

Hattie Frail

A Christmas Eve to Forget

by
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First Edition

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Synopsis

There's an incident at a birthday party a Miss Amy Carter gets knocked unconscious. Later the same day she dies, but then doctors find an illegal drug in her blood system. This reminds the police of last year's similar unsolved case. Stumped for clues, Detective Inspector Dorking turns to Hattie Frail to see if she can give the police any new light on this extremely baffling case.

Scene 1

It's midnight on Friday 24th of December 2032; there is a rather large group of very drunken teenagers at Ralph Stevenson's 18th birthday party at 28 Pink Lady Avenue, Appletown, Kent. Kym Lowndes is talking to her friend Fiona Carlton as they put on their coats.

MISS K LOWNDES

Hey, Fiona, just a minute ago I was talking to Tania and Amy.

MISS F CALTON

Sorry, who?

MISS K LOWNDES

(Whispering)

You know, our mate Tania Carter and her lesbian sister ... Amy.

MISS F CALTON

(Whispering)

Oh yes, I can remember those two now, what about them?

MISS K LOWNDES

(Whispering)

Well, apparently, according to Tania, Amy has just walked out on her ex-girlfriend Jessica Morris. And get this ... she was a little bit ... well ... controlling. (Enter right Mr Jake Lowndes)

MR J LOWNDES

Hi, you two. I think it's time to go before somebody rings for the pigs, don't you?

(Enter left Mr Jason Cavendish who bangs straight into Mr Jake Lowndes)

MR J CAVENDISH

You lot are leaving early, don't you think? Hey, gay boy!
(Waving a full can of beer)
Here, why don't you have a try of this!

MR J LOWNDES

No, it's all right, I've got to drive my sister home, but thanks anyway.

MR J CAVENDISH

Well in that case I'll have to spill it all over your brand-new coat instead then, shall I?

MR J LOWNDES

I don't think so, mate!

MR J CAVENDISH

(Leaning closer)

I'm no mate of yours (pouring his beer over Jake), and there you go, have a little something to remember me by, ha! Now I really enjoyed doing that.

MR J LOWNDES

How dare you!

(Punching him)

Here, take that and that!

MISS K LOWNDES

Miles, he isn't worth it! (Turning around) Hey, Toby, help us!

MR T SIMMONS

(Turning round)

Ha! I've got to let people know about this. Hey, everybody, there's a fight! (Exit right)

MISS K LOWNDES
(Tutting)

Great!

Scene 2

It's 1 p.m. and the main telephone line is ringing at 66 Bramley Street Appletown, Kent. The owner of the house, Mr Max Lowndes, wakes up suddenly, then slowly leans over on his left side of his bed to answer the call.

MR M LOWNDES
(Whispering)

Yes, hello, oh hello, Kym, it's one in the morning. What's the matter?

MISS K LOWNDES
Dad, Mum suggested I should ring you. I'm sorry to wake you up so early, but I'm at the Appletown Police Station; it's Jake, he's being held in custody.

MR M LOWNDES
Oh no, what on earth has he done now? Surely this must be a terrible mistake. And are your mum and that waster of a boyfriend there with you?

MISS K LOWNDES
Yes, she's here and Joe is too, but they're not with me right now, they've just parking the car.

MR M LOWNDES
So, what's happened then?

MISS K LOWNDES
Well, it all kicked off when we were just about to leave Ralph's house. You see, there was this massive fight and now Amy's in hospital, she's unconscious and is fighting for her

life. But the other lot were saying to the police it was Jake who caused it to happen.

MR M LOWNDES
(Leaning on his right)

Your friend Amy Carter?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, Dad.

MR M LOWNDES

I hope you haven't been arrested too.

MISS K LOWNDES

No, I wasn't, and I've just given them my witness statement.

MR M LOWNDES

We don't need any more bad press. We've had enough with that horrible misunderstanding situation with him and that English teacher, and if this gets out too then my acting career will be over for good.

MISS M LOWNDES

I'm sorry, Dad.

MR M LOWNDES

Don't go and blame yourself, it's not your fault, dear. Now, I do know that about a week ago your cousin James qualified as a solicitor, so why don't I contact him?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, I like it, good idea, Dad. And I'll let Mum and Joe know when they get in.

MR M LOWNDES

All right, I'll do that next, then I'll make my way over there. Now don't you worry. Trust me, love, we'll soon get all this sorted, one way or another.

MISS K LOWNDES

OK, Dad, we'll see you in about half an hour.

Scene 3

It's 2.30 a.m. Miss Kym Lowndes has given her witness statement to PC Leroy Russell, and Jake Lowndes is currently being interviewed by DI George Dorking, PC Patrick O'Brien, and solicitor Mr Graham Lowndes in interview room 1.

DI G DORKING

For the record it's 1.30 a.m. on Friday the 24th of December 2032. Persons here present are Detective Inspector Dorking, PC Patrick O'Brien, Mr Jake Lowndes, and solicitor Mr Graham Lowndes. So, perhaps you can tell me what happened?

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, so it was around midnight, and I was speaking to my sister Kym. We were standing in the porch and were just about to leave Ralph's house when this boy called Jason Cavendish started picking on me and saying that I was a 'gay boy'. He chucked his beer all over my brand-new coat, then started laughing at me. Well of course I had to defend myself, like any other decent person would, so I hit him. But then everybody else started joining in as well.

DI G DORKING

Now PC O'Brien received information from other people at the party that you hit Amy with a chair. Is that correct?

MR J LOWNDES

Well, she was hit with a chair, that's right. I saw her walking towards the sofa, and I was quite close to her when she was hit, but it wasn't me. I'm innocent! I've absolutely no idea why they all thought it was me! Maybe they believed what the papers have been saying.

DI G DORKING

What's this about papers, what papers?

MR J LOWNDES

Well, just recently, all the journalists have been pestering me because they thought that I was going out with my English teacher. It wasn't me ... It was Mike Lloyd. You see, he has short ginger hair like I have. It was him the people saw with Miss Kingsbury a few days ago. It's all been a very big mistake, a misunderstanding, a case of mistaken identity. Or it could be that he's just jealous because of who my father is.

DI G DORKING

Your father's the latest James Bond character, isn't he? And I've heard he's just finished filming *Live to Spy Another Day* in Sydney, Australia, is that right?

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, that's all correct. Ah, wait a minute! Right now, before I forget, I must tell you about this. So, on the last day of term, which was last Friday, Mike came up to me in the playground with his fist in the air shouting his head off. His exact words were 'It's you who keeps phoning me and not leaving your number, isn't it! I'm going to get you for this!' He pushed me over, and as he walked away, I shouted, 'No, it wasn't me!' I don't think he wanted to listen, so this may have something to do with this, maybe, I don't know.

DI G DORKING

Ah yes, I can see where you're coming from now. So, you don't know who's been making these nuisance phone calls then?

MR J LOWNDES

No, I'd love to know. I even went around asking, but nobody's come forward.

DI G DORKING

OK, Jake, we'll investigate this Mike Lloyd character you speak of. Thank you for that.

MR G LOWNDES

Are you going to charge my client?

DI G DORKING

Not at present. We'll make enquires and speak to your client again if we need to.

MR G LOWNDES

Well, my client has told me he didn't do it, and I'm quite certain he's telling the truth.

DI G DORKING

OK, Jake, we're letting you go, so no further action will be taken. But for your own peace of mind, if you'd like to have some help from one of our staff, we have a psychic called Hattie Frail. You could meet her here later today, but only if you decide to. It wouldn't cost you anything, and she's very good at what she does.

MR G LOWNDES

Well, my dad's house would be the best place, so she can go there. He shouldn't mind as he's well into that kind of stuff.

DI G DORKING

Right, I'll contact her. She won't be told anything other than your name, and she'll arrive at your dad's house on her own, in about 7 hours' time. I'm still terminating this interview: it's 2.15 a.m. on the 24th of December 2032. Jake, PC O'Brien will now take you back to your cell and we'll speak to you again later today.

Scene 4

It's 2.17 a.m. Mr Max Lowndes, Ms Suzy Hanson, Mr Joe Edwards, and Miss Kym Lowndes are all standing near the front desk talking to PC Leroy Russell.

MS S HANSON

Excuse me, officer, but we're here for Jake Lowndes. He's in custody right now.

MISS K LOWNDES

(Offensively)

I could kill those people. Why would they say that Jake did it? It doesn't make sense! Jake just wouldn't do that!

PC L RUSSELL

Please calm down! Look, I'll go and see how the interview's going. Please take a seat, I won't be long.

MS S HANSON

(Apologising)

Sorry, police officer, for my daughter's little outburst just there. Oh yes, if you wouldn't mind, that'll be great, thanks.

PC L RUSSELL

Yes, sure.

(Turning round)

Hey, Claire, you wouldn't mind holding the fort for us, would you? I've got to leave my post for a few minutes.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Enter right)

Yes, OK.

PC L RUSSELL

Thanks.

(Exit left)

MISS K LOWNDES

I'm sorry about all this.

MS S HANSON

Don't be sorry, I'm sure the fight wasn't your fault, love, or Jake's fault either.

(Leaning forward)

Come here.

