

Wendy is Dead!



Jean Marian Lewis

Chapter 1

Eleanor Sefton woke with a start wondering what was happening outside. She could hear loud voices somewhere near in the street. Getting out of bed she pulled one of the curtains back a couple of inches and peered out. The noise was coming from Wendy's house opposite. She heard the children crying and someone arguing with Wendy. She wondered who was visiting at two o'clock in the morning. Whoever it was they had left the front door wide open. It was probably that ex husband of hers as he had taken the divorce badly and had said at the time that Wendy had lied. According to him if she had told the truth they would not have been granted a divorce.

She wondered if she should go across but was worried in case they thought her just a nosy busybody. After a few minutes things quietened down and Eleanor decided to make a hot drink which would help her get back to sleep again. She felt so alone at times like this. She was concerned for Wendy and as there was no one with whom she could discuss her worries since her husband Douglas had died, everything seemed so much worse than it probably was.

Wendy was divorced and it was difficult for her bringing up three children on her own. Occasionally Eleanor would baby sit while their mother had a night out with friends. She was an attractive young woman and Eleanor hoped that one day she would find someone to love and take care of her and the children. Wendy's parents were good and sometimes took the children home

for the weekend so that their daughter could have a break and spend some time with her old school friends.

The family had lived opposite for about six years and Eleanor had met Wendy's husband Keith Timmings soon after they moved in. He seemed a friendly, pleasant, likeable young man and she was so sad that they broke up. She never knew exactly why but Wendy always changed the subject whenever it was mentioned. Anyway it was none of her business. You never knew what went on inside a marriage.

Eventually Eleanor managed to get a few hours sleep and at 9.0 a.m. was enjoying a cup of tea and a piece of hot buttered toast when she heard another commotion in the street. This time it wasn't raised voices disturbing the peace but the loud scream of police sirens. Hurrying to the door Eleanor saw two police panda cars outside of Wendy's house. One young officer was outside using his walkie talkie. A few yards away Wendy's mother had parked her car.

"Oh God, what's happened now. I pray it's nothing terrible and that Wendy isn't hurt," Eleanor said out loud.

Chapter 2

A call came in to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Bristol at 8.50 on Friday morning, from local police informing them that the body of a young woman had been found in the Bedminster area of the city. There were three children at the premises and the young woman's mother who had discovered the tragedy when she arrived to take the children to her home for the weekend.

Detective Leslie Marshfield gathered together his team of detectives and informed them to be prepared for any weekend leave to be cancelled as a possible new murder had happened on their patch last night.

He said, "It's up to you team to do your best to wrap this up as quickly as possible. Cut no corners, do everything by the book and let's do our best to find out exactly what happened. A young mother has been found dead and we owe it to her and her family to discover how and why."

Looking quickly around the earnest faces in front of him, the D.I. thought how lucky he was to have such dedicated and excellent officers in his team. Nothing was too much trouble for them and if anyone could solve this new case, they would.

"Jane you come with me and Brian and Tim visit the neighbours in the street.

Find out if they saw or heard anything. Report back here at 4.0 0.m. when we will share any discoveries with the rest of the team."

"Will do boss," replied D.C. Brian Sloman and D.C. Tim Hansford, almost in unison.

"Cut out this 'boss' business you two. You sound like a couple of parrots," chuckled the D.I.

"O.K. Get going everyone. Let's get to the bottom of this," he added.

Chapter 3

D.S. Jane Lewis sat in the driver's seat and said, "Where exactly are we going Sir?"

"Make for the general Bedminster area and I'll give you further instructions then Jane," replied Leslie Marshfield.

Jane drove past St. Mary Redcliff Church which had stood in the same place for centuries and had been visited by Queen Elizabeth the First who had called it 'the fairest, goodliest parish church in England'. The first church to stand there had been in Saxon times and Leslie thought there was probably crime around then too; after all humans don't seem to change all that much.

