

Bob Kerr Investigations

The Series



Part One:

Ponderings

by

Russell & Scott Willens

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Bob Kerr Investigations

Ponderings

Chapter One

“That doesnae look right.” Uttered Bob Kerr to his trusted companion; a Jack Russell by the name of Hector, who was of similar age if dog years were counted and just as lame. “A queer place to be doing a bit of fly-tipping; Dod will have a fit. He was tellin’ me they were weeks behind schedule when they were fishing you out of the trench this morning, but we’ll just keep on walking, haven’t seen anything, nothing to do with us.” Hector appeared to hang on every word as they stuck to the dark tree lined path around Seafield Pond. They didn’t need lights or torches; they’d walked this route for the past sixteen years. In the distance four shadowy figures were now getting back into a car with no lights on but the engine had been running all the time and sounded a bit like a diesel. Gavin would have known what it was as he was in the trade. “About all he’s good for Hector, that and his blessed computers. Not that there’s much between any of them. I’d like to know where I went wrong. She says I was too hard on the first two and not hard enough on the other pair.” For the first time since they’d left the house Hector appeared not to be listening, his heightened sense of smell catching new and more pungent scents; curiosity satisfied he now trotted as quickly as he could to where the stranger’s car had been parked. Bob had no choice other than to follow him. “What are you seeing Hector?” It was a fairly stupid question as the dog was almost totally blind. “Don’t you go fallin’ in that trench again? I’ll no be able to get you out until morning.” Bob pulled a small torch out of his jacket pocket, which was purely for emergencies and pointed it towards the ground.

Sure enough he was in the middle of several sets of foot prints. “They’re either awful wee blokes, or women with that size of foot Hector. Oi where are you headin’ now?” Bob had intended shining his torch down into the trench where the sewage pipes were to be laid, but he got no more than a glance as Hector decided he wanted home. “Aye we’ll get up the road before The Bowling Club Crew starts rollin’ out. Yer no as daft as you look.” The dog didn’t dignify the comment by looking back; instead he just kept on at his own pace towards

home.

By eight o'clock the following morning Bob Kerr was standing over the trench he'd seen the fly-tippers at, whilst a gracious labourer had once again gone into the pipeline to coax Hector out with a chocolate biscuit; doggy treats hadn't worked this occasion.

"I'm goin' to take him to the vet; he's too much trouble nowadays." Lied Bob as he waited anxiously for his pal to be retrieved from the pipe. There was a little snarling, barking and a few choice words from the Labourer before both appeared from the pipe. However the Labourer looked far more ashen faced than expected. "What's wrong with you Son you look a bit shaken there? He can be a right aggressive wee bugger, you know what they say about grumpy old men, well he's the canine equivalent."

"Seen a ghost mate?" Asked Dod trying not to look concerned about the possibility of another delay in the contract.

"Closer than you might think Dod. You'd better call the police." Whispered the Labourer as he held onto the struggling Jack Russell whilst trying to stop himself from being sick.

"What now?" Asked Dod with a croak in his voice.

"There's a body down there, weirdest thing I've ever seen. It's a bloke, but he's in women's clothes." Answered the Labourer whereupon he handed Bob Hector wrapped in an old towel Bob had provided. Having been stuck down a hole filled with water and God knows what else, he seemed happy enough to be in Bob's company unlike the Labourer, who was now throwing up.

"That'll be one of those transistors. A lot of them going about." Suggested Bob knowing this wasn't quite the right term for them, but hoped that the gravity of the situation would hide his uncertainty.

Bob was at least half a mile from his house and his running days were long gone. He spied the Site Agent's office and assured from his own site experience fully expected them to have a phone, but before heading off turned to the Labourer for confirmation. "Does the office

have a phone?" Asked Bob, the young man nodded twice and pointed in the general direction of the office.

Bob knocked loudly on the office door and moments later a middle aged man in a well worn suit appeared. "Can I help you?"

"Sorry to appear so abrupt, but I need to use your phone, one of your labourers who was helping to get my dog from the trench; he claims there's a body down there, so I think you, we should call the police." Said Bob without as much as a breath between sentences or a flicker of emotion, confident once more now that he had his dog back. The Site Agent stood still and said nothing, he didn't know if this was a joke or, was this old man a complete lunatic? "I know it's hard to believe, maybe you should have a look for yourself before we call the police, I would go down but the old legs won't take it, if I got in there I would never get out again and then your trench would be moonlighting as a graveyard with the first two customers going free. If you think I am an old fool who's lost his marbles as well as his dog, show me the phone and I'll call the police myself, they know me. Better do it fast, we don't want this place smelling any worse than it already does."

The Site Agent regained his composure, although he continued to eye Bob with suspicion as he spoke. "Sorry it's a lot to take in, the phone's over there, I don't know the number so perhaps its better if you do it, being a local." The inference went ignored by Bob as he dialled the number.

"Hello? Is that Poulton Police Station, this is Bob Kerr. Yes I'm fine Isabelle. You had better get yourselves down here to East Gate, to the pump house site. One of the workers has found a body in the trench, whilst he was trying to get my dog out. No I'm not drunk and it's not a joke. No I don't know who it is, I haven't been down there." Bob was rapidly running out of patience. "You could always ignore this call and maybe some old age pensioner or some kids mucking around might find the body tomorrow, the day after I made this call, which would look good in the papers. Twenty minutes, ok then thanks."

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“Well Mister? Mr Muirhead, I think you had better check on the laddie who found the body. Maybe you should bring him in and give him some hot sweet tea. I’ll go back and wait for the police.” Bob loved being in control of the situation, it took him back to when he was building stone and ran a large squad of men.

