

# The second wife

By : [declan mckimm](#)

"The storyline was amazing" "I never would have worked it out" Hinbird Valley is a peaceful place where most of its residents are wealthy. Tammy Williams has just moved into a circle of six houses with her boyfriend, and all the neighbours seem to be very friendly. However, one day, Rupert Christen returns after 26 years of been locked up for the murder of his first wife. He has just remarried a woman named Alesha. Alesha is despised by all of her neighbours, and they all have motives to murder her. Everybody hates Rupert, too, because many of the residents remember his first wife. Then Alesha is murdered, and all of the neighbours instantly point the finger at Rupert as the murderer. All of the evidence also points to Rupert. However, Tammy suspects that there may be something fishy going on, and she then starts to think that Rupert may have been framed for the murder. Although there are many arguments to suggest that Rupert is the murderer, did he really do it?



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# The second wife : Chapter 1

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## Prologue

In the year of 1986, in the south of Manchester, there was a circle of six houses where the rich lived. These houses each had one floor, but they were still rather large. They each had beautiful gardens and the people who lived in them had little time on their hands to work on them, but their gardens still looked dazzling as they could easily afford a gardener. None of the houses stood out from the rest- they were all of equal size and they looked similar.

Everything seemed perfectly normal in these houses, and things were, until one evening of January 1986.

Rupert Christen lived with his wife Dawn in number 4. They had just recently married, and they had just moved into the house. They were also both the same age, with both of them aged twenty-two years old. Rupert's father was a multi-millionaire, so Rupert was used to getting what he wanted. He liked to be in control of everything and everyone, so he despised it when somebody offended him. If someone were to offend him, he would always get his own back on them.

Dawn, on the other hand, was a rather considerate person. Sometimes, she was selfish and liked things to be her own way, but at other times, she was a caring young woman. She had been brought up in a different background to her husband- she lived on a council estate as a child, where all of the addicts were around her. She had never taken drugs before, but her upbringing had made her an untrustworthy person at times, and she had been known to do some outrageous things in the past.

"So", said Rupert, "how are you finding your life here, in this quiet little place?"

"It's beautiful", replied Dawn, "it's just how I dreamed it would be".

"Is it now?" said Rupert.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Dawn.

Rupert laughed. "You know what I mean", he replied.

"No, I don't".

"Of course you do. You've only married me for the money".

"What? That's absurd! Why would you think that?"

"Isn't it obvious? You come from a terrible life, and you suddenly marry me, a rich man. You don't love me".

"Yes I do!"

"Don't lie to me, Dawn".

"I'm not lying!"

"Yes you are. I see what your plan was, now. You married me so that you can live a life of luxury, and in the meantime, loan my money that my father made me to your sister".

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"She paid you it back, didn't she?"

"That's not the point. She used my money".

"She set up her own business with that money. She has been very successful, and has given you plenty of interest as a thank you".

"But what if she was not a success? Then I would have been £30,000 worse off. I would never have seen a tenth of that money again".

"My sister knew what she was doing".

"And she knows what she is doing now, doesn't she?"

"What are you talking about?"

"She's just moved in next door, too, so that she could copy my life".

"What have you got against Vera?"

"She's just a sly witch".

Dawn looked vexed now. "Don't talk that way about my sister!"

Just then, Vera knocked on the door and came in.

"Is everything alright?" she asked. Like her sister, Vera had a quirky personality. At times, she would be the kindest person in the whole neighbourhood, but when people got on the wrong side of her, she would do horrid things.

"Yes, Vera", replied Dawn, "everything is fine here".

"I heard shouting".

"Will you just keep your nose out!" yelled Rupert at the top of his voice.

Vera stood and stared. She had no idea Rupert was like that until that moment. She then realised what sort of monster her sister was married to.

"Who are you?" Vera asked Rupert.

"You know fine well who I am. Why won't you just leave me alone with my wife, for once!"

Vera turned to look at Dawn, who was shaking slightly, struggling to not shed a tear.

"If the noise continues I'm going to telephone the police", said Vera.

"What?" cried Dawn.

"Go ahead", said Rupert, "what will they do about it?"

"You're not in a healthy state of mind, to tell you the truth", said Vera.

"Just go", said Rupert.

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"Why should I? So you can beat my sister up?"

"Why are you saying these things?" asked Dawn, "will you just stop!"

"Fine", said Vera, "I'll go, but don't come running to me when he hurts you".

Vera then left.

"I lend her money to start a new life, and that is the thanks I get", said Rupert.

"She's just scared", said Dawn, "you shouted at her loudly. You had no right to do that!"

"And she had no right to accuse me of assaulting my own wife!"

"She's just looking out for me. She..."

"Don't try to defend her. Your sister's a psycho, just like you".

Dawn was silent for several seconds. She stood in the middle of the living room, looking at the man she swore she would spend the rest of her life with. "You really are an evil man", she said to him.

There was another knock at the door. This time it was Imelda, the next door neighbour who had also become very good friends with Dawn. Imelda had known Dawn before she married Rupert, since they were in the same school, and they had been friends since then.

"It's just me", said the fairly wealthy woman, "Olly's just popped out into the pub, I thought you'd like to join us".

"Isn't that the place where the commoners go?" said Rupert.

"Well, I know that we're middle class people, but we can still go out and enjoy ourselves".

"I'm not feeling up to it tonight", said Dawn, "I'm sorry".

"You're not sick, are you, honey?"

"It's not that. I just don't feel like going out tonight".

"Well, you know where we are if you change your mind", replied Imelda, leaving her good friend with Rupert.

"There's another psycho you have got me involved with", said Rupert.

"She's not a psycho. She's a caring person", said Dawn.

"She's off her bleeding trolley, and stop defending everyone. What's the matter with you, Dawn? Everything I say has to be wrong, doesn't it?"

"No".

"Yes. You always argue against me. I am never right, am I? You always have to be right, don't you?"

"Why have you come out with this tonight? We've been married for eight months!"

"Well, that's eight months of my life wasted, isn't it?"

"I loved you".

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"Stop the lies. I want the truth. I cannot build a marriage on lies. Look me in the eye this time, Dawn. We can end it now if we want. Just tell me the truth. If I had no money and was as poor as you before you married me, would you have married me?"

Dawn was quiet for a moment. "You want the truth?"

"Keep talking".

"The truth is that you're a stupid, selfish man who likes to be in control of everyone. I don't want to spend the rest of my life with you".

"So, you're admitting you only married me for the money?"

"I admit I only married you for the money. Are you happy now?"

Rupert remained silent. Dawn said, "I'll go, first thing in the morning. I'll have my things packed, and I'll be gone".

Rupert still said nothing, and remained stood in the living room. As Dawn left the room to go into the kitchen, Rupert snook into the bedroom, where he took out a pistol that he owned. He placed a shell into the gun. While Dawn was getting a drink, Rupert tiptoed towards the kitchen door, aimed the gun at the back of her head, and fired.

Dawn dropped to the floor. She died instantly.

"That's what you get for messing with Rupert Christen", he said, still with the gun in his hand.

Imelda was still outside, smoking a cigarette, when she heard the shot. There were also other passers by who heard the shot and ran into the house. They all saw Rupert holding the gun, and when he turned towards them, he said, "she's dead, and there's no bringing her back". He then dropped the gun and sat down on the sofa.

Later that night, Rupert Christen was arrested for the murder of Dawn Christen. He was questioned, and charged with her murder. In his trial, the jury found him guilty, because of the DNA evidence and the witness statements which proved that he had murdered Dawn. He was given a sentence of 25 years in prison. For the next 25 years in the circle of houses, nobody spoke of Dawn's murder, but everybody thought about it.

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## Chapter 2

### Chapter 1

Hinbrid Valley changed very little within those twenty five years. Some of the residents remained there, and all of the buildings remained unchanged. It was like the murder of Dawn never happened.

Tammy Williams moved into Hinbrid Valley, two doors away from the house where the horrific event occurred. She moved into number 2, next door to Vera Thomas, the sister of Dawn, and Anna Barclay, who had lived there for three years. Tammy had recently gained a fiancée, Danny, who she was going to marry in eight months time. Danny was the manager of a major company, so his income was substantial, and together with Tammy's job as a detective, the pair of them were becoming very wealthy indeed. After three years of being a detective, Tammy was ready to settle down and move into the quieter areas of Manchester.

While everything was getting sorted with the delivery men, Tammy decided to talk to her new neighbours, because Danny said that he would take over with the packing.

First, she decided to go to number 6, where the Gardiners lived. John and Eva Gardiner had lived in the area for over ten years, and they were both very successful play producers. They owned a theatre in Manchester and had written some fantastic plays. All of their income depended on those plays. They also had an eight year old son, Harry.

"Hello", said Tammy, "I'm new here".

"Are you in number 2?" asked Eva, sat on her front lawn, sipping a red wine.

"Yes, and I've just moved in with my fiancée".

"Well, Hinbrid Valley is going to see some changes today, isn't it?" said Eva, pointing to number 4.

"Is someone there, too?"

"Yes. I don't know who, but the sign was taken down a few weeks ago, and I saw some people coming in the other day, so they might be moving in today".

"Is the area quiet?"

"Yes, very. I'm Eva, and my husband, John, is in there. He's just coming out now".

John left his house, and sat next to his wife. Together, both of them looked like a pair of film stars. John was clearly pushing for fifty, and he was wearing clothes that were obviously expensive. His wife was the same. Eva had made the effort to dress formally, like she wanted to make an impression on her new neighbours. She wore a giant sunhat and her hair was tied back into it.

"So, what's your job?" asked Tammy.

"Both of us run our own theatre. Have you seen any of our plays?" asked John.

"I'm not that into theatre", replied Tammy, "but I'm sure they're great. Do you write your own?"