Jane was then instructed to turn left and drive across the bridge which crossed the River Avon, taking the road past the old cigarette factory and to a street further down on the right. They stopped as near as possible to number 15 Colwyn Place where blue and white police tape was cordoning off an area.

Approaching the house, a young police constable standing guarding the entrance, saluted smartly them saying,

"Good morning Sir,"

"Good morning Constable, where exactly is the body,"

"Straight through to the kitchen Sir, Dr. Buchanan is with her now and the Scenes of Crime Officers are here too."

"Thanks," replied the D.I. and entering the house he making his way to the back of the ground floor closely followed by Jane.

"Good morning Les," said the kneeling figure of the duty forensic pathologist Dr. Ben Buchanan.

"I would say we have a definite case of murder here. You see the marks around her neck? These indicate a clear case of strangulation."

"Yes I agree with you Doc. What do you make the time of death? Well provisionally I'd say at between 2.0 and 3.0. a.m. but I should be able to give a more accurate time after I complete the P.M."

A team of Scenes of Crimes officers were already at work dusting for fingerprints and looking for samples of D.N.A. or anything else that might help track down the person responsible for this crime.

"Where are the rest of the family Jim?" the D.I. asked one of the men he recognised.

"They are with some of the local police in the front room downstairs Inspector," he replied.

"Thanks Jim," replied the D.I. retracing his steps and closely followed by his D.S., he knocked on the door and went in.

Chapter 4

Detective Constables Tim Hansford and Brian Sloman had visited all the houses on the side of the street where the tragedy had occurred and in the house next door the neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Young, had heard a couple shouting at each other at around 2.0 a.m. but it did sometimes happen when Wendy Timmings had a new boyfriend in there. It had quietened down quite quickly last night so they hadn't given it any more thought to it until Wendy's mother had started shouting for help and frantically knocked on their door this morning. They had been very shaken to hear what had happened and

immediately telephoned 999 to report it to the police and then had contacted Wendy's father to come and be with his wife who had gone back in to look after the children. He had arrived within the hour and was in there now comforting everyone.

The detectives asked if they could tell him any more about the man they had heard but they were unable to as they hadn't seen him. It sounded a bit like her ex-husband but they weren't sure enough to positively identify him.

Later that morning the two other detectives knocked on Eleanor Sefton's door and they asked their routine questions and were surprised by her answer.

"Do you have time to come in officers? I'd like to tell you what I know about the family."

"Certainly and thank you. We need all the help we can get," replied Tim Hansford.

Eleanor made tea and carried it in on a tray with a plate of biscuits.

"Do help yourselves officers," she said.

"Thanks Mrs. Sefton," they replied.

"I don't want to waste your time. I know how busy you always are. Too much work and too little pay, I always say. I wouldn't want to do your job in these dangerous times."

"Someone needs to catch the bad guys, Mrs. Sefton and we both quite enjoy our work especially when we succeed. We'd solve many more cases if the public were all as willing to help as you are," said Brian Sloman.

"I just wanted to say that I met Wendy's husband a few times when they were first married and he seemed a really sweet, gentle person and was so good with the children. He is a self employed builder. He works quite long hours and seems to be doing well for himself. It just about broke his heart when Wendy divorced him.

I have always hoped he would find happiness with someone else. Wendy seemed to have a string of men friend calling but she was obviously a bit fussy about the kind of man she wanted. It wasn't going to be easy to find someone who would be willing to accept three children as well though."

"What about last night? Did you see anything and what exactly did you hear?" asked Tim

"I woke at around 2.0 a.m. to hear shouting so I pulled back the curtains and could see it was coming from across the street. The door had been left open and I could hear raised voices but I couldn't be sure who it was. All I am certain of is that it was a man's voice and woman's whom I know was Wendy. The children were crying too or at least the younger one was. It didn't last all that long and it has happened in the past. I made myself a hot drink and by the time I went back to bed I noticed that the door opposite had been closed and all was quiet

"You can imagine how shocked and upset I was this morning to hear what happened. No one deserves that and I pray you catch whoever is responsible."