MISS K LOWNDES

(Leaning backwards)

No, you can't hug me. You see, I've got a confession to make. Well ... after that teacher mix-up business with the newspapers, I decided to get back at Mike by making a few nuisances phone calls. So maybe it was him who got one of his mates to say it was Jake who chucked the chair.

MS S HANSON

I'm guessing you haven't told the police this yet.

MISS K LOWNDES

Well, no, not yet, as I've only just thought of it.

MS S HANSON

Well, Constable Mills is at the front desk. Perhaps you should go over there and speak to her? Would you like me to come with you?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, if you wouldn't mind, thanks. (Exit left)

MS S HANSON

OK.

(Exit left)

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Looking up)

Yes, may I help you?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, hmm ... I forgot to mention this in my statement earlier, sorry. This little piece of information just could be the reason why people were saying it was James who chucked the dining room chair at Amy.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Turning on her tablet)

Yes, I've got my tablet switched on, so got for it.

MISS K LOWNDES

Well, you see last week when the newspapers were badgering James over this Miss Kingsbury business, it wasn't him, it was this guy called Mike Lloyd who went with her. I know they look like each other with that ginger hair of theirs, but it wasn't him, it wasn't my brother!

CONSTABLE C MILLS

I see, carry on.

MISS K LOWNDES

Please, you can't tell Jake about this, I'll do it myself when I see him next.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

I won't tell Jake, I promise,

MISS K LOWNDES

(Folding her arms)

Well, I'm not proud of it, but a few days ago I did this terrible thing. I decided to get back at Mike by dialling his Smartwatch a few times, but never revealing my identity. Mike must've concluded it was Jake doing it and gave orders to a couple of his mates to get my poor brother into trouble again. I feel that's exactly what he's gone and done.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

I see, so was it to teach him a lesson?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes! That's right. You see, I know how controlling Mike is, and I thought that if he didn't know where the phone calls were coming from, it just might freak him out. And it worked. How could I have been so stupid?

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Thank you for telling me, Kym. So, you think this Mike Lloyd person got his mates to get Jake into trouble?

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, I do.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Switches off her tablet)

Kym, I've recorded it all. Now, have you done anything else that I need to know about?

MISS K LOWNDES

No, that's it, why?

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Right, now I'm sorry to say that making nuisance phone calls, although minor, is still an illegal act. However, as it's your first criminal offence, I've decided to deal with it by way of a caution, so don't do it again.

MISS K LOWNDES

Oh, thank you ever so much.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Handing over her card)

Here's my contact details if you should want to speak to me again about this case, anything at all. Right, I'll just go and ask the officer there behind me to see if he wouldn't mind covering the desk for me. Then I'll go and inform DI Dorking, I won't be long.

(Exit left)

Scene 5

It's 2.35 a.m. and enter right PC Patrick O'Brien.

PC P O'BRIEN

(Approaching Suzy Hanson)

Excuse me, Ms Hanson, we have released Jake, so he and his solicitor should be here in a minute.

MS S HANSON

Oh, that's good.

MR J LOWNDES

(Enter right)

Mum!

MS S HANSON

(Looking up)

Oh Jake, love! We've all been so worried about you.

(Turning round)

(Shaking Graham's hand)

And Graham, I must thank you for helping us out at such short notice.

MR G LOWNDES

(Shaking hands)

It's no trouble at all. We must meet up sometime soon to catch up. Do phone me, maybe next year now? Anyway, I've got to dash. I need some well-deserved sleep if that's OK.

MS S HANSON

(Hugging)

Yes, of course it is.

MR G LOWNDES

Thank you, goodbye and Happy Christmas to you all!

(Exit left)

MR K LOWNDES

Oh, before I forget, Mum, Dad, Kym and Joe, there's something I need to tell you all. It's good news!

MS S HANSON

What's that, love?

MR J LOWNDES

Well, the police are going to be contacting a psychic lady to see if she can sense anything regarding the incident. Her name's Hattie Frail.

(Turning to face his dad)

So, Dad, as you live the closest to the police station, I asked them if she'd be able to meet us all at your house. They said yes, but it'll have to be dead on 9 a.m. this morning. Apparently, she's brilliant at what she does. Is that, OK?

MR M LOWNDES

(Signing as he looks at Joe Edwards)

Yes, all right.

MR J LOWNDES

Great!

MISS K LOWNDES

(Takes a deep breath)

Wow, that sounds great! But changing the subject for a moment, um ... Jake, I'm sorry, but I must tell you this right now. It's something to do with the case, well it's a confession really.

MR J LOWNDES

Really, a confession, you're making me feel quite nervous.

MISS K LOWNDES

(Takes another deep breath)

Well, it's about the phone calls. So, before I tell you, please believe me that I'm very sorry.

MR J LOWNDES

Go on.

MISS K LOWNDES

You know last week's fiasco with Mike and your English teacher. Well, it made me so very angry that I made the calls to ... Mike.

MR J LOWNDES

What! So, it was you who did those silly phone calls? How on earth did you get his number? Oh, it doesn't really matter. Well, in any case you were only looking out for me, I suppose.

MISS K LOWNDES

Yes, I was.

MR J LOWNDES

OK, but don't do that again, you hear?

MISS K LOWNDES

OK, I won't.

Scene 6

It's 3.23 a.m. in the A&E department of the Appletown General Hospital. Miss Amy Carter's boyfriend, Mr Tom Clarke, is speaking to Amy's parents, Mr and Mrs Clifford and Miss Rebecca Carter.

MR T CLARKE

You know I can't help feeling this is all my fault. If only I hadn't persuaded her to go to that stupid party. I mean, that hit by a chair shouldn't have made her go into a coma. It landed on her chest, and she didn't bang her head, she fell onto a nice comfortable sofa. Maybe she's reacted like this because she's still recovering from that awful virus bug?

But I thought going to Ralph's place would cheer her up a little. Oh, what have I done?

MR C CARTER

What do you mean, being ill? Like us, Amy's hardly ever ill. Once she had chickenpox and tonsillitis and the occasional cold. But except for her asthma, nothing else really. So, what was the matter with her? And why didn't we get told?

MR T CLARKE

(Shrugging)

I'm sorry, but I thought she would've told you.

MRS R CARTER

No, she didn't!

MR T CLARKE

Well ... on Sunday last week Amy was beginning to feel ill. On Monday she was feeling worse. Over the phone I tried to persuade her to go to the doctors. She said it was just a virus. And then we also discussed that she should leave that controlling Jessica Morris and come and live with me instead. But anyway, Amy was going to confess everything to Jessica. So, the plan was for me to pick her up on Tuesday about 9 p.m. But when I got there, Jessica answered the door. After I said my name, she didn't react at all, so I just assumed that Amy had had second thoughts. So, then I apologised and told her I was one of Amy's second cousins; as I was in the area, I'd thought I'd look in on her. Jessica said that Amy had gone to bed early and was already fast asleep. She'd tell her about me visiting in the morning.

MR R CARTER

Really?

MR T CLARKE

Yes, really. Well, the next day, when I knew Jessica would be working, I rang Amy and asked her why she hadn't said anything. Her reply was that 'she couldn't find the right moment'. So right there and then I said it was either me or Jessica, and luckily, she chose me. So, I picked her up the next day, which was Wednesday. I was so happy that we were finally together. But she didn't mention anything to you, I wonder why not.

MRS C CARTER

(Shrugging)

Well, no, you see once she got involved with Jessica we just started seeing less and less of her. Just like when she was dating Danny Spence. Now let's see, the last time we spoke was on Saturday morning. She said she had left Jessica to be with you, which, by the way, we're so relieved and happy about. She said nothing at all about being poorly, and we weren't even told about this birthday party either.

MR T CLARKE

I'm sorry about that. Now, about this illness: after I picked her up on Wednesday, I was going to take her straight to the hospital to get her looked at because she felt so ill. But I just couldn't get her to go.

MR C CARTER

So why did you take her to this birthday party then?

MR T CLARKE

Well, by the afternoon she'd had a long sleep and was feeling a lot better. So, I casually mentioned the party, and as we both needed cheering up a bit, we decided to go along. And now she's lying here in hospital, fighting for her life. If only I hadn't said anything ... if only!

MRS R CARTER

Listen, you're not the one to blame here. (Enter right Dr Jamie Hunt)

MR T CLARKE

(Turning round)

Oh, excuse me doctor, but we were just discussing Amy's flu bug. We were saying how unusual it is for her to get as ill as this.

DR J HUNT

Yes, I know, I've just been looking at her records. To be honest, I don't like the look of it. Maybe there could be foul play here. I suppose the only way to find out is to get a blood test done.

MR T CLARKE

Yes, I think so.

MR C CARTER

I think that'll be a good idea too.

(Turning left to face his wife)

What do you think, love?

MRS R CARTER

I agree with you two as well ...

DR J HUNT

(Reaches for a needle and leaning forward)

Now this won't take long.

(Putting the syringe into Amy's top right arm)

There you go, all done. I'll just need to go and give this to a nurse; I won't be long.

Scene 7

It's 9 a.m. Miss Hattie Frail is sitting on a sofa in the lounge at 66 Bramley Street, drinking a hot cup of tea and

talking to the Carter family.

MISS H FRAIL

Thank you for inviting me over, it being a little bit early I'm afraid.

MS S HAYS

Oh, that's OK, we couldn't sleep anyway.