"Of course we do!"

"Then you both must be very creative then".

## The second wife

"Well, it's quite stressful at times", replied Eva, looking at her son, "but it's all worth it". Harry then came outside and hugged his mother.

"It's nice to meet you", said Harry.

"That's my boy", said John, "always polite to the people who he meets".

Tammy smiled, and said, "well, I'd best be off and meet the other neighbours".

"Watch out for the Strattons next door", replied Eva, quickly.

"What's the matter with them?"

"You'll see".

Tammy walked to the house next door. Before she got chance to approach the house, she saw a woman coming out, crying into the house, "and I told you, I saw a wolf down in the woods yesterday!"

"Hello", said a shocked Tammy, looking over to Eva.

"I told you", Eva laughed.

"Who are you?" asked the woman.

"My name is Tammy Williams. I'm new to the area. I've just moved into number two".

"Oh, hello dear, my name is Imelda Stratton. I'm sorry about what you just saw there. My husband and I have been a little shaky lately. Perhaps now is not the time to explain why".

Imelda Stratton was ageing. She wore strange clothes that did not go together, and her hairstyle was even stranger-at the top of her head, her hair was blonde and curly, but nearer to the bottom of her hair, it was brown and scruffy looking.

"So, how long have you been living here?" asked Tammy.

"I can't even remember, it's been so long", replied Imelda, offering Tammy a cigarette, "do you smoke?"

"Oh, no. So, is it quiet here?"

Imelda remained quiet for a few moments. "Yes, it is", she said, looking away.

"That doesn't sound very convincing", said Tammy.

"You're very nosy, aren't you?" laughed Imelda.

"I'm sorry. It's my job to be nosy".

"What are you? A private investigator?"

"No! I'm a detective".

"Well, I suppose what happened here twenty-six years ago won't surprise you".



## The second wife

"Was there a murder here?"

"You're very clever. Twenty-six years ago, a man named Rupert Christen shot his wife dead, in the house next door to me".

"In number 4?"

"Yes. I've never really got over it since. Dawn...the murder victim...was one of my closest friends, and it shocked me to hear that she died in that way. I've never been the same since. Other than that, Hinbrid Valley is such a beautiful and peaceful place".

"So, you have been a little shaky since then because this murderer is to be released from prison soon?"

"How did you know that?"

"Well, it was twenty-six years ago when the murder took place, so I'm guessing that he would be released by now, taking away the trial time and everything".

"Well, you're spot on. Two days ago, it was the 25th anniversary of Rupert Christen's sentence, and I knew that he has been released. I also know that it's probably him who's moving back into number 4. I don't know if I can cope. I feel sorry for Vera".

"Vera?"

"Dawn's sister. How on Earth will she manage to have a normal life with the murderer of her sister waltzing around the place?"

"Which house does she live in?"

"Between you...and number 4".

"Oh, dear".

Just then, Imelda's husband joined her for a cigarette.

"Have you calmed down yet?" he asked her.

"I'm sorry, Ollie", replied Imelda, kissing him.

"It's understandable", Oliver replied, "and who are you?"

"I'm Tammy Williams, and I've just moved in to number 2".

"Have you now? Well, unfortunately, it's a bad time to move here. I think that there's going to be a lot of action round here, now that he's coming back".

"Imelda's already explained to me. I'm very sorry".

"It doesn't seem like five minutes ago since...never mind. Anyway, Imelda, why don't I take you out for a meal?"

"Would you? It would take our mind off things".

"Anything for my sweet Imelda", he said, stroking her cheek.

Tammy decided to leave them be. As she walked over to number 1 to meet the other neighbour, she was stopped when she noticed the woman in number 3 looking through the kitchen blinds at her.

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"That must be Vera", Tammy said to herself.

Vera looked through her blinds for a couple of seconds, before closing them. Tammy decided not to bother the woman as she felt sorry for her.

Anna Barclay, who lived next door to Tammy, walked out of her house.

"Hello", said Tammy, "I'm living next door to you".

"Hello", said Anna, "I'm not really living there. I'm looking after it for a few weeks while my uncle is away".

"Oh, right. So, where are you off to?"

"I'm off to number 4. I work there now".

Tammy paused. "Do you?" she asked.

"I'm the new servant for this man and his wife who's moving in".

"Really?"

"Why?"

"I've heard a couple of things about the people who might be moving in there. Do you know anything about them?"

"I've never met them before".

"Do you know their names?"

"Well, here they are now. Why don't you talk to them yourself?"

Before she knew it, Tammy heard a limousine pull up outside number 4. The limo itself looked like it cost as much as the house. It was amazing. Then, a door opened, and Tammy saw a woman's shoe step out of the bottom. The shoe was blue with decorations all around it. Then at the top of the door, she saw a fancy hat.

"Who are these people?" she thought.

Then the woman stepped out of the car. Tammy instantly noticed her face. The woman looked no older than twenty, and she had bright, blonde hair, and her face was covered in pink make-up. Her eyebrows were blue, and a little bit of glitter was seen on her lips, which were smothered in gloss. She also had a fur coat, and a fancy skirt. After she got out of the car, the driver held out his hand for a tip. The woman simply slapped his hand, and the driver put his arm back into the car, as if he knew he was not in the position to do anything back.

"Oh, my God, John", said Eva Gardiner, in the background. Tammy looked at her.

"What...oh...my...God", repeated John, staring at the woman.

"So, this is it", said the woman.

"It certainly is, darling", said the man, getting out of the car.

Tammy realised one thing about the man that stood out straight away: he looked like he was in his forties, while the woman looked like she was in her twenties. The man himself looked as wealthy as the woman. His clothes were completely over the top - he looked like a gangsta from New York.

## The second wife

"Then what are we waiting for?" said the woman.

The man looked around, and he noticed Imelda and Oliver Stratton, still apparently smoking their cigarettes. Imelda stood there, putting on a brave face.

"I'm home", said the man.

## Chapter 3

### Chapter 2

After their seemingly dramatic entrance to Hinbrid Valley, Rupert and the woman with him entered their new home. Before he went in, Rupert turned round for another look at Imelda and Oliver, before going inside. The doors were closed, but the Strattons remained stood outside.

"Well, this day was going to come sooner or later", Oliver said to his wife.

"I know", replied Imelda, "I just didn't think it would be so soon!"

Imelda and Oliver went back inside, while Tammy went back to her house.

"So, you've met everyone?" asked Danny, unpacking the last few things.

"Yes... I'm telling you, there's some characters round here", replied Tammy.

"Why? What are they like?"

"They are truly upper class people!"

"Well, I suppose the neighbours don't really matter to us. It's still a nice place".

"I've still not been two numbers 3 and 4 yet. I've heard that the woman in number 3 lost her sister, since the man who has just moved into number 4 murdered her!"

"What?"

"That's what I was thinking. How dramatic!"

"I don't think you should go and talk to him just yet, then".

"Well, I don't know. I'd better go and meet him now, because he'll think I'm rude if I don't talk to him".

"Maybe a little later. They've just arrived, haven't they?"

"Yeah".

"Well, you wouldn't want to disturb the Queen of Sheba while she's unpacking her Diamonds".

"So you've seen the woman with him then?"

"Seen her? She almost blinded me with the jewellery that she wore!"

Later, Tammy visited Rupert Christen without a moment of hesitation. She knocked on the door, and Anna answered.

"It's you", said Anna, "can I help you?"

"I've just come to meet Rupert Christen and his wife", Tammy replied, trying to look into the house".

"Who's this?" said the woman, storming behind Anna, "who are you?"

"I'm Tammy Williams, and I live next door but one to you".

"And?"

"Well...I just wanted to come and meet you. I'm new here too".

## The second wife

"Fascinating...my name is Alesha Christen. Can you go now?"

"Alesha!" yelled Rupert, running to the doorway, "she's just joking. Come on in".

Tammy entered the house, comparing this couple to the Strattons.

"So, what brings you here?" asked Rupert.

"I just wanted to come and meet the neighbours", replied Tammy, sitting by the pool in the back garden.

Alesha did not seem to pay the slightest bit of interest. She sat away from the other two, drinking a martini that her male servant had made her.

"Well, I'm Rupert Christen, and this is my wife, Alesha. I know what you're thinking, and yes, I am significantly older than Alesha, but age doesn't matter, does it, honey?"

"Of course not, darling", replied Alesha, glaring at Tammy.

"So, what do you do for a job?" asked Rupert.

"I'm a detective", replied Tammy.

Rupert's face changed instantly.

"Really?" he asked her.

"Yes. I solve murders for a living".

Alesha laughed, spitting out a little bit of her drink.

"I'm sorry", said Rupert, "I must explain everything to you".

"I've heard about it already", said a modest Tammy, looking away a little.

"I want to explain things to you properly", said Rupert, "twenty-six years ago, in this very house, I murdered my first wife..."

Tammy was surprised at his honesty. She assumed that he would deny it, but she was shocked that he was capable of talking openly about it.

"In court, a psychologist described it as a moment of madness, which it was. I just blanked out at the time of the murder. I can't really rememebr much about it".

"And you were given twenty-five years?"

"The courts took into consideration my early guilty plea, and the judge was fairly easy going, so I was handed twenty-five years instead of longer. I've just got out two days ago".

"So, you married Alesha in prison?"

Alesha still did not say anything. Instead, she coughed, and glared at Tammy.

"I met Alesha in prison five years ago, when she came into the prison to film a drama series. My wife is an actress, you see".

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"I never would have guessed", said Tammy, trying not to sound sarcastic.

"Anyway, when Alesha saw me, and I saw her, it was literally love at first sight".

"How romantic", said Tammy, again trying not to sound sarcastic.

"After a few years of prison visits, I finally proposed to her, and we married just a few weeks ago!"