"Thank you for your help and we can promise you we are going to do everything to bring this person to justice. It can't unfortunately bring Wendy back but it might, in time, help her family to know that the perpetrator isn't still walking the streets," said Tim.

Draining the last of their tea the two men thanked Eleanor again and left to continue questioning the remaining neighbours.

Chapter 5

On entering the small front room the D.I. and Jane saw the shattered parents of Wendy doing their best to comfort the children. They were all seated together on the settee and the children, although tearful, were listening to a story their grandfather was reading.

He looked up and greeted the detectives. "Please come and sit down and excuse me for not getting up but as you see I am in the middle of reading a story to the nippers."

The officers shook hands with both grandparents and sat down in the easy chairs opposite.

"Hullo children," said Jane smiling. "You like stories do you?"

"Yes we all do said the eldest child Gary who was eight years old."

His sister Amelia, who was six, gave a shy smile while the youngest child Jack ignored them and attempted to turn the pages of the book.

"I have a suggestion to make," said the D.I. "I need to talk to your grandparents so how would it be if this nice lady, Jane, takes you into the middle room and reads more of the story. That way We shall finish much quicker and you can then come back."

They didn't appear to be keen but Jane smiled at them and went towards them stretching out her hand saying, "I'd really love to hear the story so far perhaps you could tell me about it Gary and then I will read some more of it to you."

They stood up although it was left to granddad John to bring little Jack along. Once they were seated in the middle room John returned to help the detectives in whatever way he could.

"Now do I have it right?" asked Leslie Marshfield. "It's Mr. and Mrs. Chard isn't it?"

"Yes, Angela and John," came the response.

"I'm sorry to have to put you through this but it is very important that we find out everything we can as soon as possible "Could you talk me through what happened when you arrived this morning Mrs. Chard?" said the D.I.

"I'd arranged for us to have the children for the weekend to give our daughter a rest and to let her have a little time to herself. It isn't easy bringing up three children alone and we have always helped out when we could,"

said Angela. "I have a key and let myself in and called out as usual. Then I heard the children banging on the door of the bedroom. First of all I walked through to the living room and kitchen calling Wendy's name. It was when I entered the kitchen I found her lying staring up at the ceiling. I could tell at once that she was dead. I'm afraid I panicked then and ran into the street screaming for help.

Then I knocked at the next door neighbour's door and she telephoned 999 for the emergency services and after that she 'phoned John to come over. I then ran up to children, took the key from above the bedroom door and went in. They explained that their mother had locked them in when they went to bed as she was expecting a visitor. They didn't see who it was and eventually

got off to sleep but when it was light they found they couldn't get out as the door was still locked. They had called and called and were in quite a state when I went in.

When the police arrived I asked if I could take them next door to get them some breakfast as the neighbour had suggested it earlier. I gave them a bit of a wash too and when John arrived we went back into the middle room as we had been informed that you would want to speak to us."

"As I was late on the scene Inspector I can't really be of any help," added John.

"Thank you both, I think that will do for now. We have your address if we need to speak to you again," responded the D.I.

Suddenly there was something of a commotion outside and the door burst open to reveal the children's father.

Chapter 6

Keith Timmings entered the small lounge and said, "What's happened? A neighbour rang me and said that Wendy had been hurt."

The children jumped up and ran to their father hugging him, obviously pleased to see him.

"Can we come and stay with you Daddy? asked Gary.

"Yes Daddy I want to go with you," added Amelia.

"Daddy," said Jack, sucking his thumb and grasping Keith's leg with his free hand.

The D.I. said he needed to have a chat with their Daddy outside in the car so perhaps they could stay here until they returned. It shouldn't take too long.

"Yes let's have another story," said Granddad John.

"Come and sit on my lap Jack," Angela said holding out her hand. Jack always ready for a story hurried over and climbed on to the settee.