MISS H FRAIL

(Turning to face her right side)

So, you must be Jake?

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, that's right.

MISS H FRAIL

And you say you're innocent of this incident, whatever it is.

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, of course I am.

MISS H FRAIL

If you could stay sitting down, then I'll come over and touch one of your hands. In order to concentrate, I'll need to close my eyes for a few minutes if that's all right?

MR J LOWNDES

(Putting out his left hand)

Yes, that's fine, you go ahead.

MISS H FRAIL

(Takes Jake's left hand)

Right, I can see Amy. She's a young thing with lots of long blonde hair, and she's alone standing in the far-right corner of the lounge. You're on the left side. It looks as if she needs to sit down for a bit. Yes, I think she's a little unsteady on her feet. Moving on, now she's approaching your side and she's placed her empty glass on a table and

is standing by the sofa, which is near to you. Oh no, she's just been hit on her chest by a wooden dining chair being thrown at her. And I can see a young man running away from her.

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, that's right! I told them it wasn't me! So, what does this guy look like?

MISS H FRAIL

Right, I can see him: tall with blond hair. I can get a couple of letters, which are d and p, that's all I have on him.

MR J LOWNDES

Oh my God! Yes, I must've been right earlier. When I was at the police station, I said to the police officer that a guy called Mike Lloyd could've been involved in some way, and it looks like a definite possibility. So, you're saying it was Dave Perkins. Yes, I can remember him being there now. Right, Dave has always been Mike's sidekick. Hattie, you don't need to say anything else about this, because now I know it was Dave who threw the chair at her. And now she's in hospital, fighting for her life.

MISS H FRAIL

Oh, OK then. So now I'll just contact the police station and tell them my findings.

MR J LOWNDES

Yes, thank you.

MISS H FRAIL

Well, thanks for inviting me into your lovely home. I really must go now because I've got shopping to do. And don't worry, I can assure you this will be sorted out very quickly indeed.

MS S HANSON

(Putting out her right hand)

Thank you ever so much, Hattie. May I see you out?

MISS H FRAIL

(Shaking Suzy's hand and putting on her coat)

Thank you, and please don't worry.

MS S HANSON

(Indicating)

After you, Hattie.

MISS H FRIAIL

Thank you.

(Exit right)

MS S HANSON

(Picks up a handbag)

Excuse me, Hattie, but I think this is your handbag, isn't it?

MISS H FRAIL

(Turning round)

Oh yes, I couldn't have gone shopping without my purse, now, could I? Oh dear.

Scene 8

It's 9.45 a.m. DI George Dorking is busy working at his office desk. DC Jack Cameron knocks on his slightly opened door.

DC J CAMERON

Happy Christmas, sir. May I have a quick word? It's very important.

DI G DORKING

Yes, Jack. What can I do for you?

DC J CAMERON

We've just had two phone calls, one from Hattie and other from the hospital.

DI G DORKING

Oh good, and ...?

DC J CAMERON

Well, firstly Hattie says do ring her when she's back from shopping. If we require her services again, she'll be available in a couple of hours. And secondly, she said it was a lad called Dave Perkins who threw the dining room chair. She also said that just before Amy was hit, she was unsteady on her feet and holding her head and was just about to sit down on the sofa. And lastly the hospital has just this minute phoned in I'm really sorry to say this but unfortunately Amy passed at 9 .30 this morning.

DI G DORKING

What? She's dead? How can that be? She wasn't hit that badly. There must be something else going on here, surely? Maybe someone had laced her drink with a drug or something.

DC J CAMERON

And get this ... the parents and her boyfriend were so worried about her state of health just before the incident that they had asked the doctor if Amy could have a blood test.

DI G DORKING

Yes, and did they find anything?

DC J CAMERON

Yes, they did, sir. They found Temazepam, sir. And somehow apart from this drug and the strangulation, all this reminds me of last year's Lauren Howe unsolved case.

DI G DORKING

Sorry, who?

DC J CAMERON

Lauren Howe, sir. You know that young lady who was found strangled in Woodsfield Park last year. I think it was sometime in March, if I remember correctly.

DI G DORKING

Oh, I think I remember that now, yes, I worked with Darren on that case, yes, it all happened just before Hattie joined us.

DC J CAMERON

Yes, that's right. So, I've done some digging around, and I've found several things in common between the two girls. Firstly, they both dated the lady doctor called Jessica Morris. Secondly, they both worked as receptionists at the Appletown Private Hospital. Thirdly, they were both 20 years old; and finally, they both had long, flowing, blonde hair.

DI G DORKING

That's all very interesting. Now, let me think ... we shouldn't release on social media that they both dated Jessica Morris. But I'd like you to go and ask Darren to drive back down to the Howe family. He should remember where they live. And can you and Richard visit this, Jessica Morris? I want to know everything about her, her finances the lot. Also, can you ask Leroy to investigate this Dave Perkins character. Oh yes, then I'll phone Hattie and ask her if she wouldn't mind coming in at around half twelve.

DC J CAMERON

Will do, sir.

(Exit left)

Scene 9

It's 9.58 a.m. It's raining and PC Darren Samuels is standing on a porch at 72 Granny Smiths Street, Appletown, Kent, talking to Mr Gary Howe.

MR G HOWE

Hello, Darren. Happy Christmas to you. What can we do for you? Have you got some new information for us then?

PC D SAMUELS

Yes, Gary, you're spot on there. Unfortunately, I can't tell you much, for obvious reasons. But I'm sorry to call on you like this today of all days.

MR G HOWE

Don't worry about that, come inside. Hannah's just about to make a cup of tea to go with her homemade mince pies. Would you like to join us?

PC D SAMUELS

Yes, that'll be lovely, thank you.

MR G HOWE

(Calling out)

Hannah, Darren's here, he's got some news for us. Can you put out another cup and a few more mince pies?

MRS H HOWE

(Shouting from a distance)

OK!

MR G HOWE

(Waving him in)

Come this way. So, what's this all about, then?

PC D SAMUELS

Well, unfortunately there's been yet another murder. SOCO and the forensic team have found a few similarities

between Lauren's death and our latest murder case. We'd like to ask you a few more questions if that's OK?

MR G HOWE

(Leading them into the lounge)

Yes, that's fine, do make yourself comfortable. So, what's the new information for us then?

PC D SAMUELS

(Switching on his tablet)

Well, what I'm going to tell you isn't widely known to the public and we'd like it to stay that way.

MR G HOWE

Understood, so who is the next unfortunate victim?

PC D SAMUELS

It's a Miss Amy Carter. She was one of Doctor Jessica Morris's ex-girlfriends.

MRS H HOWE

(Enter right holding a tray of tea and mince pies)

Jessica! Not again!

(Places the tray on a low wooden table)

Please take what you like: milk, sugar, and mince pies of course.

PC D SAMUELS

(Taking his tea and mince pie)

Thank you. Yes, I'm afraid so.

(Holding up a photograph)

Now this girl here was Amy Carter. Did you know her at all?

MRS H HOWE

(Taking the photograph)

No, I don't. Do you know her, Gary?

MR G HOWE
(Leaning over)

No, I'm afraid not ... poor kid.

MRS H HOWE
(Sighing)

I do hope Jessica wasn't involved in Lauren's death too.

PC D SAMUELS

Well, we wondered if you could bear to recap on Lauren's friendships again.

MRS H HOWE

Well, before Jessica came into our lives, Lauren used to date boys. The last one was this guy called Danny Spence. I'd say he's a rather good-looking, sturdy young man, and he was always well shaven with fine, straight, shoulder-length, mousy, tidy hair. They went out together for about a year. But then, I couldn't believe it, suddenly out of the blue she ended up in hospital with a broken nose and a few cuts from a knife! I mean, well, we just didn't know he was that sort of person. You see, she used to keep that kind of stuff away from us.

PC D SAMUELS

Oh yes, Danny Spence, now we did investigate him, but nothing came of it, I seem to remember.

MRS H HOWE

Yes, that's right. Anyway, we tried very hard to get her to prosecute Danny, although she was adamant about not reporting him. And after that she stayed with us. Then about a month later she got this receptionist job at the newly built Appletown Private Hospital. And there she fell in love with Jessica. I think, from what I can remember, that she was a very attractive girl with shoulder-length brunette, wavy hair. She had long legs too, always wearing high heels. After about a month, Lauren decided to go and

live with Jessica. Then another year goes by and, well, you know. Now you will recall that the original investigation team did talk to her about all this. And after you had eliminated her from your enquires, she went off down to Torquay, first to visit friends, then to do a week's karate course.

PC D SAMUELS

Yes, that's correct.

MRS H HOWE

Yes, so she did this every year around March time. Now if it wasn't for her asthma attacks, Lauren would've been as fit as a fiddle; except for that terrible flu bug she suffered just the week before. So, Hannah decided to stay over at her house until she showed signs of improvement. Then she left on the Thursday evening, which turned out to be two days before she died. Ah yes, she was also quite friendly with Jessica's brother, Craig. Other than that, she was always walking and running about.

PC D SAMUELS

So, what can you tell me about Craig?

