

Matthew Costello

Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM

A COSY CRIME SERIES

Too Many Lies



Contents

Cover

Cherringham — A Cosy Crime Series

About the Book

Main Characters

The Authors

Title

Copyright

1. A Village Divided
 2. A Chill in the Air
 3. No Fishing Today
 4. Pop-up Protest
 5. A Free Lunch
 6. A Motive for Murder?
 7. Suspects
 8. Father and Son
 9. Empty Nest
 10. An Early Drive
 11. Builders' Tea
 12. A Trip to Repton
 13. An Act of Desperation
 14. Scene of the Crime
 15. Finally, the Truth
 16. The Vote
- Epilogue: One Last Surprise.

Cherringham — A Cosy Crime Series

“Cherringham — A Cosy Crime Series” is a series made up of self-contained stories. The series is published in English as well as in German; and is only available in e-book form.

About the Book

When Cherringham's Council debates selling the historic village hall for development as a luxury restaurant and hotel, all of Cherringham is up in arms; some seeing the sale as needed, others deeply opposed. For many, the centuries-old hall is the very heart of the community! But when the leader of the protestors is attacked after a raucous meeting and death threats are made, Jack and Sarah are asked to investigate. Can they find a possible killer before the crucial Council vote? And maybe stop a murder?

Main Characters

Jack Brennan is a former NYPD homicide detective who lost his wife three years ago. Being retired, all he wants is peace and quiet. Which is what he hopes to find in the quiet town of Cherringham, UK. Living on a canal boat, he enjoys his solitude. But soon enough he discovers that something is missing — the challenge of solving crimes. Surprisingly, Cherringham can help him with that.

Sarah Edwards is a web designer who was living in London with her husband and two kids. Three years before the series starts, he ran off with his sexy American boss, and Sarah's world fell apart. With her children she moved back to her home town, laid-back Cherringham. But the small-town atmosphere is killing her all over again — nothing ever happens. At least, that's what she thinks until Jack enters her life and changes it for good or worse ...

The Authors

Matthew Costello (US-based) is the author of a number of successful novels, including *Vacation* (2011), *Home* (2014) and *Beneath Still Waters* (1989), which was adapted by Lionsgate as a major motion picture. He has written for The Disney Channel, BBC, SyFy and has also designed dozens of bestselling games including the critically acclaimed *The 7th Guest*, *Doom 3*, *Rage* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Neil Richards has worked as a producer and writer in TV and film, creating scripts for BBC, Disney, and Channel 4, and earning numerous Bafta nominations along the way. He's also written script and story for over 20 video games including *The Da Vinci Code* and *Starship Titanic*, co-written with Douglas Adams, and consults around the world on digital storytelling.

His writing partnership with NYC-based Matt Costello goes back to the late 90's and the two have written many hours of TV together. *Cherringham* is their first crime fiction as co-writers.

Matthew Costello
Neil Richards

CHERRINGHAM
A COSY CRIME SERIES



Too Many Lies

Digital original edition

Copyright © 2019 by Neil Richards & Matthew Costello

Copyright for this edition © 2019 by Bastei Lübbe AG, Schanzenstraße 6-20,
51063 Cologne, Germany

Written by Matthew Costello and Neil Richards

Edited by Eleanor Abraham

Project management: Kathrin Kummer

Cover illustration © shutterstock: Ihnatovich Maryia | JJFarq | Ian_Sheriffs

Cover design: Jeannine Schmelzer

E-Book production: Jilzov [Digital Publishing](#), Düsseldorf

ISBN 978-3-7325-5313-6

Follow the authors: www.facebook.com/Cherringham

1. A Village Divided

Jack turned to glance at Sarah, sitting next to him in the packed Village Hall. It was standing-room only.

Up front, the Parish Council sat at a long table. Some chatted, but most of them were looking out at a crowd drawn here by a controversy. One unlike anything Jack had experienced since he moved to Cherringham from New York City.

Back home, in the NYPD, he had been used to dealing with crowds of hostile people — making sure that nobody got *too* upset.

To the left, the front rows of the hall were occupied by a group of people literally on the edge of their seats. Villagers of all ages, many of whom Jack recognised.

Dotted among the group were signs on wooden sticks, currently resting on the floor, but obviously ready to be raised at a moment's notice.

And *that* was where Sarah kept looking.

Because amid that fired-up, tightly wound group, and ready to turn this meeting into an explosive show, sat Chloe, Sarah's daughter.

Chloe, now aged twenty-one, and back home in Cherringham, was clearly making her own decisions on things.