D.I. Marshfield and Jane led the way to the car followed by Keith. He sat in the back with the Inspector and Jane sat in front.

"What exactly happened?" asked Keith.

"What have you heard? asked Leslie Marshfield.

"Someone rang me this morning and said I needed to get here as something had happened to Wendy. He didn't say what and he didn't explain how he knew or who he was. I asked if he was joking and he said that I'd better get over here quickly as the children needed me. "

Taking his word for it for the present, Leslie explained what had happened. Keith seemed visibly shocked and Leslie thought that he really didn't know what had happened or he was a good actor.

"Oh God!" cried Keith, "She didn't deserve that. No one does. Wendy wasn't the easiest person to get on with. You just needed to know how to handle her. We unfortunately had a divorce as she felt we had married at too young an age and she still wanted to play the field. She had had several men friends but one by one they seemed to fizzle out."

"There was a man there last night," explained Leslie but at this stage in our enquiries we have no idea who it was. I'm sorry to have to ask this Keith but where were you last night at between 1 and 2 am?"

"I was in my flat Inspector and sound asleep by then. I work long hours and am usually in bed by eleven o'clock," said Keith.

"Is it O.K. if I take the children home with me now Inspector?" he added.

"That shouldn't be a problem but we shall need to speak to you again Keith so please don't leave the Bristol area until we find out exactly what happened last night."

They returned to the house to explain to the children and their grandparents what was happening. The children appeared delighted and John and Angela said they would be willing to go to the flat or have the children at their house at anytime if Keith needed them. They had always got on well with Keith and both had been very sad when he and Wendy had split up.

Chapter 7

When Tim Hansford and Brian Sloman had left Eleanor Sefton's house they had called on the elderly couple next door. They had stayed up late watching a film on T.V. and when they went up to their bedroom they glanced across the road as they pulled their bedroom curtains and saw a man going into Wendy's house. They both thought it looked like her ex-husband but it was dark and they couldn't be absolutely certain. Whoever it was had a key as he let himself in and didn't bother closing the door behind him. It wasn't too long after that they heard shouting but it hadn't lasted all that long and they hadn't been all that concerned as that kind of thing had happened before. They were appalled at what had happened. They thought she was a young woman who liked enjoying life, getting out whenever she could. She seemed a good mother as far as they could tell.

As there was nothing else they could be definite about, the two detectives thanked them and made their way back to the police station for the meeting with the rest of the team.

The others were already back and the D.I. asked what if anything they had discovered. Tim reported the comments of the neighbours he and Brian had visited and the D.I. wrote details on the white board. Several thought it may have been the children's father who had called at the house. However no one could be certain.

"It seems then we have two suspects," the D.I. said.

"Keith Timmings, the children's father or one of Wendy's boyfriends. We need to find out who they were and pay them a visit. As soon as forensics have finished dusting her mobile 'phone for prints I want you Brian to go through the contacts and go with Jane to question them. Tim you and I will bring Keith Timmings in for further questioning tomorrow morning. I am finding it difficult to judge whether he is telling the truth or whether it is all an act."

The team members nodded their assent and The D.I. added. "Off you all go, have an early night. I want you here bright and early tomorrow morning. Let's get this case wrapped up!

Before he left the D.I. telephoned Keith Timmings to warn him they wanted to see him the following morning and that he would need to have the grandparents look after the children for a while.

Chapter 8

The following day a reluctant Keith Timmings was escorted to the police station and taken to an interview room. The D.I. asked Keith to take a seat and he and Tim Hansford sat down opposite him.

"We are going to ask you a few questions Keith and we shall be recording it and making a visual recording. This will serve as a record but it also proves exactly what goes on here, therefore acting as evidence if ever a query arises concerning this interview. For this purpose we need to identify ourselves. He gave his name and rank and that of his D.S. and then asked,

"You are Keith Timmings, ex-husband of the deceased Wendy Timmings?"