MR G HOWE

Yes, Craig. Well, he's a nice simple type of guy, very hard-working, smallish – I'd say about five foot six inches, and quite thin. I'd say he's in his early 30s. He has a receding hair line, light-brown hair with a little wave in it, yes, and he wears thin-rimmed, gold-coloured glasses. He's a collector of toys, you know. He has lots of cars, trains, aeroplanes: you name it, he's got it. He also works at the same private hospital. Only last week, we were waiting at the bus stop, the one next to Barclays Bank, and we bumped into him. He was with a young woman; at a guess I'd put her age as late teens or early 20s.

PC D SAMUELS

Can you describe anything else, like her hair, and did you

Speak to them? Anything at all?

MRS H HOWE

Yes, she had big brown eyes, long, straight, auburn hair and very long legs. We did speak to them. We found out her first name was Marie, and he's still working at the same hospital.

PC D SAMUELS

Thank you. Right, I've just typed all that information into my tablet. Now is there anything else? (His Smartwatch starts beeping) Sorry, I've got to answer this. Oh, hello, sir.

DI G DORKING

Yes, Darren, I've just spoken to Hattie and she's willing to help us. She wants some sort of item she can hold. Perhaps there's something of Lauren's?

PC D SAMUELS

Of course, I'll let them know right now, sir.

(Switching off his Smartwatch)

That was DI Dorking. He wants me to tell you about Miss Hattie Frail: she's a psychic who's been working alongside us. She's just agreed to help us on this latest case, and we think Lauren could be connected in some way. Would you therefore be willing to let her investigate some of the loose ends of your case as well?

MRS H HOWE

Ah yes ... Though painful, of course, we could see our way to doing that. How do you think she can help us?

PC D SAMUELS

She just needs to hold something of Lauren's; it could be anything, preferably something she handled a lot.

MRS H HOWE

Hmm now, let's think. Yesterday a dear friend of mine was asking if she could borrow my favourite old book on the *Titanic*. I couldn't find it anywhere, so I went to see if it was in Lauren's bedroom, because she always used to love reading it. I didn't find it, but what I did come across hidden away at the bottom of her wardrobe was this big round, white biscuit tin full of her goodies: lots of old photographs, personal letters, trinkets, her Smartwatch, tablet and some other stuff. You can borrow it all and Hattie could choose what she likes.

PC D SAMUELS

(Taking all the items mentioned)

Thank you, we'll take good care of them. You wouldn't happen to know her tablet's password by any chance?

MRS H HOWE

Yes, it's Kitty. It was the name of a cat we used to own when she was a little girl.

PC D SAMUELS

(Switching off his tablet)

Thank you so much. (Taking the items) They will all be safely returned to you in due course. And thank you for the lovely tea and your delicious mince pies. You have both been very helpful indeed and we'll be in touch again. Bye for now.

Scene 10

Meanwhile DC Jack Cameron and PC Richard Thomas are waiting outside 49 Pink Lady Avenue, Appletown.

DC J CAMERON

Richard, as soon as we get in, you ask for the toilet and then I'll speak to Jessica.

PC R THOMAS

Yep, that suits me fine, good luck.

DR J MORRIS

(Wipes her eyes with a handkerchief)

C-can I help y-you?

DC J CAMERON

(Showing his police ID badge)

I'm Detective Constable Cameron and this is PC Thomas.
May we have a word? It's about Amy Carter.

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes, I know. I just heard that Amy went to someone's party and there was an incident. And now she's d-dead. I c-can't believe it!

DC J CAMERON

Yes, I'm afraid it's true, we're very sorry, it being Christmas Day and all, but it's very important ... may we?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes, d-do come in. Please c-can you go into the kitchen? I'm just about to make a cup of tea, for the shock. Would you like one? And I've got some Christmas c-cake too.

DC CAMERON

Yes, that'll be very nice. White with two sugars, please, and I wouldn't say no to a nice slice of your lovely-looking Christmas cake as well, thank you.

PC R THOMAS

Yes, same here please, thank you. I'm sorry about this: please may I borrow your loo?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes, sure, it's u-upstairs, first on your right.

PC R THOMAS

Thank you very much. I'll be back downstairs before you know it.

Scene 11

It's 10.45 a.m. DC Jack Cameron and PC Richard Thomas are sitting in the kitchen on two black metal breakfast stools, each holding a cup of tea and a half-eaten slice of Christmas cake, talking to Dr Jessica Morris.

DC J CAMERON

I'm so, so sorry, Jessica, about Amy's death.

DR J MORRIS

I'm n-now ready to hear it all. Please tell me exactly what happened to Amy, go ahead.

DC J CAMERON

Well, yesterday Amy and her boyfriend Tom Clarke were at a boy's 18th birthday. His name is Ralph Stevenson. Around 11 p.m. last night there was a massive fight, and a wooden dining room chair was thrown. Unfortunately, Amy was hit on her chest and was knocked out unconscious. I promise you the doctors and nurses did all they could do to save her ... But she passed away peacefully 15 minutes ago.

DR J MORRIS

(Looking at her Smartwatch)

Oh m-my G-God! Do you have the p-person or persons who did this?

DC J CAMERON

Yes, we do. We are currently talking to a Mr Dave Perkins.

DR J MORRIS

G-good, I don't know him, but if it was him, then he can rot in hell! This is just so awful, poor Amy. I know she left me for Tom, but she didn't d-deserve that to happen to her, no way! Anyway, as she's not with me anymore, why have you come to tell me all of this? Shouldn't you be dealing with this guy instead?

DC J CAMERON

OK, Jessica, the reason why we're here is because we've just received some new information about Lauren's case too, although we can't tell you about that at present.

DR J MORRIS

Really?

PC R THOMAS

Yes, really. Now if there's anything else you can think of, anything at all, no matter how small? We'd like to ask you a few questions, that will just need yes or no answers.

DR J MORRIS

O-OK.

PC R THOMAS

Does your brother Craig still work as a porter at the Appletown Private Hospital?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes.

PC R THOMAS

Is he dating a girl called Marie Watson who works at the same hospital as a receptionist, on the main entrance desk?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes.

DC J CAMERON

Do you know how long they've been going out for?

DR J MORRIS

For a-about a couple of years. They got together after my mum's f-funeral, as a matter of fact.

DC J CAMERON

Did he receive any inheritance money?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes, we both got quite a bit.

DC J CAMERON

In your mind, do you think Marie's only with him because of the inheritance?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes.

PC R THOMAS

Am I picking up a little animosity here between the two of you, at all?

DR J MORRIS

Y-yes. I tend to p-pick up v-vibes off people, and Marie's aren't pleasant, I can tell you. Maybe it could be her j-just not liking people like me being a lesbian and all that. Craig absolutely adores her of course, but he still v-visits me whenever he c-can. He even looked after Amy for a couple of days just before she died. I c-couldn't stay because I had to go to work. I wouldn't know what I would do w-without h-him. I'm so sorry for crying like this.

DC J CAMERON

It's OK, Jessica. I'm sorry, but I do have to ask one last question. I'd like to talk to Craig and Marie. Do you know where they are right now? Is Craig still living at 23 Cox

Street, Appletown? And do you know if Marie is living with him too? Just take your time.

DR J MORRIS

No, it's all right. Yes, Marie's living with him, and the address is what you said. But you'll catch Craig at the hospital, poor thing. Ah, yes, oh, and I've just remembered something else!

DC J CAMERON

What's that?

DR J MORRIS

Well, L-Lauren and Amy both used to date this nasty man called Danny Spence, who also w-works at the hospital, b-but as a cleaner. They always said that being with him was like living in a horror f-film. Apparently, for a couple of months he was the sweetest kindest guy you would want to meet, but then he would change and start to beat them up nearly every single d-day over the slightest little thing, and s-sometimes for absolutely no reason at all. Hmm, h-how strange, I never realised it before now, but on both occasions, I got involved with Danny's exes. I ... I wonder if he's got anything to do with Lauren's death. Oh my God! Anyway, why do you want to talk to Craig and Marie? I can't see Craig being involved with Lauren's death; he always liked her. But as for Marie, I know I don't like her, but I don't think she'll be the type to go around killing people either.

DC J CAMERON

You don't happen to know if Marie has anything to do with Danny at all?

DR J MORRIS

No, she absolutely detests him. Well, that's what she keeps telling everybody, but who knows with her?

DC J CAMERON

(Replacing his cup of tea on the table)

Thank you for the tea and reminding us about Danny. We'll certainly be in touch with him again soon. And about Craig and Marie, we just need to talk to them and ask if there is any information they can give us, or else to remove them from our enquires.

DC J CAMERON

(Handing over his card)

Now here's my contact details. If there's anything else you can think of, please don't hesitate to ring me on this number.

DR J MORRIS

(Taking the card)

Yes, of course. I'll see you out.

DC J CAMERON

No need, we'll help ourselves out. And don't you fret, we'll sort all this out one way or another.

(Exit left DC Jack Cameron and PC Richard Thomas)

Scene 12

It's 12 p.m. DI George Dorking is giving a briefing in the busy, major incident room; he's standing by a big light brown notice board displaying a small group of relevant photographs.

DI G DORKING

Right, listen up, everyone. I've just been speaking to Hattie; she's going to help us again, but she's not coming in till she phones in about half an hour.