"Sorry to pry, but why have you moved into the house where your ex-wife died?"

"Well, I loved this house. I'd lived in it ever since I was a boy. This is my home, even if there has been a million murders here. When I was told this house was up for sale weeks before my release, I just had to buy it!"

Alesha approached Rupert.

"We're happy here, aren't we darling?" she said, placing her arms around his neck.

"Of course we are. The past is the past, and we must look forward to the future!" cried Rupert, "we'll be here until we die!"

Tammy decided that she had had enough after Rupert said that. She got up, and tried to be as polite as she could, before leaving. When she got home, Danny was ready with the jokes and questions.

"So, you're still alive then?" he asked her.

"That's not funny", replied Tammy, "I don't know if he is genuinely like that, but that Rupert seems very friendly. You wouldn't think he'd murdered someone before!"

"Well, I'll be keeping my distance from them. That woman is a fool if she's married a murderer".

"I don't know what must be going through her mind, marrying someone who murdered his other wife!"

"Well, that's her problem, not yours. What do you say we go out tonight for a chinese".

"Of course!" replied Tammy.

Meanwhile, Rupert and Alesha prepared to go out shopping together.

"I hope they have diamonds in this place", said Alesha.

"Just consider yourself lucky you live near to all of these fancy shopping centres. There are no ASDAs around here, you know", replied Rupert.

"Thank God for that, I don't think I could cope with all the common folk around here, throwing eggs off our car!"

"Only the rich come here, my darling".

When they opened the gate, they were suddenly approached by Harry Gardiner.

## The second wife

"Oh, look. It's that polite boy from number 6", said Rupert, "how are you today?"

"You...are...evil", said Harry, pointing his finger at Alesha.

"What?" said a stunned Alesha, even surprised with the fact that she managed to speak.

"You heard me", replied Harry, "you're a slut, and a whore!"

Harry gave Alesha the evil eyes, and he watched the pair of them get into the car and drive away. Alesha still watched as Harry stared at her, his eyes almost closed. When the car started to drive away, Alesha turned round, only to see Harry still stood there staring, and pointing his finger towards her.

"You said he was polite?" asked Alesha.

"Well, he was fine with me before", replied Rupert.

"Why on Earth would he call me evil? I've never even seen him before in my life! Why would he do that?"

"It beats me", replied Rupert, driving on.

After having finished their shopping, Rupert and Alesha decided to go for a walk to the park. After five minutes of sitting down by the lake, they were interrupted by a woman.

"So, come back crawling to your nest, have you?" said the woman.

Rupert turned round, and he knew straight away who the woman was: Vera.

"You!" he yelled.

"Is that all you've got to say?" Vera asked, "after what you did?"

"Who the Hell are you?" asked a confused Alesha.

Vera looked at her for two seconds, and moved her face closer to Alesha's. "I'm your worst nightmare!" she replied.

"She's Dawn's sister", explained Rupert.

"Oh, right. I thought she was some mad woman. You never know these days, do you?"

"I have a good right to be mad. Your husband brutally murdered my sister, and he wanders round this park, with not a care in the world!"

"I went away for twenty-five long years!" cried Rupert.

"They should have shot you, like you shot Dawn! Dawn lost her life, but you kept yours, and you can live the next thirty years in complete and utter bliss. What does Dawn get? She gets put into a hole to rot away!"

"Have you finished yet?" interrupted Alesha.

"This isn't the last you'll see of me. I live right next door to you!"

"Well, that problem can be solved. We'll just grow some trees next to the fence so we can't see you".

"Grow some trees", laughed Vera, "you couldn't grow a brain!"

## The second wife

"I beg your pardon", said Alesha, standing up.

"You heard me. It puzzles me, why you married this homicidal maniac!"

"Because I understand him! He went through a moment of madness. Haven't you?"

"I'm pretty mad myself right now".

"Really?" said Alesha, sarcastically.

"Haven't you got somewhere else to be?" asked Rupert.

Vera laughed. "I certainly have, darling. I certainly have".

"What's that supposed to mean?" asked Alesha.

"Even you can work that out. Everywhere you go, I'll be there, waiting. You will see me on every street corner, and even when you go on holiday, I'll follow you".

"Don't be such an idiot! You're making a fool of yourself, saying those stupid things!"

"Just you wait and see, Rupert Christen. I will not rest until you are back behind bars. Just watch me!"



## Chapter 4

### Chapter 3

The next day, Alesha and Rupert decided to visit a local museum. On their way out to the car, Alesha saw Vera stood in her kitchen window, staring at them. Alesha looked at Vera, who gave a little sarcastic wave. Rupert then got into the car and started the engine.

"Come on, honey", he said, "the sooner we get away from her, the better".

"I'm not going to let that bitch ruin my life! I am just going to ignore her whenever she comes near us".

"That's more like it. Now come on, let's go and enjoy our day".

"I'm ready to live my life!"

When they both arrived at the museum, they looked at some of the exhibits, and was soon approached by Vera when they were in the kings and Queens section.

"Did you know that Queen Victoria reigned for sixty-three years, so she's the longest reigning monarch in our country to date".

"That's brilliant!" cried Alesha, "she's here!"

"Remember what you said?" Rupert reminded.

"Also, our current Queen only has a few years left to break that record-three, to be exact".

"Just go back home, Vera", said Alesha, "you're not hurting us in the slightest. You're not accomplishing anything by been here".

"I'm just here to enjoy the exhibits, like yourselves".

"Seriously, we don't care about you. You're gonna have to do better than a few facts and figures to get to us!" laughed Alesha.

"Don't worry", laughed Vera, "this is only the start of your troubles. If you think this is it, you've got that one hundred percent wrong!"

Vera then walked away, presumably out of the museum.

"What was all that about?" asked Rupert.

"The ignorant cow doesn't understand why you did what you did on that night".

"She was in the courtroom at the time. The professionals even told her, it was a moment of madness".

"We'll get used to it eventually".

## The second wife

"And she'll get used to us...she's going to have to if she wants to remain in Hinbrid Valley, because we're going nowhere".

"What do you make of those threats?"

"They're just empty. She wouldn't dare do anything".

"You think?"

"Just wait and see - she can't hurt us. We're untouchable".

"If you say so".

Elsewhere, Tammy was invited to Eva's house for a drink.

"Feel free to come in", said Eva, "there's nothing incriminating in here".

"Are you sure about that?" asked Tammy, pointing at the gun".

"Oh, that's not a real gun. Well, it is, but we don't have any bullets in it".

"So, it's just for decoration above the fireplace?"

"I know it sounds strange, but John likes it up there. He says it reminds him of his shooting days".

"Shooting days?"

"Before he met me, so this is going years back, John used to go out bird shooting".

"Charming".

"Well, he seems to miss those days - he's even won awards for it!"

"For shooting birds?"

"John has a perfect aim! He can shoot from miles away!"

"I'll bear that in mind. So, why have you invited me here?"

Eva grinned. "You don't like going to France to get to Spain, do you?" she asked.

"Well, I'm used to that in my job".

"Of course. Now, the reason I wanted you here, and don't get me wrong, I'll pay you well, but I wanted to ask you to find out things about Alesha".

"Things about Alesha?"

"You see, John and I have written many plays over the years, many of which have starred Alesha".

"So, that's how you know her".

"Yes. Alesha is a bitch, but she's a brilliant actor. The public are asking for Alesha - she's played some truly amazing characters. Well, there are competing theatres in Manchester who are also looking for Alesha, and the other week, we offered her the chance to be yet another starring role in our new play, Pure Evil, but she declined!"

"So, you think that Alesha has gone to another theatre?"

"I don't know why, but it certainly seems that way!"

## The second wife

"So, what would happen if Alesha kept turning to these other theatres in the next few months?"

"Well, after Alesha turned down that recent role, we had to hire a different, veyr unpopular actress who nobody knew or cared about, so the audiences dropped".

"So, basically, what you're saying is, even though you really dislike her, if Alesha turns down these next few plays, the market share will drop massively".

"We could be put out of business", said Eva, making her voice quieter as she said that.

"So", said Tammy, "you want me to find out if Alesha is actually going to other theatres, and why".

"Well, it can't be money, can it? She's got plenty now, hasn't she?"

"So, I wonder why Alesha has been going to other theatres".

"Please find out. I will pay you to find out why Alesha turned that role down!"

"Alright, alright. I'll see what I can do!"

"Thank you! Thank you so much!" cried Eva, putting her arm round Tammy's.

Meanwhile, Alesha and Rupert returned home. When Alesha wandered into her bedroom, she screamed.

"What on Earth is it, darling?" cried Rupert.

"My bed is creased!" screamed Alesha, at the top of her voice.

"No, it's not", said Rupert, unsure of what to think of it, since he saw no creases on their bed.

"Yes it is! Look here!"

Rupert looked to where Alesha was pointing, and he saw that one part of the bed was creased a little bit.

"Bring me that bloody servant!"

Craig rushed in. "What's the matter, ma'am?" he asked her, completely ignorant to what Alesha was upset about.

"What's the matter? What's the matter? Are you joking? Look at what you've done to my bed!"

"Wh..what have I done?"

"You know what you've done! Creasing my bed up like that - you should be shot!"

"Beds are likely to crease, Alesha, even when they're made", said Rupert, trying to defend a poor Craig.

"I've made my bed tonnes of times, and they've never creased. This is totally unprofessional!"

"Well, it's going to get creased anyway, when you go to sleep tonight".

"That's hardly the point! I like to come home to have everything perfect! Just get out of my house, you stupid man!" yelled the spoiled woman, pointing to Craig.

## The second wife

"No, don't go", said Rupert, "my wife has had a stressful week, and I think it would be best to leave her alone for now. She'll come and apologise later".