"Yes I am," replied Keith.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you to come in Keith but we need to question everyone who could possibly gain access to Wendy's house and we understand you have a key. Is that correct?" queried the D.I.

"No Inspector. When I had to leave, I did have a key for a few weeks but later Wendy asked for it back. She said she was unhappy at the thought of me turning up whenever I felt like it. I wasn't at all happy about it but I was afraid she would try to stop me seeing the children and I couldn't bear the thought of dragging everyone before a Magistrates' Court to plead for access to my own kids. I felt it was wisest to hand back the key. She probably gave it to her latest bloke whoever that is."

"I have to tell you that at least three of Wendy's neighbours thought it could have been you who had called that night."

"It most definitely was not. As I said yesterday, I work harder than I ever have just trying to support us all and that means I am exhausted at the end of the day. I just relax a little when I get home and usually eat a ready meal in front of the television," replied Keith.

"What did you watch that evening?" asked Inspector Marshfield.

"A favourite of mine, 'The Killing', a foreign film with English subtitles.

"I know it well. It's a favourite of mine too," said the D.I.

"So you like a bit of crime do you Keith," he added.

"What I like is seeing the bad guys caught Inspector," replied Keith.

"Yes we do too and that is what we intend to do in Wendy's case," added the inspector.

"Is there anyone who can confirm what you have told us Keith?"

"Not about what I did that night inspector. I'm afraid at the moment all I think about is work, bed and my children. Wendy's parents may know about the key but I have no idea whether she would have bothered to mention it to them."

"O.K. thank you for coming in to help us with our enquiries Keith, that will be all for now but we may need to see you again."

"You know where I am if you do need me Inspector," retorted Keith and he crossed to the door then turning he said, "Please find whoever did this. I would never hurt anyone and was hoping that one day Wendy would grow up and ask me to come back so that we could be a happy family again. Then he closed the door and made his way down to street level.

Chapter 9

While Keith Timmings was being interviewed, Brian Sloman had gone over to the Forensics department to see whether they had finished with Wendy's mobile 'phone. They had only found her fingerprints on it and were happy for Brian to take it.

He returned to his desk and thumbed through the contacts. There were three names of men other than Keith, four female friends and her parents. He would need to contact them in turn but first he would ask for a record of recent 'phone calls. There was always the possibility that her murderer had made an appointment to visit her.

Having visited the 'phone company which Wendy had subscribed to, Brian explained the urgency and seriousness of his request for the record of Wendy's calls. When they were informed that it was a murder case the relevant records were printed out for the D.S. He thanked them for their help and courtesy and made his way back to the office to study them carefully.

Later that afternoon Brian had established in his mind that there were only two of interest and that the most likely was the new man in her life, Terry Anstey who had called her numerous times in the last couple of months. Wendy had also made a large number of calls to him. He was definitely someone they must interview. The other was a male called Philip Harrington who had called a couple of times a week. There was only one return call from Wendy.

As soon as the D.I. returned to the office Brian reported what he had discovered and was told to go ahead and 'phone them to ask them to come in to help in their enquiries.

Brian 'phoned Terry Anstey and was surprised to get an immediate response.

"Yes, hullo, can I help you?" said an obviously worried voice.

"Hullo Mr. Anstey, This is Detective Sergeant Brian Sloman. We need to speak to all Wendy's friends as I am afraid there has been a tragedy and Wendy, I'm sorry to have to inform you, is dead."

"Oh God! How awful, I can't believe this! I was hoping to persuade her to marry me. Are you certain that it is her?"

"I am afraid we are Sir. Would it be convenient for you to come to the central police station at 9.0 a.m. tomorrow to tell us anything you can about Wendy. If we are to find the person responsible we need to have a clear picture of Wendy's activities and whom she was likely to have let into the house."

"Yes, of course, I feel totally shattered Sergeant but I'll tell you everything I know."

As he put down the telephone receiver Brian thought that Anstey sounded genuine enough but if guilty he was hardly likely to admit it. It was always better to take nothing at face value or very few cases would ever be solved.