(Turning left to face PC P O'Brien)

So, Patrick, I'd like you to go through the stuff that Lauren's parents and Amy's parents have asked to be put

to Hattie's psychic abilities.

PC P O'BRIEN

Will do, sir.

DI G DORKING

So, first we've got Amy Carter. Well, we've already spoken to everybody who was at Ralph's 18th birthday party, and this is what we've found out. Hattie has already given a reading on it too, which I'll explain later.

(Turning around to look at the board, then pointing to the top middle picture)

Right, this is the victim, Amy Carter. She looks very similar to Lauren, in that both have blue eyes and long blonde hair and are around the same age. Now she had just moved in with her new boyfriend, a Mr Tom Clarke, and his address is 81 Russet Close. She was privately educated and left school last year in late July. She then got herself a full-time receptionist job at the Appletown Private Hospital. We haven't any more info until she was hit by a wooden dining room chair being thrown at her. It landed on her chest, and she fell on a sofa, knocked out. She was admitted to hospital on the 23rd of December, and she died today at 9. 30a.m.in the Appletown General Hospital. Now at the party other people were saying that a young guy called Mr Jake Lowndes had chucked the chair, but he denied it. Hattie has already been to his house, and she says he was telling the truth according to her reading. She's also provided a new name, of Mr Dave Perkins. Now Leroy has approached him, and he has been charged with GBH.

PC R THOMAS

Have we got anything from social media?

DI G DORKING

(Turning right to face PC Richard Thomas)

Yes, so according to those sources and to Tom, Amy was a

night-owl type of person, partying all night long. And she was hardly ever ill, except for suffering from asthma. Now, a week before she was struck down with the flu, Amy was just starting to feel better, so she and Tom decided to go to Ralph Stevenson's 18th birthday party. He lives with his parents at 27 Cox Street, Appletown. Well, because of Amy's worrying state of health, the doctors decided to perform a blood test on her. The family don't know about it yet, but the drug Temazepam was found in her system, so now we are looking for a murderer.

(Turning left to face PC Patrick O'Brien)

Oh yes, Patrick, Hattie also said that Amy was holding her head before she was hit with the chair. I think we'll need to speak to Hattie again about this issue, because Amy could've been drugged at this party.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, of course, sir.

DI G DORKING

Ah yes, one last thing. Before Tom came along, Amy was dating and living with a lady doctor called Jessica Morris, address 49 Pink Lady Avenue, who just happens to work at the same hospital. Now, coming on to Miss Lauren Carter, who is the previous victim.

(Pointing to a picture on his top left side)

She was a very attractive blue-eyed blonde, only 19 years old. This was one of our last year's unsolved cases. She was found by a dog-walker on Saturday the 10th of March in Woodsfield Park. She had been strangled; she wasn't sexually assaulted, although she did receive a blow on the head with a heavy object of some kind. Her body was slumped down by a tree with an empty asthma spray on the ground beside her. She had a few close friends, but again we don't have anything at all to report from the police records. At the time of her murder, she was living with her girlfriend, who yet again was a certain Doctor

Jessica Morris, address 49 Pink Lady Avenue. Lauren, by contrast, was state educated. Then in late July last year she got herself full-time reception work at the Appletown Private Hospital. Now, there are a few differences but a lot of similarities between the two girls. So therefore, it could be that these two murders are connected in some way.

(Pointing to a picture low bottom right hand corner)

This is Craig Morris, who is Jessica's brother, address 23 Cox Street, 33 years old.

(Turning round)

Richard, I believe you have his file, haven't you?

PC R THOMAS

Yes, I have, sir.

DI DORKING

So, remind us about him.

PC R THOMAS

Well, he was state-educated and left in July 2018, when he was 18 years old. In October of that year, he got his first job working as a gardener for the Appletown Council; he did this for just over 9 years. Then in November 2028 he left them to go and work as a porter at the Appletown Private Hospital. But we couldn't pin him down as the murderer, because there's footage of him shopping in the local Co-op. He was with a much older gentleman, who was later found out to be a Mr Roger Myers. Now this was happening around the same moment that Lauren died, given a few minutes or so, so we didn't have enough evidence to charge him. And unfortunately, we can't revisit this man's house, because about a fortnight later his neighbour found him dead in his bed; apparently, he'd died from heart failure.

DI G DORKING

Right, so Jack is talking to Mr Craig Morris right now, but does anybody here know of him? Anybody at all?

CONSTABEL C MILLS

Yes, he's one of my mum's neighbours. He's quite a shy guy, likes to collect things like expensive toy trains, I believe.

DI G DORKING

(Pointing to a picture at the bottom left side)

Right, next we have Danny Spence, yes, he's known to us all right. But for those who are new to us, he's 30 years old, and he was also Lauren's and Amy's ex-boyfriend. Address, 86 Cox Street. So, let's just remind ourselves: he was state-educated, and when he was 18 years old, he was sent to the Appletown Young Offenders' Unit. He stayed there for three years, because he was found fighting on the streets, arson and so on. After that, in 2022, his Parole Officer got him a job working as a skivvy on various local building sites. He now works as a full-time cleaner at the Appletown Private Hospital. I suppose he could have been angry over Lauren and Amy for leaving him to be with Jessica; and he could have pinched the drug somehow. So, for this reason I think we can make him our prime suspect for both cases.

(Pointing to a picture bottom-right corner)

Now Doctor Jessica Morris: she's 31 years old, address is still 49, Pink Lady Avenue. She was privately educated and left school in July 2019. Then in late September of that year she went on to study medicine for a doctor's degree at Oxford University. After her graduation she first worked as a junior doctor at the Appletown General Hospital and now she's a fully qualified doctor working at the Appletown Private Hospital, with no previous record.

(Turning left to face PC Richard Thomas)

What did you get on her, Richard?

PC R THOMAS

When Jack and I spoke to Jessica, she was genuinely very, very upset to hear about Amy and Lauren. Also, I made sure that I borrowed her loo, to see if I could find any

Temazepam drugs, although I couldn't find anything.

DI G DORKING

(Winking)

Yes, hmm ... very sneakily done without producing a warrant! But right now, forensics are investigating to see who could've signed out these drugs.

(Pointing to a picture middle-left corner)

And finally, Marie Watson, 27 years old, living with Craig Morris. She was state-educated and in 2023 got a hairdressing apprenticeship job at an Appletown hairdressing salon called Scissors. She did this for three years, and then she worked as a self-employed hairdresser. Now she works full-time as one of the receptionists on the main desk at the Appletown Private Hospital. Also, looking through past records, we know that she has had previous. Apparently, when Marie was fourteen years old, she spent a few months inside Appletown Young Offenders' Unit for her prolific shoplifting activities.

PC R THOMAS

Coming back to Jessica again, she also told us that she thinks Marie hates her because she's a lesbian.

DI G DORKING

Oh, yes, thanks, so we have possible motives that could involve Danny Spence – either for revenge or homophobic-motivated attacks or even both. So far these are the only things we have to go on really, so let's start here. Right, we need Danny and Marie Watson in. Please, Darren and Richard, can you two go and visit Danny. Also, Claire and Leroy, I'd like you to go and talk to Marie, please. Good work, everyone. However, bearing in mind they all have a connection with the hospital, really any of them could be responsible for the murders, so we must keep an open mind. Thank you, everyone, and let's just see what Danny Spence and Marie Watson have to say for themselves. Now this will be interesting, can't wait.

What a horrible day we're all having here.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

To me 2032 will always be a Christmas Eve to forget. Anyway, let's all cheer up and help yourselves to some of my lovely homemade mince pies.

DI G DORKING

(Taking a mince pie)

Yes, thank you, this looks delicious. And I agree with you, Claire, not like last Christmas, when we had hardly any calls out at all! Oh well, never mind, hey!

Scene 13

It's 12.30 p.m. PC Patrick O'Brien is still sitting down at his desk in the relatively quiet major incident room eating a mince pie and speaking to Hattie Frail on his main phone line.

PC P O'BRIEN

Thank you, Hattie, for phoning us on Christmas Eve of all days.

MISS H FRAIL

Oh, that's all right. I've nearly finished all my Christmas shopping; just got to make my usual mince pies and Christmas pudding. So that's why I said to George that I would ring you instead of coming in.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, that's fine.

(Holding a Smartwatch)

Right, Hattie, I'm holding a Smartwatch.

MISS H FRAIL

Yes, I can see a young lady, she's not married, I'd say around 20 years old. I'm now being her. I'm living with my girlfriend who is a Doctor of Medicine. I've got blonde

hair and long legs. Hmm, now I can see the letter l, and on the end of her name I can hear an en sound, and for the surname I can see the letter h.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, you're right, that Smartwatch belongs to a Miss Lauren Howe.

MISS H FRAIL

Yes, so I'm Lauren Howe. Now for about five days I've had this terrible flu bug. On the day of my death, I was on my own, feeling a little better, so I was just about to go the Co-op when a man turns up at my house. I'd just opened the front door and I'm talking to a young man on the outside porch.

PC P O'BRIEN

Can you describe this young man?

MISS H FRAIL

Hmm.... OK, so she's not letting me know who he is. Now, to be honest, this is quite strange behaviour I'm receiving, it's almost like she's being protective of him for some strange reason. Now because of this I'm really struggling to get into the murderer's mind, so I'll have to tell you everything from her perspective, will that be alright?