"You okay?" Jack said, leaning close to Sarah.

"I am *not*," she said, turning back to him. "That group ... I mean, yes of course, I understand their position. But ... to be honest, I'd like my daughter to stay out of this."

"Well," Jack said, smiling, "think *that* ship has sailed."

"And that guy? Their leader?"

Jack nodded. He knew that Sarah was referring to the organiser the group had hired to help them save the venerable Village Hall building.

Ralph Syms.

Ever since he had shown up on the scene, the temperature of this battle about building repairs, money, preserving the past, and the future of the ancient village of Cherringham, had turned fiery.

A lot of people — Jack included — didn't like that.

Finally, with the chatter from the audience reaching a crescendo, Jack saw the current Parish Council Chair, their friend the lawyer Tony Standish, stand up.

He attempted to start the meeting.

*

"Excuse me," Tony said, in a voice that might possibly have garnered attention in a courtroom, but not here.

Sarah saw Tony look at the other council members with an expression of "what do I do?"

He should use a megaphone, thought Sarah. Or at least a big gavel to rap on a solid chunk of wood.

Tony tried to raise his voice.

"If we *could* have everyone's attention *now* — please!"

Not bad, thought Sarah.

And finally, the noisy crowd stilled.

Tony looked surprised that he was able to effect such a change. Now, with their grumbling attention, he could proceed.

But as he did, Sarah shot another look at Chloe, sitting close to the "Save Our Hall" group's organiser, Syms.

Handsome, charismatic, and a good ten years older than Chloe.

All things that made Sarah uneasy.

Even though she kept reminding herself that, after Chloe's breakup with her French fiancé Pascal, well, her

little girl *wasn't* so little anymore. She was an adult. And now, back in the village where she grew up, she was clearly showing it.

For now though, the “Save Our Hall” group — as tense as they looked, perched on their folding chairs, ready to spring into quick action — remained quiet.

Tony moved to the business at hand.

*

“This is — as I’m sure you all know — *not* a meeting *proper* of the Parish Council. It is an informal *hearing*. A chance for us *all* in the village to learn more about the umm ... *challenging* plans for this, our very own and dearly-loved Village Hall. And for you to umm ... share your views with your council members before our crucial vote on the proposals at the formal meeting on Friday.”

At this, Jack saw Tony smile benevolently at the audience packing the room, more like a vicar at a Christmas service than a council leader in a charged political meeting.

But if he was expecting applause, he didn’t get any.

Just mutterings from the various groups across the room. The tension in the room — thick.

“Ahem, yes,” said Tony, frowning. “Um, so in order that we might hear about the proposal — as it were — from the ‘horse’s mouth’, we have with us this evening Mr Ted Ross of Ross Leisure Holdings, who will talk us through his company’s plans.”

Jack was surprised that Tony, used to the civility and restraint of a courtroom, got that far into his opening.

On the word “plans”, the “Save Our Hall” group immediately sprung to their feet.

They turned and faced the sea of people looking at them.

“Save our hall! Save our hall!”

On cue, the signs were hoisted up — that simple message scrawled in big black letters.

Some in the audience joined in, Jack could hear. Others yelled out for the group to *sit down*.

The crowd divided. On both sides, Jack saw faces he knew from the village — many of them good friends.

Tony meanwhile, was a rabbit in the headlights.

He must have expected this, Jack thought.

Jack leaned into Sarah.

“Think it’s going to be a tough night.”

“Poor Tony,” she said.

“And your dad too,” Jack said, nodding to the podium where he could see Sarah’s father looking out rather nervously at the crowd.

Michael Edwards, Jack knew, had agreed — *pro temps* — to fill a sudden vacancy left when one of the older council members decided that it was — hello! — time to make the big move to the Costa del Sol.

Sarah’s dad probably didn’t bargain for this, Jack thought.

“Yes. And the thing is, I’m not sure how he feels about the issue. Money in the village is so tight — they’ve pretty much had to freeze spending.”

“Which is why you’re ‘pro’ the development, I guess?” said Jack.

“Me?” said Sarah. “God, I don’t *know*. I’m hoping I’ll be clearer after tonight.”

“I wouldn’t count on it,” said Jack, smiling.

The chants of protest went on for a few minutes until, like a conductor, Ralph Syms turned to his cadre of protestors and held up his hands.

That’s all he had to do.

With a nod, he signalled they should sit down.

Their presence made known, Tony now could take a deep breath.

The hearing could actually begin.