The police eventually arrived, forty minutes later. Bob noticed it was young James Brunton and Sergeant Blackwell. Bob didn’t have a lot of time for the latter, young Jamie on the other hand was keen and helped out with the mini rugby, he could have been a professional, but broke his leg before an important trial for Scotland’s Under Eighteens and never really took it seriously after that. Instead he concentrated on his career in the Police. Sergeant Blackwell on the other hand was from Glasgow originally and found this quiet backwater more to his liking than the gangs in his home city. It was a lot less hassle throwing his corpulent frame around, bullying youngsters and harassing old people, unlike the drug dealers and the loan sharks, folk said he was in their pocket.

“Morning Mr Kerr, how are you?” It was young Jamie who spoke first.

“I’m fine Jamie, how’s yer Mum and Dad?”

“They’re.....”

“Listen here you pair, we’re no here to exchange pleasantries and pass the time of day. As for you Bob Kerr better no be wasting our time.”

“I suppose not; your breakfast getting cold?” Muttered Bob to himself

“Mr Kerr can you show us where the labourer found the body please?” Asked Jamie.

“No problem Son, just follow me.” Answered Bob as he led the way up the grassy slope towards the trench. “This is it here.”

“Oi Bob, can you no see these stripes on my arm or, are you going blind like that old dug of yours; should have been put down years ago.

Direct your answers to me.”

“Listen here you, maybe folk in Glasgow appreciate that lack of respect you give folk, but your turn will come, people around here trust Jamie and even that old gossip Isabelle Morrison, but you, well that’s a different story. Just remember it wasnae you who found the body it was Hector.”

“What do I care what people in a hell hole think about me, five more years here and then I can retire.”

“That says it all, the sooner they promote somebody local the better and safer this place will be for all. In there, if you want to be a hero Sergeant Blackwell, why don’t you go in and check it out?”

“PC Brunton go into that trench and check it out.”

Jamie and Bob just smiled at each other

“Before you go in Son, you had better put some overalls and gloves on, you don’t know what’s down there, Health and Safety and all that.”

“Good idea Mr Kerr, we don’t want any more bodies piling up.”

“Just get on with it Constable.”

Jamie pulled the necessary overalls and climbed down into the trench and then only a few minutes later and only slightly less shaken than the labourer. “It’s true Sergeant, there is a body down there, looks like an elderly Gentleman in his mid sixties.”

“Not a complete waste of time then?” Bob’s question was directed at Sergeant Blackwell who flatly ignored it.

“Mr Kerr, can I see you for a minute.” Asked Jamie.

“Right away Son.”

“Mr Kerr, when they bring the body up I would like you to have a look at it before they put it into the van. There’s something about him, I think I recognise.”

“Okay Jamie, but you’d better ask Sergeant Blackwell first, don’t

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want you getting into anymore trouble.”

As the coroner’s men were carrying the body towards the rear of the van Jamie asked them to stop, so Bob could have a look. This time it was Bob’s turn to be shocked, he looked at the face in disbelief and gasped, “Its Peter Thompson from Tranent, Peter Thompson you know he writes for The Envoy, Peter Thompson the Natureman.”

“Well at least they’ll have something decent to write about next week other than Domino Drives and prize winning vegetables.” Said Sergeant Blackwell.

“It would be nice if you had some kind words to say about the recently departed.” Said Bob as he began to walk away.

“Mr Kerr, hold up Bob.” Called Jamie. “You’ll need to make a full statement. I could pop round later today if that’s all right?”

“Mr Kerr will have to do what everyone else has to. Either wait here or make his own way up to the Police Station.” Said Sergeant Blackwell firmly. “This looks like a suspicious death and we’ve not got time to chase up statements because members of the public are too lazy to help us, but are quick enough to criticise.”

Chapter Two

“I thought you had a meeting today?” Asked Eva Kerr, Bob’s wife for more than forty long years, as she prepared the living room for the imminent arrival of her friends.

“I cannae be bothered. I’m going out with the dogs.” Said Bob searching for his tammy. “You know that bloody Inspector Woman all but accused me of being senile.”

“What did you expect her to think? You told her you saw what looked like a gang of wee people.” Eva had to swallow hard to stop herself from bursting into laughter. “Fly tipping.” Eva couldn’t stop herself from laughing now as tears ran down her face.

“Aye yer awfy funny when you want to be. I saw them and their foot prints.” Said Bob as he stomped out of the house grabbing the Jack Russell’s lead from the kitchen bunker. Eva could still be heard laughing outside as Bob fastened the lead to Hector’s collar. This just made Bob all the more determined to prove what he saw was right enough. He may not be a match for that snippy Inspector Murdoch, but he was more than a match for Sergeant Blackwell. “No way Hector, I’ll get there before the pair of them, and her in there will be made to eat her words.” Added Bob as they reached the garden gate.

“Morning Bob. All right there Hector?” Asked Diane Wheaton from the houses behind Bob’s, as she stopped to clap Hector and dig for gossip.

“Hi Hen.” Said Bob with a sigh. It would be at least ten minutes before he got away again. Diane always started with the pleasantries and on this occasion slowly worked up to the body. “It wasnae me Hen, if it was anybody it was Hector, or the Labourer that went to get him out of the trench. Hopefully this time we’ll get round without finding anything more than a few rabbits and water hens.” Bob made to move off, but Diane blocked his path.

“I heard the body was wearing a dress.”

“You did? I cannae say I noticed. I just wanted to get away from

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there as soon as possible. At my age you don't want to be hanging around dead people too much." This time Bob sidestepped Diane and was onto the inside road before Diane could say anything more.

"Mind and keep him on his lead this time." Called Diane.

"Aye." Said Bob as he walked as quickly as his legs could carry him. From the front window of his house he could see that the Police had cordoned off the trench in which the body had been found. Yesterday the site had been crawling with Police and locals out for the gossip. Today however through the bare branches of the roadside trees there were only two uniformed officers sitting in their car. "That's what's wrong with them today. If they had to walk a beat then folk wouldn't be so ready to condemn them. What do you say Hector?" Asked Bob, but Hector wasn't interested in his master's rantings, he just wanted to be let off his lead and sniff every blade of grass in the field.