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, that'll be fine.

MISS H FRAIL

Good, so he's medium height, wearing a woolly hat, gloves, and there's a scarf which is covering most of his face. Now I've just asked him if he wouldn't mind going to the shops with me, but I need to go and get my handbag first. He says, 'of course I'll wait for you'. Moving on, I'm now coming back downstairs, I can't see him anywhere. Oh no, ouch, that really hurts! I think I've just been hit on my head from behind. I can hear him saying, 'I

hate you; you shouldn't be allowed to walk on this earth." Oh dear, and now I'm being strangled, I can see the light and I'm feeling very cold, yes, I'm dead.

PC P O'BRIEN

What's happening now?

MISS H FRAIL

I can see him picking up the handbag from the carpet. I'm seeing the asthma spray and the house keys they're on the carpet too. He's picking up the keys and locking the front door. Right, he's emptying the asthma spray and has put it in the left zipped pocket of her jacket. Now he's wiping the glass vase with one of his handkerchiefs and replacing it on the side corner table. Now he's putting her handbag over the bottom of the banister.

PC P O'BRIEN

This is brilliant, because we did know about her being knocked out, but we didn't know exactly whereabouts this occurred. So, you think she was at home?

MISS H FRAIL

Yes. So, carrying on, now I've got two black bin bags from out of Lauren's sink cupboard and I'm covering her up. Moving on ... I'm now hoisting her body over my right shoulder like a fireman's lift. We are going through the kitchen back door. I've locked it, and now I'm making my way to her garden fence, which leads out to Woodsfield Park. We've gone through the gate and I'm now dumping her body in the middle of some trees. Moving on, I'm now removing the black bin bags and putting them in my bottom-right coat pocket. I've replaced the keys into her right zipped jacket pocket, and I've put her asthma spray on the ground by her left hand. I'm now taking her jacket off her back; I've wrapped it around her waist and tied the sleeves into a knot. I'm now fleeing the scene and I'm taking the black bin bags with me. I can't

get any more on him, I'm afraid.

PC P O'BRIEN

Well, all this has been very useful information for us, Hattie. Now, about Amy Carter as well: sir has asked if you wouldn't mind going back over that case now if you wouldn't mind. We've already spoken to the family about it and they're happy for you to go ahead with it. But before I forget, Amy died at 9. 30 this morning.

MISS H FRAIL

Oh dear, that's a terrible tragedy. Yes, that'll be fine. So, what will you be holding?

PC P O'BRIEN

(Holding up a photograph)

I've got a photograph.

MISS H FRAIL

So, what I can tell you is that before she died, she'd been quite ill for three or four days with some flu bug or other. Moving on ... we're now at the party and I can see a young man. I can sense the letters t and c; I think it's her boyfriend.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, that's all correct, and her boyfriend's name is Tom Clarke.

MISS H FRAIL

So, I'm now being her. I'm not enjoying myself, no, I really don't want to be here, but I've decided to make the most of it. Moving on, now I'm not with Tom, he's gone off somewhere. I'm talking to a young man, he's got short black hair and he's quite tall, wearing blue denims. I do know him, but only as an acquaintance. I think he thinks I'm alone and he's trying to chat me up. He's offering me a Coke, and just to be kind I've decided to take it.

PC P O'BRIEN

What about a name?

MISS H FRAIL

I can't get a full name, but I can see letters s and m. Now I've just finished drinking and I'm feeling a little lightheaded, so I'm putting down my glass on a small table. I'm making my way over to the sofa. Hey, what's going on? Oh no, I can hear some shouting in the distance, yes someone's fighting, yes there's fighting everywhere, and I've just been hit on the chest by a chair being thrown. Moving on, I've been knocked unconscious, yes, and I can sense I'm being put into an ambulance, and that's all, I'm afraid. Now I'm getting quite hungry, and when that happens, I can't really concentrate on things that much.

PC P O'BRIEN

Now, when I was taking down the witnesses' statements, I can remember talking to a bloke who looked just like that. And I do believe his name was Steve Malone too. So, if you aren't busy this afternoon, I could pick you up at say about 1p.m. and we could go to his house, once I've found out where it is.

MISS H FRAIL

Yes, that'll be fine, and if he isn't there then I might be able to pick up a few things. Ah, but if he is in, to get a much better picture, I'll need to shake his hand. But don't say I'm a psychic, just mention my name and that I'm helping the police with the case.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, of course. Thanks, Hattie, and I'll see you in a few minutes then. Bye.

(Replacing her receiver on the phone)

Scene 15

Meanwhile it has stopped raining and an unmarked police car is parked outside 86 Cox Street. DC Jack Cameron and PC Richard Thomas are about to get out.

DC J CAMERON

(Stopping in his tracks)

Hey, Richard! I think that looks like Marie knocking on Danny's front door. Yes, it's Marie.

(Pressing his radio button)

I'll let sir know.

DI G DORKING

Yes, Jack, what do you have, over?

DC J CAMERON

Sir, Marie has just arrived at Danny's place, over.

DI G DORKING

Really? Well, well, well, now that's interesting. I wonder why she's gone to his house. I didn't know she was all that friendly with him.

DC J CAMERON

Hang on a minute. I can see Danny, he's now talking to her, no, I'm wrong ... I think they're arguing. Yes, they're shouting at each other. He's pulling her inside and he's slammed the front door. What do we do, wait for more officers, over?

DI G DORKING

No, go in straight away! But I'll ask Darren and Claire to drive the van over to you as well, over.

DC J CAMERON

OK, sir. Right, come on, Richard, let's go in. I'll take the back entrance.

Scene 16

It's 1 minute later. PC Richard Thomas is knocking on Danny Spence's front door and DC Jack Cameron is jumping over a high brown wall. He notices Marie Watson and Danny Spence running away.

DC J CAMERON

Hey! You! Stop!!!

(Pressing his radio button)

Richard, I've just seen them: Marie's running down, right of Cox Street, looks like towards the Co-op, or she could be heading to the main shops. Danny's going the opposite way, he's running uphill, most probably going towards Woodsfield Park. I'm going for Marie, over!

PC R THOMAS

Richard got ya! I've just spotted Danny; I'm chasing him now, over.

DC J CAMERON

(Jumping over the wall, then slips and twists his left ankle)

Damn it! Bloody rain!

(He notices Marie pushing two full large, plastic bins, then making a sharp left turning).

Jack, I've just lost her, she made me jump over two full bins and she's gone up Pink Lady Avenue, over.

PC R THOMAS

Richard, I'm inside Woodsfield Park. I'm close to the massive main gates and he's heading for the tree, the right side. Bloody weather, my uniform's soaked to the skin!

DC J CAMERON

Jack, same here! Wait a minute, there she is! She's just entered Bagley Road. (Catching hold of her left arm, Marie falls to the ground into a muddy puddle) Gotcha!

Jack, got her, over.

MISS M WATSON

I haven't done anything! I'm innocent!

DC J CAMERON

Marie, I only need to bring you in for questioning, OK!

(Then pressing his radio button)

Jack, I've got Marie. I'll now radio into central control to see where the van has got to, over.

PC R THOMAS

Richard, no need. Darren and Claire have just arrived. I'll tell them where you are. And I've just got Danny. I'll see you back at the station, over.

MRS R CARTER

Oh yes, that's right, blimey.

Scene 17

It's 1 p.m. PC Patrick O'Brien and Miss Hattie Frail are outside 2 Bramley Street, Appletown talking to Mr Steve Malone.

PC P O'BRIEN

(Showing his ID badge)

I'm PC O'Brien and this is Miss Frail. She's just helping us with the case.

MISS H FRAIL

(With her right hand outstretched)

Nice to meet you, and you can call me Hattie.

MR S MALONE

(Shaking hands)

Nice to meet you, Hattie.

(Looking at PC P O'Brien)

Ah yes, I remember you speaking to me yesterday. How is Amy?

PC P O'BRIEN

Oh, so you haven't heard.

MR S MALONE

Heard what?

PC P O'BRIEN

Amy died earlier this morning.

MR S MALONE

What? Died?

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes.

MR S MALONE

Oh my God!

PC P O'BRIEN

Can we come in?

MR S MALONE

Yes, but I've given you my statement already.

PC P O'BRIEN

Yes, but we just need to ask you a few more questions, if that's OK.

MR S MALONE

Oh right, I see, yes of course, you can come in. I'll just let my mum know not to disturb us.

Scene 18

It's 5 minutes later. PC Patrick O'Brien, Miss Hattie Frail and Mr Steve Malone are in the lounge sitting on a sofa.

PC P O'BRIEN

So, Steve, let's start from the beginning. I've written down that you were speaking to Amy just before she was hit.

MR S MALONE

Yes, that's right.

PC P O'BRIEN

Now, we've had reports from other eyewitnesses of you giving Amy a drink, is that right?

MR S MALONE

Oh yes, that's right. I'd forgotten all about it.

PC P O'BRIEN

So, just after she drank it, how was she? Because some people have said she was a bit unsteady on her feet.

MR S MALONE

Well, she said she had a slight headache and she wanted to go and sit down. It was not surprising after all the fighting that went on and that terrible old rap-type music that was playing. Hang on a minute, you're not suggesting that I laced her drink, are you?