Craig left the bedroom, leaving Alesha to cry on Rupert's shoulders.

"What's the matter, darling?" he asked.

"Why can't my life just be perfect, eh?"

"Why? What's the matter?"

"It's always something, isn't it? After Vera stalks us all day and night, the bed sheets are creased. Next, it will be something else. Why does something always go wrong in my life?"

"Why don't you just go to sleep. You didn't sleep well last night, and you need to get caught up now. It's making you very upset".

"I love you, Rupert Christen", said Alesha, falling on the bed to go to sleep.

## Chapter 5

### Chapter 4

The next night, it was Saturday night, so as usual, everybody in the circle of six houses went out for a drink. When everybody arrived at the pub, apart from Alesha and Rupert, everybody who lived in the circle was in the pub, except of course, Harry Gardiner, who was been looked after at home.

"This is where Dawn used to drink with me", Imelda said to Tammy, "I suppose things are going to be different from now on, now that he's back".

"Don't let him get to you", Danny said to Imelda, "you're letting him win".

"He won when he murdered Dawn and got more or less a smacked bottom".

"But he didn't. He suffered for twenty-five years".

"Suffered? Suffered? Seriously, have you any idea what prisons are like? Screw Hinbrid Valley. Prison is the place to be!"

"I think you're exaggerating just a little bit", said Tammy, jumping into the conversation, "I should know. I've visited a few prisons in the country. Believe me, they are nowhere near what you say they are".

"The point is, why did he not die for the murder of Dawn?"

"That is another debate that I don't want to get involved in".

Suddenly, the happy atmosphere in the room changed when Rupert Christen walked in. Almost everybody went silent in an instant.

"Well, don't let me stop you", said Rupert.

"I don't know how he has the cheek to come in here!" cried Oliver.

After Rupert came Alesha, dressed up like a dog's dinner, as usual. When she entered the room, she did not say anything to anybody, except for the barmaid, to place her order.

"Do you do champagne?" Alesha said quite loudly, as if she wanted the whole room to hear what she was saying.

"She brags about everything", Eva said to her husband, making sure Alesha did not hear.

"Just look at her", said John, "dressed up like that. She's only going out for a few drinks!"

"She overdoes everything. Strangely enough, though, I've managed to cope with her for the last eight years!"

"I don't know how! Whenever I see her, the hairs on the back of my neck stand up!"

"I despise her. She's evil, and I wish I could grab her hair and smack her head off the...Alesha, darling!" cried Eva, changing her attitude instantly because Alesha was approaching her.

## The second wife

"Hello, Eva", said Alesha, "long time no see".

"Yes", said a surprisingly calm Eva, "I was surprised to find out that you have moved here. It's only next door to us but one, you know!"

"I realised that. So, how's business?"

"It's been better, to be honest".

"Yes. Oh, well. So, John, how have you been since our last...arrangement?"

"What do you mean by that?" asked a genuinely confused John.

Rupert then came up to the group of people.

"How is everybody?" asked Rupert.

"Well, Rupert, honey. I don't think you've met the Gardiners, yet. I used to work for them a long time ago".

"Used to?" asked a puzzled Eva, "a long time ago?"

"Yes. You see, Eva is a very busy woman, and I had to leave her, unfortunately. It was very sad".

"Well, I think..."

"Besides, I think that Eva got quite bored of me!"

"That's not..."

"Why don't I get us some drinks?"

"OK..."

Alesha went up to get some drinks.

"Please forgive my wife's behaviour", said Rupert, "she's been a little bit jumpy lately".

"Never mind", said a polite Eva, who was boiling up inside.

John tried to change the subject.

"Has Alesha had the opportunity to come and see us for the role in our new play?" he said.

"New play?" asked Rupert, "well, she hasn't done one for months..."

"We've been wanting to give her a starring role".

"I told you, I'm retired from acting", interrupted Alesha.

"Are you, now?" asked Eva.

"Yes. I've given it up!"

Eva got up suddenly and stormed out of the pub, leaving John to follow her back home.

## The second wife

"What's the matter with them?" asked an ignorant Rupert.

"Just forget them", said Alesha, "let's go and announce our new plans to Imelda and Oliver".

"Well..." said Rupert, "I haven't spoken to Imelda yet since I came back, so I'm a bit nervous".

"Scared of Imelda? She's a nutcase, I'll give you that, but she won't do anything, will she? Come on, I want to see the look on her face!"

"Imelda, darling!" cried Alesha, approaching Imelda and Oliver.

"What the bloody Hell do you want?" said Imelda, who couldn't care less at that moment in time.

"We've come to announce our new plans".

"What bloody plans?"

"Take a look at these papers", said Alesha, showing Imelda some forms.

"What are these?"

"We are buying this very pub".

"You're what?"

"Wait. There's more", laughed Alesha, "we're turning it into a strip club!"

"What?!" cried an extremely infuriated Imelda.

"Yep. It's for over eighteen's only. Nothing will change. It's going to be the same bar, same rooms, same toilets - same everything, except for the stripper poles in that corner over there".

"You know fine well it's where we used to drink together, Rupert Christen!"

"It's for Alesha, really. I don't like this place. I'm sorry, Imelda".

"I should have known that you two would come up with something as scheming as this!"

Imelda was about to punch Alesha, but she knew the trouble it would cause if it did, so she left the building with Oliver. Tammy opened a window and eavesdropped on their conversation.

"We can't just let them do this!" cried Imelda, "Dawn would be so upset!"

"I know, my baby, but we can make a petition or something to stop them from buying the place", replied Oliver.

"That wouldn't work. We have to think of something. We must do something to stop them!"

"Anything for my sweet Imelda...anything".

Tammy decided to stop listening there, because there was more drama going on inside the pub. Vera had just walked in, half drunk.

## The second wife

"Ah, there you are", said Vera, pointing to Rupert and Alesha, "I thought I'd lost you for a second".

"That's all we need right now", said Alesha.

"Now, what was that nursery rhyme my mother used to tell me when I was little?"

"Oh, for God's sake..."

"Mary had a little lamb, who's fleece was white as snow, and everywhere that Mary went, her lamb was sure to go".

"You're hilarious, do you know that?"

"Here's another one. Jack and Jill came up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after".

"Is that supposed to threaten us?"

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary. How does your garden grow?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" laughed Alesha.

"With silver bells, and cuckoo shells, and pretty maids all in a row. That's how you like Anna to dress up your garden, isn't it?"

"Will you just go away?"

"I'll go away...over your dead body!"

Tammy came and stopped the quarrel. "I think you should leave, Vera", she said.

Vera decided to leave, satisfied with the embarrassment that she had caused Alesha and Rupert. Before she walked out of the door, she opened up her coat, and on the inside, Alesha saw a pistol. Alesha's face suddenly lit up. She looked like she was about to faint.

"You weren't expecting that, were you?" Vera laughed, hysterically.

When they went outside, Tammy said to Vera, "this is not the way".

"This is the way", replied Vera.

"No. Trust me, I've seen people in your position before, Vera. You have to have faith".

"Have faith? No. There's nobody looking out for me, love. I have to make my own decisions".

"Will you just listen to yourself? You're going to be sorry at the end of this feud".

"I don't care what happens to me".

"I care".

"You don't even know me".

"I know what it's like to suffer that unbearable pain from the way your sister was killed".



## The second wife

"You don't understand what it's like".

"Yes I do. My grandmother was knifed to death, just five years ago. Her killer is still in prison, and well...they're gonna die in there, but I promise you, Rupert Christen will get his comeuppance. They always do".

Vera decided to walk away. She'd had enough.

"I'm sorry to hear about your grandmother", she said.

## Chapter 6

### Chapter 5

Alesha and Rupert returned home that night rather early, since there was hardly anyone left in the pub after Alesha had finished with them all.

"Did you see the look on Imelda's face?" cried Alesha, "I don't think I've ever laughed so much in my whole entire life!"

"I think that's a little bit over the top", replied Rupert, "what has she ever done to you?"

"It's just that look she gives me. Anyway, I thought you despised her".

"I don't know if I do anymore. I cannot blame her for hating me the way she does - the same goes with Vera".

"Vera? You understand Vera's actions?!"

"But you understand mine?"

Alesha was suddenly interrupted by Craig entering the room to get his coat.

"And where do you think you're going?" Alesha asked him.

"I'm going home", replied Craig, pointing at the clock.

Alesha looked at the clock, which said 9:58.

"You cheating conman!" yelled Alesha.

"What? I go home at this time".

"You certainly do not! You go home at 10:00. You lazy freak!"

"Come on, Alesha", said Rupert, "I think we can let him off with two minutes early. He has no work left!"

"That's hardly my point! I don't want a lazy person working for me as my servant. There are plenty of people who would kill for his job. No, I will simply not allow it. Craig, you're fired!"

"Fired?"

"You heard me. Get out of my house right now!"

Craig left, before Rupert even got the chance to save his job.

"What have you done that for?" asked Rupert.

Alesha did not reply, and Rupert left her on her own.

When Craig left the house, he got into his car, and when he started the engine, he saw a figure standing outside number 4. They wore extremely bright yellow clothes, like the ones Rupert had worn the very same night.

"Is that Rupert?" Craig asked himself.

## The second wife

The figure seemed to be peeping into the windows. Craig just thought to himself, "well, if Alesha has a stalker, she deserves it!" and he then drove off.

Ten minutes later, as Tammy prepared to go to bed, she opened the living room window to let some air in. She looked out, and looked into number 4's living room window, where she saw Rupert arguing with someone, presumably Alesha. Their window was also open, but she could not hear anything, only muffled sound. Rupert looked fairly angry, and he turned round and looked at Tammy, who quickly jumped back from her window. Five seconds later, she heard a very loud shot, coming from the direction of number 4!

