expected to get anything back from Abel, so his tab was always empty. Abel always, when starting his first drink, spoke through the pub and the bar, every night with the same words; "Cheers, to all of you, who rejoice me with a free drink, knowing that you will never get one back." And always this was followed by a loud communal 'Cheers Abel,' with a rumbling knock on the bar or table.

It was one of the traditions that the pub and its inhabitants had brought to life in the years of its existence. It had made the pub a real community home pub where everyone knew each other and where most of the real characteristic citizens of the small village of Highfields could be found.

This night, after Abel had made his famous toast, Nathan, the owner of the gas station and the garage, just at the outskirts of the village, started talking to Abel from the other side of the bar. That was his regular place to sit, every night after eight o'clock, the time he had closed his business for that day. Nathan was also in his fifties, single, hardworking and had little to do in his spare time other than to drink in the pub and chat with everyone about everything and nothing. Nathan was a beer man and lifted his pint of beer in the direction of Abel. "Hey Abel, that was a really nice lamb stew I had from you this week. This evening, I ate the last bit, and I could not resist licking the plate clean and leaving nothing behind. Since I am the only one using this plate, I just put it back in the kitchen cabinet, ready for use the next day, ha-ha. Roger, give my personal chef Abel his well-deserved whisky from me, please." Abel looked up and said; "So you were still eating that, did you? You ordered it a week ago. I do not get fat from customers like you, ordering once a week, and then eating it all week.

But I am glad you liked it, Nathan, and it means you are eating roast pork, mashed potatoes, and vegetables from tomorrow, until the next week, ha-ha. Cheers mate.”

This was another kind of tradition, a constantly repeated type of conversation between two of the regular guests.

The person next to Nathan was Pete, the painter. He was a widower who had almost all the inhabitants of Highfields as his customers to paint their homes or other objects in- or around the house. He also lived alone and could afford to work only about seven-eight months a year, keeping the autumn and winter months free, as much as possible. Everyone in the village knew that habit, so everyone planned their painting jobs in the spring and summer. Pete was the second guest to order a drink for Abel that night, turning to Roger; “Roger, I saw your little skirmish earlier with Frank and that group. I was wondering, do you know who the last person who left was? I had seen him sitting at that table in the corner last Tuesday, but then he was alone, just sitting there drinking his beer and constantly looking in the direction of the bar, until he quietly left. But tonight, when he left, I saw the menacing look he gave you. And did you see what he did when he went outside?” Roger looked up and smiled at Pete. “Of course, I saw it, Pete, and I can tell you, he will know I saw that as soon as he gets back into my pub again.” The familiar rumble of throbbing knuckles on the surface of the bar echoed through the pub again, and that was the end of that conversation, when Roger just kept serving drinks and took a big sip of the eternal pint of beer, he had under the tap for himself.

The evening went by, as always, until it was closing time, and everyone went home, but not before Abel had been lifted off his stool and helped to his room to sleep out his long daily daze.

Chapter three.

The next day, like every day, Hannah Parish, the cleaning lady, opened the door of the pub exactly at seven in the morning. She entered the pub and went straight to the kitchen where she always made coffee and breakfast to take to Roger, after which she would return to the kitchen to start her cleaning work.

But today it did not go like any other morning. After making breakfast and entering Roger's room with the tray in her hands, she was surprised by Roger's absence. She also noticed that his bed did not seem to have been slept on, and she started to get a little nervous. This had never happened before, nor had Roger said anything the day before about his absence. She left the tray on the bedside table and went downstairs to see if she could find Roger anywhere else. She looked everywhere, but she found no trace. She went back upstairs and looked in the bathroom and the empty rooms, but no Roger. She started to get extremely nervous and did not really know what to do next.

Then she went back downstairs and went to Abel's room. Without knocking, she rushed in and saw Abel lying on his bed in his 'normal' position, flat on his stomach, fully clothed and snoring loudly. She shook him by his shoulders and called his name, until he finally woke up, with a look on his face as if he saw a miracle happen. "Hannah, my dear, you finally came," he began to mutter, still influenced by the previous evening's alcohol. "Oh Abel, do not talk craziness, you need to wake up. Something strange is going on. I am overly concerned. Roger's not here, and he has not slept in his bed. I cannot find him anywhere. Do you know where he could be? You must help me, Abel. Wake up!"

We have to find out what is going on.” Because of the insistence of her voice and the obvious disturbing words, Abel suddenly woke up and shook his head. “No, I do not know, he did not say anything to me. Did you look in the shed? I really do not know what to think about this. Let us have a look around.”

After checking the shed and all the other places they could think of, they sat down at a table in the pub and discussed what to do.

“This is not normal,” Hannah began talking again, breathless with concern. “This is nothing for Roger at all. This is weird. I am getting really scared. What should we do? Call the police?” Abel thought about it but could not think of a reasonable explanation. He also found it very disturbing, because in this way he did not see a plausible explanation for Roger's absence. He agreed that Roger was not like that at all. “Yes, it is good to call the police, but I do not know if they will take immediate action. Wait, I have Chief Inspector Archer's private number in my kitchen. I will call him in person.” Abel went to the kitchen to get the number and came back. Hereafter he picked up the phone from the bar and called the chief inspector. Archer listened to what Abel had to say and told him he was coming right away.