PC P O'BRIEN

You tell me.

MR S MALONE

I didn't lace her drink with anything, how dare you! But I can tell you something: just before I was speaking to her, she was with Ben Walters and another guy who I don't

know. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but they didn't look very happy.

PC P O'BRIEN

So, did either of them get close to you?

MR S MALONE

Yes, a few minutes after they left, I thought she was alone, so I went up to her and asked her if she wanted a drink. She said, 'Yes, I'd like a coke, thank you.' Then when I was coming back from the kitchen the blond guy went and bumped into me as they were leaving the lounge. Maybe Ben or he could've laced her drink when I wasn't looking.

PC P O'BRIEN

Ah well, I don't know who the blond guy would be, but Ben Walters, yes, now he's known to us.

PC P O'BRIEN

(Handing over his card)

OK, Steve, so I'll now follow that up. Here's my contact details and if you think of anything more, you can phone me any time.

MR S MALONE

(Taking the card)

Yes, thank you, I'll see you both out.

Scene 19

It's 2 minutes later. PC P O'Brien and Miss Hattie Frail are sitting in the police car talking about Mr Steve Malone.

PC P O'BRIEN

So, Hattie, did you get anything?

MISS H FRAIL

Yes, I did. And I'm sorry to say that he's telling you the truth about everything. (Looking at her Smartwatch) Oh no, I've just remembered something! My friends Alison and Gillian are coming over in half an hour's time, for about two hours, whoops!

PC P O'BRIEN

OK, how about if I drop you off at your house first? Then I'll go to Ben's house. But will you be free after that just in case you're needed again?

MISS H FRAIL

Oh, yes, I will.

(A knock is heard on the police car side door)

Oh, it's Steve. I wonder what he wants.

PC P O'BRIEN

(Unwinding his side window)

Yes, Steve, can I help you?

MR S MALONE

(Holding up a handbag)

I'm sorry, does this bag belong to you, Hattie?

MISS H FRAIL

(Taking her handbag)

Oh, that's where it went to, thank you.

Scene 19

It's 1.30 p.m. Constable Claire Mills is in interview room 1 speaking to Miss Marie Watson.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Sighing)

Let me remind you, you are under caution. So, Marie, why

did DC Cameron and PC Thomas see you at Danny Spence's house? What on earth were you doing there? Jessica told us that you weren't all that friendly with Danny.

MISS M WATSON

No comment.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Why did you run away from us?

MISS M WATSON

No comment. And I'm not saying anything until I have a duty solicitor here with me, right now!

CONSTABLE C MILLS

OK, Marie, in that case we can't go any further because our other duty solicitor is currently busy on another case, so you'll have to wait. So, if you'd like, I can go and get you a drink until he finishes with his client. He shouldn't be too long.

MISS M WATSON

Yes, I'd like some water, thanks.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Right, I won't be long then.

(Exit left)

Scene 20

Meanwhile DC Jack Cameron, Mr Danny Spence and duty solicitor Mr Tim Hayles are in interview room 2.

DC J CAMERON

Let me remind you, you are under caution. So, Danny, why did you run away from us?

MR D SPENCE

(Sighing)

No comment.

DC J CAMERON

So, you're matey with Marie Watson. Has she been seeing you behind Craig's back, then?

MR D SPENCE

(Shrugging)

Yes, but what Craig doesn't know won't hurt him. What the hell has that got to do with anything ... anyway?

DC J CAMERON

Let's change the subject for a moment. Some new information has come to light about Lauren Howe's unsolved case.

MR D SPENCE

(Leaning forward)

Really? What new information?

DC J CAMERON

We can't tell you that. Now, you used to date Lauren; and she left you in favour of Jessica, just like Amy did, is this true?

MR D SPENCE

Yes, so?

DC J CAMERON

Let me guess. You hated the thought of Lauren batting for the other side, didn't you? We know you were working at the time, so instead you decided to ask somebody else to bump her off; like, say, Marie ... for instance.

MR D SPENCE

(Shouting)

NO! I didn't ask Marie to kill Lauren. NO WAY! You're so barking up the wrong tree here, matey. Ha! You've just got to believe me on this one.

(A knock is heard)

DC J CAMERON
(Shouting)

Yes!

PC R THOMAS

I'm sorry to disturb you, but I do really need to speak to you, sir, it's urgent.

DC J CAMERON

PC Thomas has just interrupted us and is asking for my assistance, so I'm pausing this interview.

(Getting up and heading towards the door)

Yes, Richard, what is it?

PC R THOMAS

Forensics has just phoned in.

DC J CAMERON

And?

PC R THOMAS

Well, Karen had acted on a hunch. So, she decided to double-check with the signatures in the drugs register. And she has a name of one of the signers in both cases.

DC J CAMERON

Who? Hang on a minute! Ah, ha! Now that drug wasn't ever detected in Lauren Howe's post-mortem.

PC P THOMAS

No, it wasn't, and the name's Jessica Morris.

DC J CAMERON

(Concerned)

What? Jessica! Bloody hell! Excuse my French! Well, why don't you bring her in, and let's just see what she has to say for herself. Thank you, Richard.

(Walking back to his chair)

Danny, I'm terminating this interview; it's 2.15 p.m. on the 24th of December 2032.

MR D SPENCE

Yes!

DC J CAMERON

So, Danny, as we still don't know why you ran away, we'll be calling you both back for further questioning; so, don't you two go anywhere.

Scene 21

It's 25 minutes later. PC Leroy Russell and PC R Thomas are standing at 49 Pink Lady Avenue. From the inside, Miss Jessica Morris opens her front door with a luggage holdall in tow.

PC L RUSSELL

Well, well, well, and where do you think you're disappearing to, young lady? To the Bermuda Triangle?

DR J MORRIS

(Shrugging)

Hello again, what are you doing back here? I just phoned Marie and for obvious reasons I've cancelled our afternoon's get-together. And as I'm not due to go back to work for another four days, I decided that I needed to get away and have some me time. So, I'm going to stay at my great Auntie Maude's house in Great Yarmouth for a while.

PC R THOMAS

Doctor Jessica Morris you're not going anywhere other than to the police station with us.

DR J MORRIS

(Shouting)

Why? I haven't done anything, what's going on?

PC R THOMAS

Doctor Jessica Morris, we do urgently need to talk to you, so you must come to the police station with us right now, thank you.

Scene 22

It's 3.26p.m. Dr Jessica Morris, duty solicitor Mr Tim Hayles, DC Jack Cameron and PC Leroy Russell are in interview room 1.

DC J CAMERON

(Sighing)

Jessica, just to let you know, you are currently under caution. So, for the record, in this interview room are Doctor Jessica Morris, DC Jack Cameron, PC Leroy Russell and duty solicitor Mr Tim Hayles. It's 3.26 p.m. on Friday the 24th of December 2032.

(Looking at Dr Jessica Morris)

So, Jessica, we've just received information that you were signing out the Temazepam drug, a few weeks ago and last year, just before Lauren died. Is there something sinister going on here? Or would you say it's a rather unfortunate coincidence?

DR J MORRIS

No, it must be the latter, of course. Hey, just hang on a minute, what are you implying here? Are you suggesting that I've had something to do with the deaths? I wouldn't do that, not in a million years. I wouldn't even hurt a fly!

DC J CAMERON

Calm down, Jessica! Take a deep breath!

DR J MORRIS

OK, I'm calming down. Now I've got to think for a moment here. Well, about last year's signature and right

the very next day: I went down to Torquay for a couple of weeks. First, I visit friends, then I do a week's karate course. Every year I do the same, I've been doing it for about ten years. But in any case, it was when I came back home that I found out that Lauren had been strangled in Woodsfield Park. So how could I have done it? How? Ah, but at both times it wasn't me who wanted the drug; my signature was used, yes, only as a witness though. Wait a minute ... but this drug wasn't found in Lauren's ...

DC J CAMERON

Is it a popular drug?

DR J MORRIS

Why?

DC J CAMERON

Well, just before the girls died, they both had a flu bug. And according to forensics, this drug will tend to imitate fly-type symptoms, as you know, being a professional doctor.

DR J MORRIS

Well, it isn't all that popular. But you're right about it giving you flu-type symptoms.

DC J CAMERON

And where were you really going to today?

DR J MORRIS

(Folding her arms)

I've already told you.

DC J CAMERON

I think you know who the killer is, and that's the real reason why you decided to leave your house. Who are you scared of?

DR J MORRIS
(Looking down)

No, I'm not scared of anyone.

DC J CAMERON
Protecting then? Who is it? Come on, you can tell us.

DR J MORRIS
OK! I can only take a guess at it, although I can't see him doing this, I just can't!

DC J CAMERON
(Leaning forward)
Who, Jessica? Who?

DR J MORRIS
I suppose my brother Craig could've been involved in some way. Regarding Lauren's death, I always thought his alibi was quite a weak one. To all of us who knew him, Roger Myers was always such an old scatter-brained individual. I'm not sure, but I think he was 87 years old. Now Craig said he was with him all evening in his house; excluding the Co-op footage of them both together, of course. Then, as we all know, about two weeks later Roger unfortunately died from heart failure. I thought it was a little odd, because he was hardly ever ill; but I didn't think to mention it at the time. So, he could've very easily got these pills by pinching them from the trolley, or from one of the patients or something. Oh, wait a minute, I nearly forgot about this. Yes, I don't know if you knew that I'm still in contact with Lauren's mum, Rebecca, and yesterday she phoned me up.