Keeping to the path as usual, Bob tried not to appear interested on what the newly arrived CID Officers were up to.

"Alright Bob?" Asked Dod as he appeared from his hut. "Looks like they're going to be at it a while."

"Have they said anymore?" Asked Bob trying to identify the CID Officers.

"Nothing to me. The papers sent down a reporter and photographer, but were away as fast as they arrived. Would have been nice if they'd asked permission to come onto the site first."

"Aye well, you should ask for a commission for the photos at least."

"I might just do that. The bloody Health and Safety Folk were sniffing about a while back. Said my fences weren't up to scratch. Short of putting up machine gun turrets I don't know what they want from me."

Bob suddenly twigged that he hadn't seen the night watchman. A local retired man by the name of Gerry March. Obviously he would have been on duty and like most nights he would have been doing his rounds. Not that he could have put up much of a struggle against

hardened criminals, but he would have been able to report any wrong doings.

“So I take it Gerry’s out of a job now?” Asked Bob casually as he stepped away from Dod losing interest by the minute.

“No, he logged it, thinking it was just another courting couple. Said he was at the other end of the site when he saw the car draw up.” Answered Dod not realising Bob’s intentions.

Bob was out regular as clockwork with Hector and knew where Gerry was most nights. During the warmer months Bob had walked to the bay and back again with Gerry. Now however Gerry only had to patrol to the far end of the seawall. A hellish cold place in the winter months. Only Bob had heard that Gerry didn’t always make it to the end of the wall on his rounds. Word had it that he’d gotten in tow with some merry widow from the caravan park which nestled up to the edge of the pond and village.

“I was sayin’ Bob that the police have already spoken to him.” Snapped Dod loudly trying to get Bob away from his private thoughts.

“I dare say. Well I had better be off. Speak to you later.” Said Bob as he all but marched Hector round the pond and back to the house. “Dinnae worry I’m no stayin’.” Said Bob as he unleashed Hector among Eva’s friends.

“Seen any wee people when you were out Bob?” Asked one of Eva’s friends, as the others tried to stifle their giggles.

“Very funny, but there’s more to this business than meets the eye. Wee people and all.” Bob didn’t wait for a reply as he headed out the kitchen door again.

The walk would have probably been too much for him, but he still grugged the petrol he used to get to the top of the village. Bob didn’t consider himself to be tight, but his family did. “Hell mend them.” Said Bob as he got out of his car slowly and somewhat slowly then added as he walked up Gerry March’s path. “When it’s gone, it’s gone.”

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“Bob?” Asked Gerry through half closed eyes.

“Didnae wake you did I?” Asked Bob as he waited to be invited into the house.

“No no come on in.” Lied Gerry as he unsteadily got out of the way. “So what brings you up to the cheap seats?”

“Cheap seats my backside. I’m no the one with a brand new Honda in the drive.” Said Bob noticing the way the cushions were laid out on the couch. “I thought you said I didnae wake you.”

“Yer here now. Want a tea? I’ve got beer if you want one.”

“Tea please.” Bob didn’t wait to be asked to sit down. Sixty years of building stone had taken its toll on his legs. What was strange, his upper body was as strong as ever just his legs let him down these days. “So what do you make of that body found in the pipe?”

“Question if it would have been found had Old Hector not fallen in.” Answered Gerry from the kitchen.

“You know who he was?”

“Aye, well I ken of him. Wrote nature articles for The Envoy. Cannae say I read it much, all fetes and court pages.” Gerry wasn’t daft but, he would play Bob’s game and force him to ask the question that he came to ask, what he was doing when the body was dumped. Only then would Gerry decide whether to tell the truth or stick to his report.

“Who else does the night shift with you?” Asked Bob pretending to take an interest in the model soldiers on the mantelpiece.

“That would be Ted Barnes, but ye ken it was me that was on that night.”

“Right enough. And does he have a lady friend he visits when nobody’s looking as well?” Asked Bob still looking at the figures. It was a similar tactic to the one he used when they played each other at dominoes.

“I wondered when you were going to get round to asking that.”

“No before you served up the tea, seems to be a shortage of biscuits though.”

“I’ve only got digestives, can’t be doing with all those fancy chocolate affairs.”

“That would be fine. So are you going to tell me what you were doing when you should have been walking the fences?” Bob considered adding an or else scenario but decided to keep that safe for now.

Gerry’s face moved slowly from a fixed yet false smile normally reserved for nosy neighbours and kids retrieving their footballs from his garden; to a proper grin. “You’ve been listening to the village gossip and now you think I have a woman friend.” Said Gerry sitting opposite Bob. “I’d be so lucky.”

“So who are they?” Asked Bob hoping his train of thought wasn’t about to run out of steam.

“My son and daughter in law.” Sighed Gerry looking down at the carpet shamefully. He knew what questions and accusations would come next. True a lot of it was of his own making. Sinful bragging.

“Is that right? Taking a break is he.” Asked Bob wholly thrown by this unexpected piece of information. “I thought he would be at The Hilton. Or maybe he’s here incognito?”

“Very funny, but no from where I’m sitting. Bloody show promised him the world. The laddie staked everything he had including his career and house on it. Two years on and all he’s left with are a couple of T shirts and a boxful of cds.” Answered Gerry reaching for his cigarettes.

Bob was stunned. His sons had tinkered with the music world, but neither made it passed the village hall or local pubs. In fact if memory served Gavin never made it passed the village hall. At least Stan could knock out a tune. Gavin was more of a want to be. Thankfully he put all those years of expensive car magazines to good use with his wee

showroom. “That’s what happens when you take your feet off the ground. It isn’t always there when you have to come back down, but that’s no so good about your laddie.”

“I should have been walking the fences, but he’s taken all this failure awfy hard. In years gone by they might have locked him away, but now a days it’s all day centres and support workers.”