It took no more than fifteen minutes for Detective Chief Inspector Archer to enter the pub and he sat down at the table where Hannah and Abel were waiting impatiently. He knew both Hannah and Abel because he was also a regular guest in the pub, so, he started to get straight to the point. “So, Hannah, Abel, this is a strange situation, I agree with you, I know Roger well enough. My first question to you, Hannah.

Was the entrance door locked when you arrived this morning, and for both of you, have you checked all the other doors that should be closed, on a normal day, at that time in the morning?”

“Yes Sir.” Hannah replied. “When I arrived, I had to unlock the entrance door as usual, and just before you arrived, Abel and I checked all the other doors. They were all locked. His mobile phone is not here, I have tried to call him several times, but I am constantly getting word that the phone is off. I also checked the key chain to see if Roger's keys were there, but there are not any. Also, his clothes and shoes he wore yesterday, are not in his bedroom. So, he probably went out, don't you think?” The Chief Inspector responded.

“It certainly looks that way, but nothing is certain, there are many scenarios possible. Ok, first the practicalities. The pub will remain closed until we know more and after my signal it can open again. No one else comes in before I give my permission. Hannah, can you call the people who should be coming to work this morning and tell them to stay away until they get our message to the contrary? Ask them at the same time if they have any idea where Roger might be. Of course, let me know if anyone has anything useful to say. We also need to make a list to contact anyone who may know anything or who can assist us in our search. In the meantime, I will call my technical team to check the pub to see if there are any signs that might explain his absence. If guests come from above, they cannot leave the pub. They must sit here at the tables. Try to do everything from here, and do not walk around when you do not have to. I will make some phone calls, but I must ask you, Abel, to put enough coffee on the table, and maybe, if possible, some sandwiches. I am afraid we will be here for a while.”

Hannah and Abel started their duties, and Archer started calling around. “Oh, come to think of it,” Archer interrupted. “Have you looked in the garage? Is Roger's car in there? Did you go in?” Abel was the first to respond.

“Oh, we did not think of that. No sir, we did not look there, or did you, Hannah?” “No, neither did I,” Hannah replied. “I checked the outside door, and it was locked. Normally that door is only locked when the car is inside, so I did not think about it anymore.”

Now she started to get nervous again. The Chief Inspector noticed her stress and tried to calm Hannah down. "Don't worry, Hannah. There may still be a perfectly reasonable explanation for Rogers' absence. We do not know anything for sure yet. Please stay here while I have a look in the garage. I can enter it from the inside, at the end of that corridor, can I not? Do I need a key?" "No sir," Hannah replied. "That door is always open because the key has been missing for months. The garage is normally locked from the outside, but, as I said, normally only if the car is in it." Archer went on. "Ok, I will be right back."

Upon entering the garage, Archer immediately got a strange feeling, because the lights of the garage were off, but the car lights were on. The engine was not running. As he walked through the garage, looking around and walking towards the exit door, he reached the front of the car and then stopped abruptly. In front of the car, on the garage floor, he saw Roger's body, clearly dead, with eyes opened and a lot of blood on the floor, from under his head. Still, Archer carefully reached down to check if there was any sign of life. When this confirmed Roger's death, the chief inspector left everything as it was, just had a careful look around the car and then returned to the pub to wait for his technical team.

The moment he came to the table, where Hannah was sitting, he saw them already coming in, as well as some of his detectives. First, he told them to take a moment, and turned to Hannah. "Hannah, could you ask Abel to come out of the kitchen, please? I have something to tell you all."

It only took Hannah and Abel a few minutes to get back from the kitchen. The DCI told them to sit down again and then turned to the technical team and his officers while he watched Hannah and Abel. "Folks, I called for you because of the suspicious absence of Roger, our pub owner. Suspicious, because of certain things we discovered after Abel called me about it. Of course, I know we do not normally start with you, when so little is known.

I was just acting out of my gut because I know Roger as a man who would never just disappear from his pub. I am deeply sorry to say now that it has been the right feeling and the right decision.

While you were all on your way here, and I was having a look around, I discovered the reason for Roger's absence. He saw the anxious looks on Hannah and Abel's faces and placed himself next to Hannah. He put his hand on her shoulder, looked at her and Abel and proceeded gently. "I am really sorry, but I found Roger in the garage. I am afraid he died, and I am even more sorry to have to tell you that it is highly plausible to me that Roger is dead because he was killed." Both Hannah and Abel looked up to the chief inspector and had to let his words get through first, before they started to look upset and surprised, and Hannah started crying and reacting.

"Why? How? Why Roger, such a good man, why oh why...?" Abel took her in his arms to comfort her, giving Archer the chance to ask him to take care of Hannah for the time being, so that he could move on, and instruct his people. His detectives, Inspector Jack, Sergeant Jim, and Sergeant Susan were looking in his direction. "Jack, please call our medical examiner, to come here as soon as possible and report to me.

Susan, Jim, please secure the entrance and exits for people trying to enter, including the garden and the terrace." And for his technical people; "You start in the garage and let us know when we can come in and talk to you. Enter the garage from the inside, please, at the end of the corridor. After your first preliminary investigation, we will look further. Jack and I are going to look around, outside the garage to see if we can find anything interesting." After calling the doctor, Jack joined Archer, who was already sniffing around the garage's outside door. "So, Jack, here we are, not long after the first murder in our little village, for the second one. Is that what growth and expansion to our community bring us, do you think? Or is it just a terrible coincidence? I really hope that it is the latter."