"What was that?" asked Danny, who was sat in the living room.

"I think we just heard a shot!" cried Tammy.

"Come on, let's go and see what's happened", said Danny, taking Tammy with him.

Tammy ran up towards number 4, and she saw that the door had been beaten down. Tammy jumped through the large hole in the door, careful not to get any splks. When she entered the living room, she instantly saw Alesha's dead body. Next to her hand was a shattered glass. The window in the living room was now closed, but Tammy decided to worry about that later. Alesha had been shot in the back of the head, but there was not a gun in sight. Rupert was stood over the dead body of Alesha, wearing his pyjamas. Imelda Stratton stood behind him, with a face which showed absolutely no emotions at all. Alesha had been murdered, and Tammy knew that she had to solve it.

## Chapter 7

### Chapter 6

Five minutes after the shot was fired, Tammy decided to crack on with the investigation. She knew that she would be assigned to the case, and she was allowed to start investigating and interviewing people, so she decided to interview the obvious prime suspect: Rupert. Although there were many other potential murderers, Tammy wanted Rupert to explain how the window was open one minute and closed the next, and she also wanted him to describe the events of the shooting. Clearly, Rupert was in a state of shock, so Tammy thought it was best that she should leave him until later. For now, she would interview Imelda Stratton.

"So, Imelda", said Tammy, "can you please describe to me what you did and where you were when you heard the shot?"

"Well, darling", Imelda started, "I was outside, smoking yet another cigarette - it's been a tough day, as you will know".

"That's a start. Can you tell me what you did when you heard the shot?"

"Isn't it obvious? When I heard that awful noise, I quickly ran up to the door of number 4, and it was locked. I heard Rupert crying and shouting inside, so I decided to break in by smashing the door".

"So, can you tell me what happened when you got inside?"

"I was just getting to that. When I got inside, I managed to get in, I saw Rupert stood over the body. He was just stood there, motionless, just staring at Alesha. About ten seconds later, you came in, and you know the rest of the story".

"So, Rupert did nothing?"

"Nothing".

"Did you see a gun anywhere?"

"Nope".

"So, I'd say it took you about twenty seconds to get inside".

"How did you know that?"

"Well, it took me about thirty seconds to get to the house, and deducting the ten second gap between you getting there and me getting there, that makes twenty".

"Well, I spent most of that time trying to get into the house!"

"You must be quite strong to break into that door, taking less than half a minute to get in!"

"Well, I managed. The door was quite weak".

"So, was anybody else around when you were smoking a cigarette?"

Imelda thought. "No. There was nobody".

"You didn't see anyone?"

"No".

## The second wife

"So, where were you looking whilst you were smoking this cigarette?"

Imelda gave Tammy a puzzled look. "Why do you have to know everything to the very last detail?"

"Forgive me, Imelda, but I need to know that you are telling the truth".

"Well, if you must know, I was looking at the valley in the distance - the place that this place is named after".

"Alright. So, do you think that Rupert did it?"

"I'd stake my life on it!"

"Did you see any way in which the murderer could have fled the scene?"

"Why? Do you think that Rupert didn't do it? Don't make me laugh!"

"In my opinion, if I had to answer honestly, at this moment in time, I'd say that Rupert did kill his wife, but I have to look at every single possibility, since I can think of at least seven - possibly eight, murderers of Alesha Christen other than Rupert".

"I got a bloody mouthful there - oh, I didn't mean to say 'bloody'", Imelda laughed.

"Did you see anything else or not?" cried an impatient Tammy.

"Yes. The window in the kitchen was wide open. Are you happy now?"

Tammy left the Stratton household for now, and before she got chance to speak to Rupert, she was interrupted by Craig, looking into the house, where all of the police tape was.

"What the bloody Hell's happened here?" he asked Tammy.

"Well", started Tammy, "long story short, Alesha Christen has been shot dead, and you are one of the suspects".

"What!?" cried Craig.

"Which bit of that sentence are you shocked at? The fact that Alesha has been killed, or the fact that you are a suspect?"

"Both! Who do you think did it?"

"I'll be asking the questions from now on. Follow me, please", said Tammy, not looking forward to this next interview.

"So", said Danny, in Tammy's house, "why do you think that I killed Alesha?"

"I don't think that you killed Alesha", said Tammy, "I think that you might have killed him, since you had the motive, opportunity and possibly means, but I don't know you that well to judge whether you are capable or not of murder".

"So, can you just get this over with then? I've got more problems now".

"Let's start with the beginning of the night. Why were you sacked from your job?"

"How do you know that?"

"Why would you come back, except to get your job back?"

"Alright, Alesha sacked me because I headed out two minutes early. I can't believe it. What do you make of that, eh?"

"All I make of that is that Alesha is dead, and I might be facing her murderer".

## The second wife

"Well, know that you're not".

"If you want to prove yourself innocent, you'll have to talk to me and give me any information that you know".

"Fine. You want information? I'll give you some. When I went to leave tonight, when I got in the car, I saw someone standing outside number 4, looking in".

Tammy paused before speaking, "did you see who it was?"

"No, but here's the interesting part: they were dressed in exactly the same clothes as Rupert wore tonight".

"That yellow suit?"

"Yeah- isn't that a coincidence?"

"Was it a man or a woman?"

"I think it was a man, but it might have been a woman, but I didn't see any...you know".

"So, it was probably a man?"

"Yep".

"Was anybody else there at the time?"

"There was nobody else there. Do you think it was them?"

"It might have been. Anyway, what was the relationship between Rupert and Alesha like? You knew them both best".

"Well, they were pretty much the perfect couple. Alesha had her strops, almost every day, but Rupert always stood up for her and he did his best not to cause an argument with her".

"Did they have any arguments?"

"I never heard them row properly".

"Not once?"

"Not once".

Tammy thought that was very strange, since she had seen Rupert arguing with someone, presumably Alesha, that night.

"Thank you, Craig", she said, "that will be all for now".

"Well, I'll tell you what - if I'd killed her, I'd have been a stupid person, because then I would have definitely lost my job, wouldn't I?"

"Oh", remembered Tammy, "one more thing. Why did you come back so late?"

"Because I wanted to get it over with. It would have been playing on my mind tonight in bed. I'll not get to sleep tonight, anyway, not after what's happened".

Craig left the house, and it was now time for Tammy to talk to Rupert.

"So", started Tammy, ready to catch Rupert out, "can you tell me your version of events just before the shot?"

"Well", said Rupert, "just before the shot, I have to admit that Alesha and I were having a little row".

"I saw that", replied Tammy, shocked that Rupert would tell the truth, "so what was the argument about?"

"I can't really remember - I think it was about Craig, or some of it. A lot of it was about little things. I was

## The second wife

surprised, actually, because that was the first row that we'd ever had!"

"So, did you kill your wife?"

"What? No! I'm still in shock about it now!" cried Rupert, showing Tammy his shaking hand.

"Alright", said Tammy, "so, the next question - where were you when the shot was fired?"

"I was in my - our - bedroom, preparing to go to bed".

"And what did you do when you heard the shot?"

"Almost immediately, I ran into the living room. I was so shocked...I..." Rupert stopped talking, and put his head in his hands.

"Did you see anybody else there at the time?"

Rupert shook his head.

"So, you just stood there, staring at Alesha?"

Rupert nodded.

"One more question, Rupert - was the window that the killer could have escaped from open before the shooting?"

Rupert nodded, "but only slightly, and the killer could not have come in, you see, because it's one of those windows that stops moving any further after about two inches, unless you flip the switch at the top".

"I know what you mean. I have them myself. So, the murderer could not have entered that way?"

"The murderer could not have entered any way, unless Alesha let them in through the door!"

"Was the door locked?"

"All doors and windows were locked - I'm a bit of a safety freak".

"So, the only way that this intruder could have got in was if Alesha opened the door to them?"

"Yes. It's the only possible way!"

"So, that makes things even more complicated..."

"What?"

"Oh, nothing. I'm just talking to myself. So, there is one more question that had slipped my mind".

"Well, what is it?"

"Where is your yellow suit?"

"It's in my bedroom. I took it off and changed just before the murderer came and killed my Alesha!"

"Can you get it for me?"

Rupert entered his bedroom, and searched through his wardrobe. His yellow suit had vanished.

"OK, Rupert", said Tammy, "I now need you to tell me everybody who had the chance to enter your house between your moving here and tonight".

"Well, I suppose anybody could have managed to sneak in. Alesha and I were very busy the other day when we were unpacking".

"Alright. I am getting closer, believe it or not".

## The second wife

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

When Rupert said that, a gun dropped out of the wardrobe.

"It's been in there for ages", said Rupert, not appearing nervous in the slightest way.

"I might need to take that for evidence".

"Why? You don't think I killed her, do you?"

"I don't know, and that could be the murder weapon. I'm not going to arrest you - yet - but I need to take that gun".

Rupert handed the gun to Tammy without hesitation or fuss.

On leaving the house, Oliver Stratton called out to Tammy, "do you need to interrogate me?"

"Why? Have you got any information on the case?"

"No. I don't know anything about that night".

"Well, I don't need to talk to you, then", replied Tammy, excited to go home.

When she arrived home, after taking the gun to the police station, Tammy said, "what a case this is going to be!"

"Have you got more suspects than usual?" asked Danny.

"I've had more, but there are lots of people who could have committed the murder: Imelda or Oliver Stratton, John, Eva or Harry Gardiner, Danny, Vera, possibly Anna, although there is no proof of a motive, and not to forget, Rupert, of course".

"So, one of those nine people is the murderer?"

"I am almost certain of it!"