“What are you no tellin’ me Gerry? I ken there’s something you’re holding back. Yer eyes twitch like when you’re holdin’ the double-blank...” Bob had long since given up cigarettes and had been deeply disappointed when all his children turned out to be smokers of varying degrees. Today Gerry’s smoke smelled particularly vile, but that nicotine monster which Bob had wrestled into submission all those years ago was now starting to fight back.

“Look Bob, very few folk ken he’s here and that’s the way I want it to stay. I bought the caravan and help out where I can which isn’t much on my pension and wages.” Said Gerry filling the small living room with smoke from his aging lungs.

“So who recognised him or saw him?” Asked Bob and allowed Gerry time to answer as he took a mouthful of tea. Bob didn’t have the heart to say that he took nothing in it.

“That guy Thompson. He was at the pond looking for some sort of bird, and I’m no altogether sure it was the feathered type either.”

“Guess work or hard fact?” Asked Bob beginning to feel restless having sat so long. “Never mind you can take me to see the laddie tonight.”

Chapter Three

“What’s wrong with his face?” Asked Connie Kerr; the youngest and most spoiled of the Kerr children, as she brought her children into her parent’s house. “He looks like he’s ready to explode.”

“Ocht I think he’s in the huff...” Began Eva, but was interrupted by Bob.

“I’m no in the huff, but I ken what I saw and you dinnae believe me. So that means you think I’m a liar and I’m no havin’ that.” Shouted Bob from through in the hall where he was searching for the phonebook under a pile of ironing on the telephone table.

“If he’s in that fettle I’m no leaving the bairns.” Said Connie expecting her mother to burst into a fluster and chastise her father.

“So you’ll be dropping them off in the morning then, on your way to work? I’ll be up anyway to take Beau out.” Said Eva who’d heard all these threats before and wasn’t about to be bullied into a corner now. She loved all her grandchildren, but she was now wise enough to take them on her terms, not anyone else’s.

“Mum!”

“Well it’s your choice. You know what your father’s like when he sets his mind to something; hell mend anyone that gets in his road. Now have you got time for a cup of tea before you rush off again?”

“You don’t have to put it like that.” Said Connie quite deflated. “It’s him.”

“It’s his house.” Said Eva as she switched on the kettle. “Now are you still on that diet, or do you want milk and sugar?”

“I haven’t got time. You pair go and get your clothes from the car.” Said Connie.

“Mum.” Moaned Rose as she deliberately let the Boxer out of the back door. The dog flew out and started barking at a couple of lads walking down the garden wall. The lads just laughed and gave him some crisps, which was all he wanted.

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“Where the hell is the phonebook, I can never find anything in this house?”

“Try your desk where you left it last night.” Said Eva trying not to sound smug because she had sorted out both her daughter and her husband out in one go.

Looking for a phone number for The East Lothian Envoy in the phonebook was like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Any reference to the paper pointed to the parent company, which in turn pointed to the printers. When Bob did eventually find a local number it turned out to be for placing adverts in the paper nothing more. “Bloody people. No wonder The Courier is out selling them four to one.”

“I didn’t know what number you were looking for, but, I found this old Envoy in the Glory Hole. It has some telephone numbers inside the front page.” Said Eva handing the paper and a mug of tea to Bob.

“Could you no have that said earlier and saved me making all those calls?” Asked Bob looking at the numbers. “After I’ve proved my theory to be the right one we’re switching to The Courier.”

“You can do what you like. I like The Envoy.”

“You’d do anything, but agree with me.”

“I wouldn’t say that.” Laughed Eva and went back through to the sitting room to stop an argument brewing between Connie’s kids.

Bob was put on hold four times before being put through to someone who didn’t want to pass him through to the sales department.

“Mr Kerr, what can we do for you?” Asked a deep American accent.

“Who are you son?” Asked Bob who was weighing up the cost of the calls against the petrol it would have cost to drive up to Haddington, which was right on the edge of his self imposed ten mile driving limit.

“I’m Dale McGregor, Editor of The Envoy. I’m told you’re some sort

of freelance investigator, looking into the death of Mr Thompson.”

“This is costing me a fortune Son on daytime rates. Would it be all right if I came up to see you?”

“Well we close in an hour. How faraway are you?”

“It’ll no be the day Son. Say tomorrow morning?”

“What is your connection to this unfortunate accident?”

“I’m sure it wasn’t an accident. I was the one that saw them dump the body. Only I didnae know it at the time. Well?” Asked Bob impatiently.

“Ten o’clock. I’ll tell my receptionist to expect you.”

“Aye. Hopefully I’ll know more by then.”

“And that’s him that never uses the phone.” Remarked Eva on her way through to the bathroom.

“At least I dinnae blether for hours.”

“Granny says you saw wee people at The Pond. Can we go looking for them?” Asked Connie’s son Danny.

“Eh?”

“There’s no such thing.” Dismissed Rose, Danny’s big sister. “Mum says Papa had too much whisky before taking Hector out.”

“Is that right? Well you can tell your mother...”

“That Papa is looking into it.” Said Eva knowing that Rose would carry an embellished story back to her mother.

“That’s not what he was going to say.” Protested Rose.

“You’re right there Hen.” Said Bob retiring to his bedroom.

“If you want to see Big Brother tonight that’s what you’re going to tell your mother.” Said Eva as she turned on the television. The kids whispered to each other, then went their separate ways. Rose cuddled up to her Granny whilst Danny went through to see what his Papa was

up to.

Getting Bob ready for such an important meeting was no better than preparing the kids for school in the old days, nonetheless Eva had him organised and out of the door in plenty of time with Mr McGregor.

Mr McGregor's office was a small affair, but they only stopped off there to collect a file then they joined two other men in the very plush boardroom. All of which looked a bit upmarket for a weekly local paper, but Bob kept those thoughts to himself. He was more interested in who the other men were.

"Gentlemen can I introduce Bob Kerr. Mr Kerr these gentlemen are lawyers. My paper may be Scottish, but your culture is fast becoming American. Where's there's blame there's a claim."