DC J CAMERON
Yes, and?

DR J MORRIS
Like I said before, I was on a karate course when Lauren

died, so Rebecca had stayed over to look after her; and she just reminded me that Craig was visiting Lauren daily for about five days when she was ill, then about a five days later she was murdered.

DC J CAMERON

Right, and?

DR J MORRIS

Well, you say nothing incriminating was found in her blood. Well, that would make sense because the drug would've been out of her system by then. And her body would've been still very weak and feeble, making it a lot easier for him to kill her.

DC J CAMERON

I see, so what about Amy? Had he been visiting her at your house also? Because she was still living with you up to a few days ago.

DR J MORRIS

Yes, he was visiting us every day for about four days, right up to the day before she moved out.

DC J CAMERON

Thank you for your co-operation, Jessica. You are being released on bail. I'm now terminating this interview, it's 4 p.m. on the 24th of December 2032.

Scene 23

It's 4.20 p.m. Mr Craig Morris, DC Jack Cameron and duty solicitor Mr Tim Hayles are talking in interview room 2.

PC L RUSSELL

For the record, it's 4.20 in the afternoon on Friday the 24th of December 2032. Right, Craig, before we start, you are under caution. Now, we have just been talking to your

sister, Jessica. She thinks that you may have been involved with Amy's and Lauren's murders. Do you have anything to say about this?

Mr T HAYLES
(Leaning forward)

Craig, you don't have to answer any questions.

MR C MORRIS

No comment.

DC J CAMERON

Did you know that Marie was carrying on behind your back with Danny Spence? Apparently, it's been going on for months.

MR C MORRIS

No comment!

DC J CAMERON
(A knock is heard on the door)

Yes, who is it?

(Turning round)

Yes, Claire, what can I do for you?

CONSTABLE C MILLS
(Showing an old photograph)

Look what I've come across.

DC J CAMERON
(Taking the item)

This is fantastic stuff! Why don't you come in? We could do with your help.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Love to.

(Coming into the interview room and sitting down)
For the record, Constable Mills has joined us and I'm

showing Craig Morris a photograph of a group of three tall, blonde-haired women. On the left is Lauren Howe, on the right is Jessica Morris, and in the middle, I haven't seen this lady before. She couldn't be your mum, could she?

MR C MORRIS

Yes, OK, that's my mum! The bitch! OK, you've got me! I did kill Lauren! I got them from the dark web, and I was right in the middle of killing Amy, too! But annoyingly, somebody else had finished her off at someone's party! It's all because after my mum divorced my dad, which was about five years ago, she then went to live in Aberdeen with that lesbian woman, Alexandra Breeze. Yes, all the way up there to live in Scotland!

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Did she really? That must have got to you.

MR C MORRIS

Yes, of course it did! How could she do it? Anyway, three years later, when she was in hospital on her deathbed with lung cancer, Mum went and married her, didn't she! How could she? I didn't go to that stupid wedding; or to her pathetic funeral either, so instead I told Jessica some of the most wonderfully perfect excuses.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

What did you tell her?

MR C MORRIS

I made out I had a bad cold. Ha! And I had quite a few lovely days down in Woodsfield Park feeding the ducks, with my train catalogues, sitting on that massive wooden bench. You should know where I mean, it's the one by the big swings.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Yes, we know the one.

MR C MORRIS

She just didn't care about us two anymore. We didn't get a look in – BITCH! And half the money went to Alexandra as well! No way was Mum a lesbian; she came from a Christian family, with high moral standards and good traditional beliefs! Marriage should be between a MAN and a WOMAN!

DC J CAMERON

Is that right, Craig?

MR C MORRIS

(Getting up from his chair)

Yes, it is ... so! You know and I know it! How on earth could she turn against us like that, and on our God? I hated her! And I still do! Even though, she's well dead and buried. She had no right to brush aside our poor old dad, just like that. He's ill! He's got dementia; I visit him as often as I can in that horrible, smelly, old run-down Appletown Nursing Home. Jessica's very lazy; she only goes to see him twice a year. Twice a bloody year! When Mum left, I decided right there and then that she wasn't our MUM ANYMORE!

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Really. And please, we'd prefer it if you sat back down on your chair, thank you.

MR C MORRIS

(Sitting down but still ranting)

Yes, really! Ah, but then I was being clever here, you see, because during all that time I never ever let it show that inside I was really heaving with rage, and I still am! It's because of MUM, it's all her fault! If she hadn't turned her back on our family! And on God! I wouldn't have done any of this! It's because of her that I now even hate my very own sister, Jessica! Because she had to go and copy her, so she's a lesbian now ... TOO!

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Really?

MR C MORRIS

Yes, really. Although no way could I kill my very own flesh and blood. I'm not that malicious! I decided to make her suffer instead. So, it was her last two girlfriends who just had to go. Yes, they both looked very similar to Mum as well, so it was very easy for me to do. Yes, it was for revenge, revenge in the name of my MUM!

But I also did this because I wanted Jessica to start dating BOYS again; it was like killing two birds with one stone.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

What about Lauren, how did you kill her?

MR C MORRIS

Well, it was dark, and I knew she was alone because I'd been watching her house. I was in her porch when I killed her. I first did it by knocking her out with a heavy glass vase, then I strangled her. She'd dropped her keys, so I locked the front door, then I emptied out the asthma spray, which was in her handbag. Then after cleaning up everything with my handkerchief, putting the vase back onto the corner table and putting her handbag over the banister, I then wrapped her up in two plastic bin bags which I got from their sink cupboard. I then picked her up over my shoulder and went through to the kitchen and out through their back door. After locking up, I made my way to her garden fence, which leads out to Woodsfield Park. I went through her gate and dumped her body in the middle of the trees. I removed the black bin bags, put them in my pockets, put the keys in her right zipped pocket and dropped the spray on the ground by her left hand, took the jacket off her back, put it around her waist and tied the sleeves in a knot. I then fled the scene.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

You know all this is very good. So, you planned all this to make it look like a freak accident? You're a genius, pure genius. Yes, that's exactly right, the keys were found in the right zipped-up pocket and the spray was by her left hand. That little piece of information wasn't ever released. Now what about your alibi, Mr Roger Myers? We know that shortly after Lauren's death, unfortunately he died from heart failure, so we couldn't go back and retrace our steps.

MR C MORRIS

Ah yes, Roger Myers, I killed him too because he wasn't a very reliable witness. And I was right because you lot might've asked him again about my alibi. Not many people knew this, but he did tell me once about his dodgy ticker, and he was very old. So really, I was doing him a great big favour! OK, I did use the drug on him! Yes, I took a gamble, I visited him every day for four days, so I could lace his water too. Then I stopped going over and just bided my time for him to ... DIE! And it worked! Because on Wednesday the 21st of March I heard that his neighbour found him dead in his bed. And the doctor signed his death certificate with the exact words heart failure! It was the perfect murder! No one suspected it was me. So yes, you're right, I am a pure genius, though I say it myself.

DC J CAMERON

Well, we didn't know anything about those details. So, you've just gone and incriminated yourself again. I'm now terminating this interview: it's 5.22 p.m. on the 24th of December 2032. Constable Mills, you can now do the honours, please.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

(Taking Mr Craig Morris's arms)

Craig Morris, I'm arresting you for the murders of Miss

Lauren Howe on the 10th of March 2031, Mr Roger Myers on the 21st of March 2031 and the attempted murder of Miss Amy Carter on the 23rd of December 2032. You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. You have the right to a solicitor which can be provided.

MR C MORRIS

If only the doctors didn't carry out that stupid blood test a few days ago, then I could've got away with it.

CONSTABLE C MILLS

Right, that will now be taken down for evidence and I would advise you to stay silent.

Scene 24

It's 5.20 p.m. DI George Dorking, PC P O'Brien, PC Darren Samuels, PC Richard Thomas, PC Leroy Russell, Constable Claire Mills and Miss Hattie Frail are all sitting down and talking about the two cases in The White Horse Inn.

DI G DORKING

(Turning right to face Miss Hattie Frail)

So, Hattie, thank you for coming.

MISS H FRAIL

Oh, that's all right.

(Turning left to face PC Patrick O'Brien)

So, did this Steve Malone person admit to lacing Amy's Coke then?

PC P O'BRIEN

Well Hattie, no, he didn't do it, and to cut a long story short, when I got to his house he wasn't there. But as I was

driving back to the station, I had to give chase to a speeding car. And guess who was in it? There was Steve Malone, his mate at the party, Jackson Hicks, and you'll never guess who else?

MISS H FRAIL

Who?

PC P O'BRIEN

Danny Spence and Marie Watson.

PC R THOMAS

Yep! They are all drug dealers, which is why Danny and Marie were running away from us, Hattie.

MISS H FRAIL

Did they? Oh, I didn't know about that, and I've never heard of them either.

DI G DORKING

Yes, they will all be put away for a very long time. Well done, everybody, cheers! And Happy Christmas to you all!
(Everyone raises their glass)

ALL IN UNISON

Cheers! Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

The End