## Chapter 8

### Chapter 7

Next on the list to be interviewed was Vera. To Tammy, Vera was a likely murderer if the murderer was not Rupert. If the person who had murdered Tammy's grandmother had got out of prison, Tammy would feel the same way and do the same things, although she would not go as far as murder.

"Vera", Tammy begun, "I need to ask you to explain a couple of things a little more to me, OK?"

"What do you want me to explain?" asked Vera, "I'm not involved in this murder in the slightest. Rupert Christen murdered his wife, and it's as simple as that!"

"There is the possibility that Rupert did not murder Alesha".

"Once a criminal, always a criminal, no matter what anybody says!"

"Can't you see that Rupert might have actually seen the error of his ways?"

"No. He has not! Everyone who commits murder should be killed themselves".

"It's understandable why you feel that way, but plenty of people who have killed have left prison, and have become very helpful, descent members of society".

"Is that what you wanted to talk about? To persuade me to be friends with that homicidal maniac over my sister's dead body?"

"No...not at all..."

"Well, you can forget it. There is nothing useful that you can get from me, and even if the murderer was someone other than Rupert, and if I saw them kill Alesha, I would let them get away with it!"

"I thought you just said that all murderers should be executed?"

"You know what I mean - like murderers in Dawn's case, who kill for no good reason. Well, plenty of people had a good reason to kill that superbitch, and quite frankly, the world is a better place without her!"

"That's quite harsh, isn't it?"

"Once you do find the evidence to go against Rupert Christen, Hinbrid Valley will be a peaceful place again!"

"Anyway, I need to ask you a couple of questions".

Vera sighed. "If you must", she replied.

"Firstly, what was your plan to get your own back on Rupert Christen?"

"Do I need to answer that?" replied Vera.

"No, but..."

"Then I won't!" yelled Vera, folding her arms and staring at the wall.

Tammy waited for ten seconds, and saw that Vera was not budging. "Look, if you do answer these questions, at least I have some information, so it does not look like you are hiding something".

"Fine!" cried Vera, "I'll answer your bloody questions, but they won't help with Alesha's murder!"

"Go on".

## The second wife

"My plan was to stalk them until they left Hinbrid Valley. I thought that they would get so sick of me that they would not want to live here anymore, and they would use their millions of pounds to find another place. There, are you happy now?"

"That's a fairly reasonable response, so yes".

"Is there anything else that you'd like to ask me, darling?" said Vera, sarcastically.

"Yes...last night, you flashed a gun in the pub. Why did you do it?"

"Well, firstly, the gun has no bullets in it, so nobody was in any danger, and secondly, I wanted to scare that bitch Alesha and her even more psychotic husband!"

"Where is the gun now?"

"It's in my bedroom".

"When and where did you get it?"

"If you must know, that was my grandfathers, from the second World War. I've never touched it since he died in 1975. Anyway, enough with my life story. You've heard enough of that already".

"Can I have a look at the gun?"

"It's in one of the drawers".

Tammy found the gun, and examined it. Vera was not lying. The gun was in fact from the 1940s. Tammy also thought that it was a coincidence, since the murder weapon had suddenly vanished, and Vera owned a gun. Vera could have managed to kill Alesha and run away with the gun easily. Now, Tammy had two guns to consider: Rupert's and Vera's. Tammy was not certain that one of the two guns was the murder weapon, but she knew that if one of the guns were, she would get closer to closing the case.

"So, are you going anywhere tonight?" Tammy asked Vera, trying to make her relaxed and unsuspecting.

"Well, I was going to, but my headscarf is missing, and it's supposed to be a freezing night", replied Vera, "so I don't think I will now".

"When did you last see it?" asked Tammy, trying to change the conversation.

"I put it down in the garden, on the table, while I opened the door. I forgot about it until later, and when I went to look for it on the table, it was gone".

"It might have blown away".

"No. I remember putting it underneath my vase".

"So, are you certain that you left it there?"

"I am one hundred percent certain. It's a mystery to me".

"Hmmm. I'll let you know if I find it", replied Tammy, leaving Vera's house.

Next to be interviewed, and the final three people, were John, Eva and Harry Gardiner. Tammy saw that Eva and John both had the motive to murder Alesha, but could they do it together, or would they be in it alone? Also, Tammy knew that Harry Gardiner transformed from a polite, fairly shy boy to a hateful, horrible brat towards Alesha. What did he have against her? These were the questions that Tammy wanted to try to answer.

## The second wife

"So", said John, "who's first?"

"I'd like both of you together", said Tammy, "there's not that much to talk about".

"Fire away then", said Eva.

"Well, firstly, I want to know, what did you do when you got home last night?"

"Well, John and I opened a bottle of champagne after sending the babysitter home. It was strange, really, because Rupert had given us that bottle on their way home, as a way of an apology. Alesha did not look too amused, though".

"So, after you drank the champagne, what did you do?"

"We went to bed", replied Eva, "it had been a very tiring day, and we wanted to just end it".

"Did you, by any chance, see or hear anything in the area last night, that was unusual".

"Funny you should mention that..." said John.

"Could it be linked to the murder?"

"Actually, I think it might be".

"Then tell me, please!"

"When Eva and I were lying in bed, we heard a woman's high heels running around the outside of our house. It was very loud. I looked outside but I couldn't see anybody. It was too dark. About two minutes later, we heard the shot".

"So, I need to find out who this person was, because they might have vital information. Tell me, is this usual, or has it never happened before?"

"Nobody has ever ran around making that much noise at that time of night since we've lived here", said Eva,

"so, do you think this person was the killer?"

"Maybe...but there might be another explanation yet".

"I'm so sick of my life at the moment. Alesha's now dead, so we have no star for Pure Evil!"

"I'm sure you'll find someone else", laughed Tammy, "can I speak to Harry now?"

"If you must".

Tammy knocked on Harry's bedroom door.

"Hello, Miss", said Harry.

"Hello, Harry", Tammy said, "do you mind if I come in and ask a couple of questions?"

"Of course you can come in", replied the seemingly angelic child.

"Harry, I need to ask you some questions about Alesha Christen. Do you know who that is?"

"Yes. She was married to Mr. Christen in number 4. She got murdered last night".

"Who told you that?"

"My mother and father".

"OK, and can you tell me what you thought of her?"

"Well...she looked a bit nasty".

## The second wife

"Were you nasty to her?"

Harry remained quiet.

"It's OK, you can tell me", said Tammy, desperate for answers.

"I did not like Mrs Christen. She was very nasty to my mother and father".

"Did your mother and father ever talk about her?"

"All the time. They complain about the lengths that they have to go to for Alesha".

"Alright, and did you hear your parents talk about what they were going to do about it?"

"No. They just complained about her?"

"Did your parents go out after they came back last night?"

"No. They stayed in and then went to bed".

"Did you hear a woman running around your house last night?"

"Yes".

"OK", said Tammy, who had ran out of questions.

Having interviewed every suspect (except for Anna, who Tammy did not yet consider a suspect), Tammy decided to try to think in more detail, but the question was, where to start?

## Chapter 9

### Chapter 8

The very next morning, Anna Barclay was found dead in number 1. Many of the residents were shocked at this, and others seemed to know that it was coming. Tammy did not seem to understand any other reason for killing Anna, other than the fact that she may have had vital information, and the murderer knew this. Assuming that it was the same killer, Tammy knew that this was her opportunity to close the case.

That morning, Tammy went to the crime scene, where Anna's body still was, and examined it to the very last detail. The first thing that Tammy saw was the rope tightly fastened around Anna's neck - she had clearly been strangled. The next thing that she noticed was that there was a hat near her body. It looked quite fancy, and it looked like a man would wear it.

"So, the murder comes in here, kills Anna and drops their hat here without noticing? That is just too fishy to me", Tammy told another investigator in the room.

"I agree", said the other investigator, "it's obviously been placed here by the murderer for a reason".

"That's something else for me to think about. Anyway, is there anything else that looks suspicious?"  
"Well, it's not suspicious, but I have come up with the events just before her death".

"Go on".

"Well, Anna is sat at her desk, presumably studying, because of her book that is there".

"What book is it?"

"It's about job interviews".

"So, she was planning on changing jobs?"

"It looks that way. Anyway, as Anna is sitting here, the murderer comes up to her, wraps the rope around her neck and chokes her to death".

"Well, that's quite obvious, don't you think?"

"These marks on her neck indicate no struggle".

"So, it was quick - the murderer had probably planned on how they were going to do it".

"So, why do you think they left the murder weapon here this time?"

"I don't know. Maybe they forgot about it, or simply did not care. This rope tells us very little..." said Tammy, unconvincingly.

"So, has this helped you with your investigation?"

"It's given me a couple of more things to think about", replied Tammy, "but we haven't finished searching the room yet. There could be more information".

After a couple of minutes of searching, Tammy found her next clue, and it was vital for the case. In the drawer, she found something rather shocking. It was a letter, and it said:

"I know you murdered Alesha Christen. I saw you enter the Gardiner's house and take the gun".

## The second wife

"So, Anna was murdered because she was blackmailing the killer", said the investigator.

"But more importantly, we know what gun was used to kill Alesha Christen!" yelled an excited Tammy.

Tammy thought that it had to be one of the Gardiners, but she received a shock when she discovered that they each had a perfect alibi!

The night before, the Gardiners set off to go to a hotel for the night, since Harry and John were competing in a golf tournament, and the hotel was at least fifty miles away, and since they left before Anna was last seen alive, the Gardiners could not have done it. This confused Tammy. She knew that this was her toughest case yet.

She thought to herself, "if the Gardiners did not commit the murder, how on Earth did somebody manage to get into their house and take the gun without them realising? The houses are only small! And why would they go to that much trouble to take the gun from their house?"