After several attempts he managed to contact Philip Harrington who informed Brian that he had had a relationship with Wendy but that was months ago. He had tried to contact her by 'phone to try and get her to meet with him again but she had only ever returned the call once and told him quite firmly that she didn't want to see him again. He had decided not to bother ringing again. It was time to look for someone else. He agreed to come in to see Brian at ten o'clock in the morning and would try to think of anything that would help the police.

Brian thought that he seemed affable enough but time would tell.

Chapter 10

The following morning the two possible suspects arrived as requested and the D.I. with Brian Sloman, interviewed them. There was nothing further either of them could add to what had been said the day before. Terry Anstey had been hoping that Wendy would have a change of heart and settle down with him and Philip Harrington had given up the idea of any future with her. Both had agreed to having a D.N.A. sample taken as well as their fingerprints.

Neither man had any idea who could have gone to the house that night unless it was Keith her ex husband.

As the second man left, the inspector went to the Forensics department to see if there had been any breakthrough there.

"Looking up from the sample he was viewing through a microscope, Dr. Ben Buchanan said, "Good morning Les, how's the world treating you?"

"It could be a lot kinder Doc," replied the D.I.

"I am hoping you are about to make it a whole lot brighter and tell me you have found something that will definitely lead us to the killer of Wendy Timmings."

"I'd like nothing better, my friend, but at the moment we have plenty of D.N.A. matches for the whole family, the ex husband too but that is to be expected as he picked up the children most weekends. However 'hope springs eternal', so they say, our boys did find some fingerprints on the outside of the door which would indicate that there could have been another caller that night. The down side of that is there are no matching prints in the database."

"Another unusual thing is that although there are bruises on Wendy's neck, there are no fingerprints which could mean it was premeditated and gloves were worn or that it was a sudden impulse but the perpetrator grabbed something like a towel or tea towel and placed it around her neck before strangling her. Also there is a large bruise on her jaw indicating that she was probably punched first of all. In other words it doesn't get us that much further ahead."

"Thanks Ben at least you have given me food for thought. Give me a bell if you find anything else," said the D.I. as he turned to leave.

"Will do Les," was the Dr. Ben's parting remark.

Going to the top floor the D.I. knocked on the door of the superintendent's office.

"Come in," a voice called out.

On entering the room the D.I. saw Detective Superintendent Blake shuffling papers into some kind of order. He looked up and said,

"Come in Leslie, what can I do for you?"

"I'd like to have a word about the Timmings case Sir," replied the D.I.

"Right, fire away then," came the response.

"It looks as though we can rule out the new men in her life. One was dotty about her and wanted to marry her, the other had given up any idea do getting back with her and was actively looking for someone else. He had signed up with some Internet 'Lonely Hearts' website. The only other possibility is that it was the husband or a person as yet unknown. The problem is we have very

little evidence to support any theory. We do have some of the ex husband's D.N.A. at the house but he did of course visit regularly to see the children."

"It seems to me Les you are between a rock and a hard place with this. My suggestion is have a word with the Prosecutors Office and see what they have to say. Just keep me informed where you are going with the case."

"Will do Sir and thanks for your time," said Leslie as he left the Superintendent to get on with his paperwork.

Chapter 11

Keith and the children were beginning to settle into a routine. He had taken a week off to spend more time with them and reassured them that he would always look after them. They were young enough to adapt reasonably well although they would always miss their mother and become upset when they realised that she would never be with them again but they were resilient and he would make sure that they could cope with whatever life threw at them. Whatever her faults as a wife, Wendy had always been a good mother and loved the children. She would leave a huge gap in their lives.

The second week he took them to their grandparents who cared for them during the day for another two weeks. After that they took the older two to school on weekdays and little Jack to Nursery School. Keith would pick them up at about 5.30 p.m.