"You think I'm out to sue you or something?" Asked Bob as he sat down in a chair held out for him by Mr McGregor.

"I can't be too careful." Said Mr McGregor as he sat between his lawyers. "So you have an interest in the late Mr Thompson's death. Can I ask why? Whilst I have the chair can I just remind everyone that this conversation is being recorded."

"You do what you think best Son." Said Bob who was starting to ask himself if this investigation was worth the bother. "All I want to know..."

"Have you read our statement on the internet or heard it on the local radio news?" Asked one of the lawyers pulling a typed sheet from a plastic folder.

"I don't know about the internet, and I've been too busy to listen to the radio." Lied Bob who listened to the radio every evening without fail as he fed the dogs and washed the evening dishes. "I've no brought my reading glasses with me." Added Bob as the sheet was pushed in front of him.

"Let me summarise in that case. The East Lothian Envoy Newspaper deeply regrets the passing of their valued employee Nature Columnist Mr Thompson. Mr Thompson will be missed by one and all. We're

making no comment on Mr Thompson's private life nor the future of his column before his untimely death."

"So I'm wasting my time then?" Asked Bob as the strong smell of coffee reached his nose.

"You said something along the lines that you or at least your dog found the body?" Asked the second lawyer. "You did give a full statement to the police I take it?"

"I did. And it was my dog that found him, dressed in women's clothes. There's also a rumour brewing that he was facing the chop. I thought he had a good column myself." Said Bob watching the coffee being poured.

"Obviously we're pleased that you enjoyed the column, but we can't comment on Mr Thompson's private life. He certainly wasn't at Seafeld Pond the day before...."

"On business?" Suggested Bob interrupting Mr McGregor.

"That's not what our client said."

"I really don't know why you've got your knickers in a fankle Son. I just wanted to tell you what I'd seen on the night." Said Bob staring at the lawyer to his right. It was becoming obvious that Mr Thompson was less than admired by his employers. All of which Gerry had told him the previous morning. As for Gerry's son, well he should have been in a hospital.

"Mr Kerr." Snapped one of the lawyers causing Bob to jump. "Sorry but you were miles away. My client was asking if any information given to you would be treated in the strictest of confidence. In exchange any information you give us would be treated the same way."

Bob sat back in his chair and smiled. Taking time to look at each of the three men in turn. He would have scratched an imaginary beard but he thought that might be a little over the top. "I think I said when I arrived, all I wanted to do was tell you what I'd seen and heard, but if you're offering information in exchange, let's hear it." Said Bob

smugly.

“We would need assurances that you would treat everything we tell you as confidential. That would include you signing a silence clause.”

“I’m no getting into any cover ups Mr McGregor. If I manage to find anything of use, I will be straight onto the police.” Said Bob having yet another unreadable piece of paper stuck under his nose.

“We wouldn’t and couldn’t ask you to do otherwise. However discretion would be appreciated.”

“I’ll give you that, but without my signature on a piece of paper I cannae even read.” Bob went into detail about going for a walk and what he’d seen right up to the body being taken away. He did however stop short of saying anything about Gerry or his son. In short, he would speak to the daughter in law again, alone, she may speak more freely without Gerry being present.

“We can confirm only verbally of course and would deny anything other than to say...” Began one of lawyers.

“Look Son. I’m a simple man, I worked with stone all my life and never found a need for double talk. So just spit it out.” Said Bob firmly.

“Mr Thompson had four months left of his contract and yes it is true we were intending to give the Envoy a makeover, replacing the Nature Feature with a problem page. Particularly aimed at people in our catchment area. Before you ask it was his wife Angela who gave us the idea and will be running this new project. Why she was driven to take her husband’s job leaving him on the edge of despair I don’t know but I am led to believe she has suffered years of neglect and sordid affairs.”

“He certainly had a reputation for it.” Said Bob. “Of course she never sought solace in anyone else.” The moment Bob said this McGregor threw wild stares at his lawyers.

“Any suggestion that Mrs Thompson’s relationship with Mr McGregor is anything other than professional will be dealt with severely in a court of law.”

Bob Kerr Investigations

“Christ son, she must be old enough to be your mother.” Laughed Bob, but soon stopped when he realised he was the only one who was. “It was just a joke.”

“If during your investigation....”

“I’m not ruling out anybody. So do you have an address for the grieving spouse?”

“Please Mr Kerr.” Said McGregor pointedly.

“I was thinking about switching to The Courier anyway.” Said Bob reflectively.

Chapter Four

“So I was just wondering. If you could run me up. No right away like. This evening after your dinner.” Said Bob putting on his best poor old dad routine.

“I’ll need to see say what Hazel says. It would be easier for me through the day.” Answered Gavin Kerr trying not to sound anymore hen pecked than he already was.

“Just tell her I need someone to drive me for a check up?” Urged Bob.

“I’ll be out in half an hour, but it’s just there and back. None of your historical tours down memory lane.” Said Gavin worriedly.

“That woman of yours has got you dangling from a string. I’ll come up for you.”

Bob arrived in his old Fiat Punto known in the family as The Blue Ferrari, given the way Bob drove it. As usual Bob had a look round the showroom and forecourt, stopping every now and again at cars that caught his eye. “I do like these wee MGs.” Said Bob scrutinizing an old MG R.

“You’d get it cost and it is a diesel.” Said Gavin knowing full well his father had no intentions of replacing his car.

“I’d think so too. How about a test drive?” Asked Bob sitting behind the steering wheel and nodding approvingly. Gavin went to get the keys.

“Just take it easy, I expect to get all the money and more for this one.”

“I’ll put money on it, that it’s all fur coat and no knickers.”

“I wouldn’t say that, but just don’t expect silk.”

“Here you’re nearly as funny as me.” Laughed Bob as he eased passed the speed limit. “Ocht, my wee car does this and makes less fuss.”