There were many questions on Tammy's mind, and this was a very puzzling mystery. It seemed that from the clues she obtained from everybody, none of the suspects could have committed the murder. With the Gardiners eliminated from the list, that left five people: Rupert Christen, Oliver and Imelda Stratton, Vera and Craig, the servant. It was all very confusing for her, and in all of the cases that she had solved, this one proved to be the toughest. The murderer had to be somebody really clever, and very scheming to come up with such an elaborate ploy to kill Alesha Christen. All of Tammy's thoughts changed when she read that note - at first, she thought that the murderer was either Vera or Rupert, but now, it seemed that they could not have done it, given the facts. Once Tammy learned how the murderer managed to take the gun, she would solve the case, she thought to herself.

After leaving number 1, Tammy decided to go home, which was next door. She then thought to herself, "ever since the Christens arrived, Hinbrid Valley has become such a different place".

Tammy decided to go out into the garden, where Vera was sat.

"I've been meaning to talk to you", Vera said.

"Oh, really?" asked Tammy, "what about?"

"Well, I'm very puzzled about something. Do you know that I lost my headscarf yesterday?"

"Yes".

"Well, I was going for a walk in the park today, and I found it there".

"How did that get there?"

"I have absolutely no idea! But that's not the most confusing part. When I found it, I saw that about a third of it had been cut off! It was gone! Now it doesn't fit my head!"

"Are you sure it's yours?"

"I am certain it's mine. It has my initials on it, and it has exactly the same pattern. It's no coincidence. Besides, headscarves don't come in that size, I mean, the size that it is now, so somebody has obviously cut a little bit off for something".

"Why would anybody want to steal your headscarf from your garden and cut it off, leaving it in the park?"

"That's why I wanted to talk to you about it. It's baffled me!"

"I'm sorry, Vera, but I have no idea. There has to be some explanation, and when I think of it, I'll come and tell you straight away".

## The second wife

"So, are you any further with the case?"

"Fortunately, yes, but unfortunately, this means that the case is even more and more complicated".

"Why?"

"I can't speak to you about that. You're a suspect, remember?"

"Oh...yes", said Vera, trying her best to laugh. Her laugh was obviously fake and seemed quite nervous to Tammy.

Tammy didn't know what to think. Did Rupert Christen actually murder his wife? Tammy received yet another clue with a knock on her door. When she answered, it was the investigator, and he said, "well, I've found out that the hat was Rupert Christen's".

"How do you know?" asked Tammy.

"It has his initials inside, and the Strattons, Craig, and several staff at the local pub said that they all saw Rupert wearing that very hat on the night of Alesha's murder".

"Well, do you know what this means?" asked Tammy.

"That Rupert Christen is the murderer?" replied a clueless investigator.

"No", said Tammy, "this means that somebody is trying to implicate Rupert Christen of the murders!"

## Chapter 10

### Chapter 9

After a whole night of trying to think things through, Tammy knew that she was getting closer to solving the murders, but she knew that everybody would have the motive to frame Rupert Christen.

When she got up and got ready, she went into her back garden, where Vera was sat.

"Have you figured out what had happened to my headscarf yet?" asked Vera.

"Unfortunately, no", said Tammy, "but there is something more important for me to ask".

"Oh, what's that?"

"You had a rope in your back garden the other day, didn't you?"

"Well...yes, but..."

"Because the thing is, Anna Barclay was murdered with a rope looking very similar to the one that you had, if not exactly alike".

"And? It doesn't prove I killed anybody!" laughed Vera.

"So, where is the rope now?" asked Tammy, getting rather suspicious of her next door neighbour.

"Well", replied Vera, feeling under pressure, "it was here the other day..."

"So, where is it now?"

"I can't remember".

"So that's it? I need you to tell me where that rope is. If it's not in your back garden, then it must be in your house".

Vera's voice grew quieter. "I don't remember taking it into the house..."

"So, if it's not in the house, or back garden, it must have been taken out of your house, so where is it now?"

"Alright. I admit it! I've lost that, too!"

"So why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"Because I knew that you'd suspect me, when I haven't done anything wrong!"

"Well, I suspect you even more now than I would have. You should have been honest, but now, I think that you probably killed Anna Barclay!"

"You're wrong! You're wrong!"

Rupert Christen was watching in the background, grinning.

"You're loving this, aren't you?" said Vera, looking in Rupert's direction.

"Well, if you murdered my wife, you deserve to go to jail for it!" yelled Rupert.

"I didn't kill anybody!" cried Vera, "and you know fine well!"

"Before you imply that I killed my wife, let me remind you that all of the evidence is going against you, Vera".



## The second wife

"What evidence?"

"Well, for one thing, the missing rope, the strong hatred towards us, the fact that you had a gun, the fact that you were under the influence of alcohol..."

"Before you go any further, let me remind you that the gun used to kill your bitchy, slutty wife was that of the Gardiners, and even though I was drunk that night, I was perfectly aware of what I was doing. Besides, I know better than to play your own games, Rupert. If anyone's the murderer, Tammy, it's Rupert. I can guarantee that!"

"We'll see about that, won't we?" said Tammy, going into her house.

Tammy got another knock at the door later that day. Again, it was the other investigator.

"We've got another new lead", he said.

"What is it?"

"That young boy who lives round here, Harry Gardiner?"

"Yes. I know him. What about him?"

"Well, he's found a yellow suit in the park, all torn and placed in a bush. Harry said that he spotted it easily, because it was hanging out of the bush".

"So, is it definitely Rupert's suit?"

"It looks that way. We would have to assume that this is not a coincidence, and the clothes that that stranger looking into the house that night wore is the same as the clothes Harry found in the park".

"So, somebody is definitely out to frame Rupert".

"But we knew that already".

"Yes, but we can now tell that this person is desperate to see him behind bars, and they have come up with this elaborate ploy of seeing Rupert Christen go back to prison!"

"So, I'll carry on with the investigation, if you keep trying to catch people out".

"I'll do that".

Later, when Danny returned home, he told Tammy yet another crucial piece of information about the case.

"All I need is one more scrap of information, and I think I can work it all out!" cried Tammy.

"How close are you to solving the case?" asked Danny.

"I think I'm close...very close".

"Well, I know you'll crack it. You've never failed yet, have you?"

"I know this is a stupid question, but did you see anything suspicious on the night of Alesha's or Anna's murder?"

"Well, come to think of it..."

## The second wife

"Yes?"

"It's probably nothing, but..."

"Go on. I might need this".

"It's just, on the night of Alesha's murder, about five minutes before the shot, while I was outside smoking a cigarette..."

"Yes?"

"Well, I heard the sound of smashing glass. I don't know where it came from, but I heard that Alesha was found next to a broken glass".

"Yes. That is something to think about..."

Then it struck Tammy. She did not know for certain, but everything suddenly started to make perfect sense - all of the clues that she had obtained fit into the puzzle, all except for two.

"I need to round all of the suspects together", said Tammy, "I think I know who the murderer is!"

"Was it something I said?" asked Danny.

"Yes, and without that information, I would still be going in the wrong direction, but I think I know what's happened, so we need to round up the original eight suspects. There is one more question I need to ask you".

"Anything".

"How sure are you that the sound of the glass breaking did not come from number 1?"

"It did not come from number 1, I am one hundred percent certain. It came from somewhere like 3,4 or 5, I think, but it did not come from number 1".

"OK, are you ready?"

"I'm coming too?"

"Of course. I might be announcing the murderer now, if I get the right answers to these questions".

"What questions? What are you talking about?"

"I'll explain when I get there!"

Tammy and Danny went to the middle of the circle of six houses, so there were police cars blocking every exit. One by one, the suspects arrived. The Strattons, the Gardiners (although they were not suspects now), Danny, Vera, and of course, Rupert. There was also the investigator who Tammy had worked with.

"Before I begin", said Tammy, "I have to let you know that I might know who the murderer is, but I need everybody in this room to answer honestly these next two questions".

"What are they then?" asked Vera.

"Number one - does anybody want to admit to running around the outside of the Gardiners' house on the night of Alesha's murder?"

Nobody spoke.

## The second wife

"Somebody here did. It's alright if you did, because it does not necessarily mean that you are the murderer. I just need to know".

Still, nobody spoke.

"Very well. I'll move on. On the night of Alesha's murder, five minutes before the shooting, did anybody drop a glass?"

Nobody spoke again.

"Did anybody break any glass at all? Whether that was a vase, or a drinking glass, or a glass bottle? No?"

Nobody replied.

"So, just to verify, nobody at all wants to admit to smashing a glass?"

Nobody spoke.

"Well then, people. Thank you for your co-operation. The murder is solved".

Everybody suddenly gasped.

"I'm just going to take five minutes out to get my explanation ready".

"You mean, you know who did it?" asked John Gardiner.

"Yes".

"Go on, give us a clue", said an excited Eva Gardiner.

"Very well", said Tammy, "if you want to solve the murder yourself, consider everything that has been said or done very carefully. Also, consider the following objects with great thought: Rupert's hat, Rupert's yellow suit, the front door of number 4, a pair of high heels, a rope, a headscarf, a window, a glass, the three guns, and a bottle of champagne. From those objects there, you should be able to deduce who the killer is".

Everybody, including the police, stared at Tammy with very confused faces.

"I'll be back in five minutes to announce the murderer", said Tammy.

## Chapter 11: The murderer revealed

### Chapter 10

Tammy returned in five minutes to announce the identity of the murderer and to give an explanation of how they murdered both Alesha and Anna.

"First of all", started Tammy, "before I tell you all who the murderer is, I would like to go through the events of the night, from what other witnesses seen or heard".

The audience remained silent. The murderer sat there, thinking about their next move.