“If you say so. So where are we going?”

“I’m going as far as Haddington, then you can drive me up to Tranent. I’ll give you directions if you get lost.”

“I think I know where Tranent is Dad.”

“I dare say.”

Mrs Henrietta Thompson was a good twenty years younger than Bob and dressed another twenty years younger than that. Bob introduced himself and had half expected to be turned away, but was greeted like a long lost friend.

“I’m glad it was someone with your breeding Mr Kerr who found my late husband.” Said Mrs Thompson checking her appearance in the glass doors of the drinks cabinet.

“Like I’ve been saying all day, it was my dog that actually found him. But I did see the people who dumped his body.” Said Bob and immediately got a loud tut and grimace from Gavin for his insensitivity. “Aye well you know what I mean Lass.”

“I do indeed.” Said Mrs Thompson with a light sigh before continuing. “My husband’s death has been somewhat of a rollercoaster of emotions for me.” Mrs Thompson was now sitting next to Bob on the couch. “I really don’t know how much more I can tell you Mr Kerr.”

“When was the last time you saw him alive?” Asked Bob attempting to sound professional, but sounding abrupt instead. However Mrs Thompson was too busy trying to get her level of grief just right to notice.

“I made him breakfast as I always did. He’d been told that a new, or rare bird had been seen down at Seafield Pond.” Mrs Thompson let a slight snuffle escape, but soon realised that sort of thing didn’t faze Bob. “I’m not saying of course that I haven’t strayed, but a woman has needs too.”

“If you say so Lass.” Said Bob looking for support from Gavin, but

he just sat back and enjoyed his father's discomfort. "Do you know who his latest fling was with?" Gavin nearly choked at his father's directness.

"I got tired of knowing."

"What about this exclusive he was after?"

"It was a figment of his imagination. He was a has been."

Gavin held the car door open for his father as he lowered himself into the passenger seat. "I'm no expert, but even I know she was laying it on a bit thick." Said Gavin as he started the engine.

"Aye, just about as thick as her make up." Grinned Bob. "Head for the caravan park."

"On yer bike. I'll take you back to the garage." Said Gavin firmly.

"I'll only be ten minutes and nobody knows me in this car." Said Bob trying to make eye contact with his son. "You might even catch sight of a fallen star."

"If you mean Adam March, I know he's back in town. I saw his wife in The Co-op the other day."

"You did, did you. Who else knows they're back?"

"Anybody that knows them."

"Right."

Louise March opened the caravan door and deliberately peered beyond Bob who stood on the first step. Only then did she ask what he wanted. Before answering Bob pushed his way into the caravan. "Who else knew you were back in town?" Asked Bob steering towards sitting room area.

"What's he doing here?" Asked Adam March appearing from the bedroom.

"I've come to see how you're doing Son." Lied Bob as he made himself comfortable.

“I’m fine. You can go now.” Said Adam fiercely.

“That’s quite a temper you’ve got there. Tell me Hen would there be any tea left in that pot ?”

“No it’s cold. What do you want Mr Kerr? My husband needs his rest and he doesn’t like strangers poking into our private life.”

“Stop talking about me as if I’m not here. I had a break down that’s all. I’m not as sick as everyone makes out.” Said Adam trying to light a cigarette but his hands were shaking too much.

“Is that right Son. Well I’m glad to hear it. A young felly like you should be out working for a living. Not sponging off his father.”

“He did all right when he thought I was bringing in the money. They all did.”

“That’s why they’re helping us now.” Said Louise pointedly. “I really think you should be going Mr Kerr.”

The idea hit Bob like a lightning bolt the moment Louise stopped speaking. Now Adam was saying something. “Sorry I missed that.”

“I said it’s not a lot to ask. Them helping me.”

“It’s not. It just depends what you ask them to do.”

“Mr Kerr please leave before I call the police.” Said Louise holding the door open.

“How the hell do I know how tall Nellie March was?” Asked Eva Kerr freshly back from taking Beau for a walk. Bob had been pacing back and forth having just missed when he got back from the caravan park.

“She wasnae as tall as me.” Said Bob trying to remember back to the days when he danced with Nellie May, as she was then, at The Corn Exchange. “You kent her better than me.”

“Well just give me a minute to get my coat off. Have you been drinking?” Asked Eva getting a whiff of Bob’s breathe, then it dawned on her that she hadn’t seen the car when she came in. “Where’s the

car?”

“I’ll put the kettle on.”

“Where’s the car?”

“Up at Gav’s place. He took me to Tranent and where the widow tried to get me merry.”

“That laddie’s trying to run a business and you have him chasing about the county on some daft notion of proving yourself right.”

“Eva!”

“I don’t know what’s come over you drinking this early in the day. The next thing you know you’ll be smoking again.”

“Couldnae afford it. All my money goes on running you and your pals all over the place.” Bob bit his lip angrily; he’d walked right into Eva’s trap. “I’m taking Hector out.”

“He’s been out, bad tempered wee shit. You’ll need to apologise to that Mrs George again. He wanted to have a go at her Cairn.”

“I’m going through to my room.”

“Runaway, go on. You know I’m right.”

“You always are.” Mumbled Bob as he retired to his room. He felt sure he had the who and even the why; it had been obvious from the outset, but he needed proof. The lawyers had mentioned the internet and whilst Bob knew what it was, he always allowed his offspring to get him what he needed from it.

“If you can spare time from your memoirs, the police are here to see you.” Growled Eva hanging onto a highly excited Beau.

“I’ll be through the now.” Sighed Bob closing his note pad that his son Stan had borrowed from his work.

The Policemen were none other than Sergeant Blackwell and PC Brunton. Neither looked overly pleased to see Bob as he came through the house. The latter apologised pointedly for his wife’s

clutter spread over the couch which he cleared away before asking them to sit down.

“This is no a social visit Mr Kerr.” Said Sergeant Blackwell sternly trying to keep his distance from Hector who was growling at him. “And you can keep that ill natured dug away from me as well.”

“Come away Hector.” Ordered Eva as she lifted Hector who just growled all the more. “Bite me and I’ll let these Policemen take you to the pound.”

“Thank you Mrs Kerr.” Said Sergeant Blackwell and waited until Hector was secured through the house with Beau. “I won’t beat about the bush Mr Kerr. We’ve received a number of complaints about you sticking your nose in where it doesn’t belong.”

“Is that right?” Asked Bob as he dropped himself into his armchair.

“This is a serious matter. We’ve recognised the fact you or at least your dog found the body. Now I’m telling you to leave the investigation to us.” Said Sergeant Blackwell increasingly unnerved by the dogs scratching at the door to get back through.

“I hear you, but I lay a pound to a penny I’m further on than you are.”

“Mr Kerr, Bob. Withholding evidence is a criminal offence. Now if you have anything we should know about, then tell us now.”

“Nothing concrete you understand, but did you know there was a connection between that journalist and the felly March?”

“The night watchman?” Asked PC Brunton getting a scowl from his superior.

“His son.”

“Why didn’t you come forward earlier with this information?” Asked Sergeant Blackwell getting his notebook out. “So what’s the connection?”

“The journalist Thompson was trying to save his career by doing an

exclusive on the laddie's misfortune."

"But March never really made it big after he won 'Sign Here'. Both his singles flopped." Blurted out PC Brunton.

"Is that right, I did kind of get that impression when I spoke to him. I suppose it was that pushy wife of his who called you?" Asked Bob as he edged himself out of his seat again and headed for the drinks cabinet. "I would offer you one, but you're on duty." Added Bob pouring himself a whisky.

"Who was he going to sell the exclusive to? He was a nature man, not a gossip columnist." Asked Sergeant Blackwell who remembered the days when he could have accepted the offer of a drink without risking his pension.

"According to his wife, The Envoy, who would probably have sold it onto the national Tabloids."

"Since my husband is intent in keeping you here a while. Can I offer either of you a tea or a coffee?" Asked Eva thinking of ways of explaining why the police were at her house to her friends and neighbours.

"Not for me Mrs Kerr." Answered PC Brunton.

"Nor me thanks Mrs Kerr, but thank you for the offer. What evidence do you have to make these connections apart from village gossip?"

"Gossip, well you might want to ask Mrs Thompson who's taking over from her husband. I'll save you the diesel, cause it's no leg work these days. The Envoy was replacing the nature column with an agony aunt column fronted by Mrs Thompson."

"Is there anything else you might want to tell us?"

Chapter Five

“How the hell did I know your mother had phoned Stan?” Asked Bob lying through his false teeth. “But since yer here, I was wondering if you could do me a favour?”

“What?” Asked Connie Kerr having raced through the tea dishes and fallen out with her fiancé for losing the head at her kids, only then to find out that she wasn’t needed to drive her mother to the bingo.

“You’ve got the internet at home right?”

“You know I have. What do you want this time? Another book that’s been out of publication for centuries?”

“No, no. I want you to look up everything you can find on Adam March, the guy that won Sign Here a while back.”

“Why?” Connie was nothing if not as direct as her father.

“I just want to know about him. I’ll pay for the telephone time.”

“Like hell you will. When do you want it?”

“Tonight. Since you’re no doing anything.”

“Dad!”

“Ocht well, I’ll just get Gavin’s bairns to do it.” It was just the right amount of bait to get Connie hooked.

“I’ll see what I can do.”

“I could come with you.”

“I suppose.” Connie could see benefits in this. Her fiancé Greg would talk football, rugby and farming all night given half a chance. It would also put him in better fettle. “Get your coat.”

“Ah you’re good lass.”

“Whatever.”

Connie had a fairly tidy house in comparison to Bob’s, true there were the odd trap left lying by the kids and Greg’s muddy boots lay

just inside the door. Other than that it was fine. Were it not for his fiery relationship with his daughter, Bob could see himself coming along more often, if only to get away from Eva's nagging.

"Rose put on the kettle for your papa and make him a cup of coffee." Ordered Connie as she bodily removed Danny from his seat at the family computer. "You have recorder practice."

"Mum. I would have won that mission." Protested Danny.

"I'll be talking to your uncle Gavin about these space games and how much time you're wasting on them."

"All we had were footballs and fishing rods." Added Bob.

"Yes and how many times were you caught poaching with Uncle Tim? Room Danny." Connie sat herself in front of the computer just as Greg appeared from the shower.

"Want a beer Bob?"

"Thanks, but the lassie's making me a coffee."

"You want a beer instead Papa?"

"Only if you've no made the coffee Hen."

"No, here you go."

"Glass." Snapped Connie.

"Right." Moaned Rose as she headed back into the kitchen.

"What sort of thing do you want to know about Adam March?" Asked Connie going onto the Sign Here Website.

"Mad March? He took a benny on stage and started swearing at the audience." Said Rose ear wiggling the conversation.

"Is that right Lass?" Asked Bob hoping not to upset his daughter who was struggling to find out anything about Adam March on the website.

"They just list him as a winner and the songs he sang during the contest. They don't even mention his singles after the show." Said

Connie.

“Let me Mum.” Said Rose eager to help and be the centre of attention.

“Don’t you have homework?” Asked Greg trying to support his future wife.

“What do you know about computers? I know where you can get all the gossip about Adam March.” Said Rose heading out of the room.

“Your Papa needs facts not teenage gossip.” Said Connie.

“I would appreciate anything, especially about his family.” Said Bob hoping Connie would move aside without arguing.

“Show me.” Insisted Connie not giving up the chair, but giving her daughter room to key in the website address.

“It’ll be in the archives now, well it was over a year ago.” Said Rose all but sitting on her mother’s knee and forcing her to give up the chair. “There was an article about him buying his family houses and cars and stuff. Then another one about the repo-men coming and taking it back. I can print it off if you want Papa.”