"About ten minutes before the murder", said Tammy, "Craig, the servant, witnessed a person, dressed in Rupert's clothes, looking into the house. Five minutes before the murder, Danny heard a glass smashing. When I asked just there, nobody admitted to breaking it. Two minutes before the murder, the Gardiners heard a person running around the outside of the house. And finally, just before the murder, Rupert Christen was seen shouting at somebody, presumably Alesha".

"We know all this", said Imelda, "could you just tell us who the killer is?"

"All in good time", replied Tammy, "but first, I need to help you to understand where I'm coming from".

Tammy then turned back to everybody else to speak, "all of these events are connected to the murder in some way. Now, let me go through all of the suspects, and how likely I thought they were of committing the murder. Firstly, the Strattons. On the night of the murder, I heard both of them planning something. Could this have been murder?"

"No, it wasn't!" cried Oliver.

"Then, what exactly were you planning?"

"If you must know", replied Imelda, "we were planning to put Rupert Christen back behind bars a different way, by staging a theft".

"And that's all I wanted to hear".

Tammy moved on.

"Next was the servant, Craig. How likely was he to commit a murder?"

Craig shook his head.

"Well", said Tammy, "I struggled to judge his character, so I really couldn't tell you. So, what about Vera?"

"What about me?"

"You've been acting very suspicious lately, haven't you?"

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Ever since Alesha's murder, you've been covering things up!"

"Alright. I have covered things up, but I've explained all that to you already!"

"Finally, there was Rupert. How likely was he to kill again? That seemed to be the big question round here - did Rupert Christen actually murder his second wife?"

"Yes!" cried almost everybody there.

"Well, you're about to find out, aren't you?" said Tammy, looking rather excited, "it's the moment of truth!"

## The second wife

Everybody sat comfortably in their seats, waiting to hear the name of the murderer. They were staring at her.

"The murderer of Alesha Christen and Anna Barclay is..."

The atmosphere was so tense that it could have been cut with a knife. Hinbrid Valley was so silent at that point you could hear a pin drop. Then the name was announced.

"Rupert Christen!"

"I knew it!" cried Vera, Imelda and Oliver, all at once.

"I think you all knew it!" cried Tammy.

"That's absurd and you know it is!" yelled a frustrated Rupert.

"Is it, Rupert? Is it? Let me explain everything".

"Go on then. I fail to see how you can prove I killed my own wife".

"Well, if everybody listened to me, I can explain everything. Let's go back to the night of Alesha's murder, in the pub before it happened. I noticed the Christens having a conversation with the Gardiners about Pure Evil, the play that they wanted Alesha to star in. Then Alesha turned it down. Why? I'll tell you why - because she had all of the money, so she didn't need to act any more. If Alesha enjoyed acting, why did she turn the job down?"

"Because she had the money, so she didn't need to work for us", replied John.

"Precisely", replied Tammy, "so, if you are one of the Strattons, or Vera, you will know fine well that Rupert Christen murdered his first wife, Dawn, because she apparently married him only for his money. So, when Alesha turned down the job, Rupert automatically assumed that Alesha married him for the money, so that she would never have to work again. This made Rupert extremely vexed".

"How come I didn't think of that?" said Vera, "it's so obvious!"

"Which is why people did not bother to think about it. Rupert now had the motive. So, he developed this elaborate plan in his mind to kill Alesha, but it needed to be set up properly. Later, as they returned home, he gave the Gardiners a bottle of champagne. I'll come back to that later once I have explained the next part. However, he knew that he wasn't going to get away with murdering Alesha, because everybody would point the finger at him, and he certainly didn't want to back inside".

"So, what did he do?" asked Imelda.

"He made it out to look like somebody had deliberately tried to implicate him. I'll explain further why later. But for now, he had to get rid of Craig, so he fast-forwarded the clock in the kitchen where Craig was working, so that Craig felt like he could go home early. Then, after Craig left the house, he ran outside, with the only witness to this been Alesha, and appeared to be a perfect stranger, suspiciously looking into the window. This was planned out to make Craig think that it was Rupert, so that when Harry Gardiner found the suit later, I would think that somebody had tried to frame Rupert".

"Then what did he do?" asked a happy Vera.

"Next, he murdered his wife".

## The second wife

"What? That can't be! That was ten minutes later, and you said..."

"I know what I said, but I have now figured out what has happened to your headscarf".

"You have?"

"The only explanation that I can think of, Vera, is that Rupert took your headscarf from the garden and used it as a silencer. This is why the edges were cut off, so that if anybody were to find it, they would not see the hole in the bottom of it, because that would make them think that a silencer had been used, and Rupert would be caught out. However, it did not block the sound off completely. It would have sounded a little bit like a cork popping out of a bottle...so, now do you understand why he gave the Gardiners a bottle of champagne?"

"Because if somebody heard it, they would think it was the us opening the champagne!" cried John.

"Yes. A gun used with a silencer does not sound exactly like a cork popping off a bottle, so it may have aroused suspicion".

"What did he do after that?" asked Vera, loving the fact that Rupert had been caught out.

"Well, after he killed Alesha, he smashed a glass, making it look like she had just been killed. He also opened the back window to make us think that the killer had escaped that way. By killing Alesha before the shot was fired, this also gave him the opportunity of putting on her high heels and running around the outside of number 6, making it look like the gun had been taken from their house and that the murderer was a woman".

"Why would he go to that length to do that?"

"Because he knew that I had to think that the murder weapon came from number 6, because if I thought that the gun came from his house, he would be caught out".

"So, he pretended to enter our house, so that he could turn himself away from the investigation".

"Yes. Then, finally, after entering the house, he locked the door so that later when I came to interview him, I would think that he had changed into an honest, descent man after been in prison, where in reality he was still the same scheming, evil psycho. He also locked the door to prevent people from coming in so fast. This gave him time to do his next task. When he saw me at the window, he staged an argument with Alesha, to make it appear that she was still alive. When he saw me leave the window, he quickly picked up his gun, opened his living room window, and fired the gun into the air. This made sure that everybody on the circle heard. Immediately, he shut the window, ran into the bedroom and hid his gun in the wardrobe. He still had plenty of time to go up to Alesha's body and play the part of a traumatised husband".

"And what about Anna's murder?" asked Craig.

"Well, the sad truth is, I think that Rupert killed Anna for no reason. He just picked her because she was the quiet one and she looked like she was hiding something. She wasn't - she had no idea. The only reason Rupert killed Anna is because he needed to make it seem like the gun used to kill Alesha came from the Gardiners' house. This would also make it seem like one of the Gardiners had killed Alesha. Unbeknownst to Rupert, the Gardiners were away at the time of Anna's murder, so they were in the clear. However, Rupert still managed to take Vera's rope to strangle Anna. He also placed his hat, with his initials in, in the room, making sure that I would find it later. This would make me think that somebody was desperate to frame Rupert".

"So, why did he want to frame us and Vera at the same time?" asked Eva.

"Because he wanted to add as many other suspects into the equation as possible. This would create more distraction from himself if he did this, and he certainly succeeded!"

## The second wife

"So, what happens now?" asked Vera.

"Well, Rupert", said Tammy, "you haven't said a word in that explanation, have you?"  
Rupert clapped his hands slowly, implying sarcasm.

"Well, well, well, Miss Williams", said Rupert, "I have to say, you have quite a complex mind, but you are wrong this time".

"I'm not wrong, Rupert", replied Tammy, "because it is the only explanation that fits all of the facts".

"There has to be another explanation", said Rupert, "because I'm not stupid enough to kill again".

"But you were stupid enough the first time?"

"I admit I was, but can you show me one bit of evidence that suggests I killed Alesha or Anna?"

"Well..." said Tammy. All eyes were on her now. If she had no proof, Rupert would walk.

"So, we've been dragged out here for nothing?" said one policeman.

"I thought so", said Rupert, "well. It's been nice knowing you people, but I'd best be off home. I don't want to spend another second here".

"Wait right there, Christen!" Tammy cried.

"What?" he asked her.

"What about Vera's headscarf?"

"What about it?"

"If your fingerprints are on that scarf, that is the proof I need, since if you were an innocent person, the fingerprints would not be there".

"I think we need to arrest him", said the other investigator, "and we'll keep you in until the results of that dusting come out. Vera, where's your headscarf?"

"I'll go and get it now", said Vera.

Rupert knew that he had been caught out. He just ran for it. He ran behind his house, and the police were quite far behind him. After a long chase, he tripped over, and the police grabbed him.

Whilst he was taken away in the car, the Strattons looked at him, gave him the evil eye and waved. Rupert stared at them, knowing that they had won. Vera, on the other hand, did not look smug or evil towards him. She just stared. As Rupert was driven away, Tammy talked to Vera.

"He'll never see daylight again. I promise".

"That's not the point", replied Vera, "I'm glad he's gone forever now, but two more women are dead because of the British justice system".

"No. It's his fault!"

"Christen is a lunatic. The government had the chance to stop him and keep him locked away forever, but no, they had to let him out, and look at the devastating results!"

"I'm not saying I disagree with you", said Tammy, "but some murderers do genuinely change".

## The second wife

"Once a criminal, always a criminal", said Vera, walking into her house.

Tammy then went back into her house.

"I'm glad that's over", she said.

"Tammy", said Danny, "I have to talk to you about something".

"What is it?"

"I think you should move out".

"What!?" cried a stunned Tammy.

"You get too involved in these cases, and frankly, I don't want this life. I don't think I can cope with this lifestyle".

"And that's it, is it?"

"I'm sorry, but one day, you'll find someone who deserves you more than I do".

It took two days of talking to each other, but Tammy finally decided to leave. Deep down, she knew that this was not the life she wanted to live, either, surrounded by rich people, so she left, back to her home village of Lewbury, where all of her family were waiting for her. She never spoke to Danny again, but she had high hopes for the future, and she applied for a new job as part of an investigation team...

The end



## The second wife

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