“You do that Hen, if it’s all right with your mother.” Said Bob getting through his beer far quicker than he intended and couldn’t be sure he would get a second.

“It says here that the show and his wife knew that Adam was mentally unstable before he won. An inside source went as far as to say they intended using this to sell more records, but it back fired and they had to let him go with a small pay off, but nothing compared to what he spent.”

“Well I think I know who the wee people were and what they were about.”

“What papa?” Asked Danny who hadn’t quite made it upstairs to his room.

“I have to go to the police. Greg you want to come with me?”

“And what about me? I was the one who found the answers.” Said Connie.

“I don’t think this is something you want to be involved with. Bad enough I’ll get the backlash in the village.” Said Bob with a heavy sigh and eased himself out of the chair. “You might want to change your name after this.”

“I’m going to next year.” Smiled Connie.

“You bet.” Agreed Greg.

“We’ll pull Stan out of the pub and pick up Gavin.” Said Bob as he wearily made his way out to Greg’s car. “I widnae ask you son, but I cannae count on Gavin being allowed out to play.”

“No worries Bob. I would just have had to listen to another one of Connie’s lectures anyway.”

“I hope you know what you’re marryin’.”

“I do, she’s great.”

“Right.”

“Is that what she is, well like her mother she does have her moments.” Bob only now considered the reception he would get from his sons dragging them away from their chosen evenings. Stan wouldn’t be much of an issue, but Gavin was only being called upon because he lump of a lad, though most who knew him knew that he was a soft lump ruled over by his wife and daughters. As for the police they would be less than impressed by his presence or story.

“I’m going to say this and then shut up.” It was the way Gavin stated most of his conversations at home when he was in the doghouse. “I can’t see a profit in this course of action. The Police can handle it now, us going in mob handed will just make matters worse as well as obvious if Mr March is already on the lookout for trouble.”

“Is that it? Woose.” Teased Stan punching his brother in the arm.

“He’s no a woose, just doesn’t ken his arse from his elbow with all those women in the house. You’re needing to get out more and no just to car conventions.” Warned Bob as they approached the beach road where the police had told them to meet up.

“Always was a creepy place, but on a dark winters night, it’s just spooky.” Groaned Gavin as he held the car door open for his far to get out whereupon he was immediately met by Inspector Mitchell. The latter used very unlady like language as she explained the laws on withholding information. “I knew that was coming.” Added Gavin on hearing that his father was to approach Gerry March on his own but wearing a wire.

“You have something to say Mr Kerr number three?”

“No Inspector.”

“He’s not expected for another couple of hours, but the people watching the house said he left some time ago, but they lost him in the darkness, don’t worry their ears are ringing as well.” A radio crackled to say that a body had been seen floating in the pond and that Gerry was standing at the water’s edge. “Right now we don’t know what’s happened, it would be much easier if we got a confession and he’s more likely to give someone like you it. Obviously I can’t force you.”

“Well if I don’t break my legs in the dark, then I can only do what I can do. You lot just be ready to run, I’m too old to be fighting with anyone.” Bob nodded to his kin and slowly moved off to where Gerry had last been seen.

“Thought you might show up tonight Bob.” Said Gerry March standing at the edge of the pond. His trousers were soaking up to his knees and his boots were covered in slimy mud. “I dare say you brought the Police with you. I killed them, both of them.”

“Did you?” Asked Bob catching a glimpse of Adam March’s body floating towards the centre of the pond.

“You do your best by them and then they throw it back in your face when everything doesn’t go their way.”

Ponderings

“Different times, different ideas.” Said Bob calmly, but he would have been a lot calmer if his sons and future son in law had been allowed to come with him.

“I told him I didn’t want any part of it. You know I ended up paying for the car he gave me. Then he and that wife of his came up with this hair brain scheme to recoup the money. He was just supposed to get himself put away in a hospital. I couldn’t let him go through that again.”

“I suppose not, but it had to be better than killing him.”

“If I had let it go on, he was planning to go after the record people. She stopped his medication because he was a zombie on it.”

“Sounds like you had it all worked out. Where’s the rest of the family?”

“Hiding. She’s taken off as well. Drugged his tea and took off.”

“You’re no planning on running are you?”

“Wi my legs. So where are the police?”

“Just round the corner, they wouldnae let me bring the laddies.”

“Expecting trouble?”

“I wasn’t expecting to find you, anyway they have me fitted with wires so they can hear what we say.”

“What put you onto us?”

“Wee people. I knew your Nellie was wee and then my lassie got stuff off the computer for me. They were making a fool of his size and lack of talent. A bad bunch when they turn on you.”

“He knew he shouldn’t have won, but they filled his head with nonsense and turned him into a freak show.”

“It’s about time you come out of that water.”

“I dinnae think so Bob.” Said Gerry as he walked further in. “I couldnae live with myself now. I just hope the rest of them rot in hell.”

I'm just glad it was someone I trusted and understands what I did."

"I wouldnae say that." Said Bob as policemen charged from their hiding places. Gerry laughed and plunged into the murky water. Bob could only watch and shake his head. Two policemen went in after Gerry, but had to pull back as the ground fell away from them.

"What took you so long?" Snapped Bob as he headed home.

"Hold up Mr Kerr, we'll run you home." Said one of the senior policemen. "We need our equipment back anyway."

"You know what you can do with your equipment." Said Bob as he was joined by his kin.

"Not quite the way I thought it would go." Said Gavin pleased that he hadn't been called upon to fight anyone.

"Surprised he didn't try and take you with him." Suggested Stan checking his watch to see if he had enough time to get a pint in before closing time.

"I was thinking he might do something, but not before he came on duty."

"Pondering even." Said Stan with a laugh.

"You might say that." Bob gave a faint grin, but his thoughts were firmly on tomorrow when the news would break about Gerry and the rest of the March Family.

The End