At work his men had been excellent and kept things going so that they didn't fall behind. with their contracted work. They didn't want to incur a penalty fee or it would mean less money for all of them. At one time, before the children arrived, Wendy used to help with the paper work in the small office at the back to the builder's yard. He would have to look for someone immediately to come in part time to help with invoices and 'phone calls.

During the following three weeks he contacted the city's Job Centres to find someone prepared to come in for three days a week. He would remain in the office for the other two days.

There were several applicants for the job and he interviewed all of them. It was an easier task than he had feared. One young lady stood out as she had had a commercial education and was very keen to work for him. She had taken time off from her previous job to look after her widowed mother who was suffering from a degenerative illness and had finally handed in her notice to enable her to care for her mother full time. Now the authorities were helping by providing a care assistant for her mother and Lynne Meriwether was ready to return to work on a part time basis. If anything she was too well qualified for the job as her typing and shorthand speeds were excellent and she had had experience in accountancy in her last job. However the hours suited her very well as the carer was provided for three days a week which meant that Lynne could take over for the rest of the week. She started the following Tuesday and soon saw exactly what was needed. She suggested it would improve efficiency to reorganise the filing system and to keep a record of everything on the computer's extraneous hard drive. It would enable them to find records easily and for her to be able to tell at any time which invoices were paid and which were outstanding. Keith was only too happy to leave things in her capable hands.

Life was settling into a reasonable routine for the whole family when Keith had a visit at home from Detective Inspector Marshfield and his whole world was shattered for the second time.

Chapter 12

After his meeting with the Detective Superintendent, D.I. Marshfield made an appointment to discuss the case with someone in the Crown Prosecution Service. He didn't think they were likely to find enough evidence to bring a case against Keith Timmings but they were the experts and it would depend entirely on their decision whether they should proceed or not.

At promptly ten o'clock, on the day of his appointment, Leslie Marshfield knocked on the door of the Serious Crime Group and entered the room to be greeted by Lyndon Bevington a middle aged man with a mop of thick grey hair.

"Good morning. Inspector Marshfield I believe? Please take a seat and tell me about this case."

The two men shook hands and Leslie explained exactly what evidence they had in the Timmings case as well as giving an outline of everyone closely involved in Wendy's life. He handed over the file he had put together for the lawyer. It contained duplicates of police and forensic records and Lyndon Bevington said he would study them carefully and get back to Leslie as soon as a decision was made.

Leslie thanked him and went back to his office not having the least idea that the decision would be completely different from the one he had anticipated.

A few weeks later he was contacted by Lyndon Bevington who informed him they had decided to prosecute Keith Timmings for the murder of his ex wife. He agreed that there was little hard proof but his D.N.A. was in the house and it wasn't the first time he had been heard arguing with Wendy. He was the most likely person to be responsible for so often a member of the family is the guilty person and his relationship with his ex wife had always been volatile. It was felt that it would be in the public interest to prosecute. A man who was subject to arguing and outbursts of anger could react that way again with someone else if things didn't go his way.

Leslie had grown to like Keith and felt he was doing a good job as a father. This was going to come as a terrible shock to the whole family. The children had already gone through so much. Their only hope was that the Jury would see his good qualities and acquit him for lack of hard evidence.

Leslie discussed his concerns with the Superintendent and they agreed that Keith Timmings loved his family too much to abandon them and make a run for it when he heard the decision of the C.P.S. so they would allow him to stay at home if the grandparents would take the children. He would be able to visit them there so the little ones wouldn't feel abandoned by him. Keith would have to hand his passport to the police until after the trial and also restrict his movements to within the city.

It was with some trepidation that Leslie rang Keith and explained that he needed to see him the following day as he had further things he needed to discuss with him. It also concerned Wendy's parents and he asked Keith to

contact them. He would like to call at ten o'clock in the morning which would give them time to get the children to school.

Keith was surprised but hopeful that they had discovered who had killed Wendy.

"Are you able to tell me what this is about Inspector," queried Keith.

"I'm afraid not. It wouldn't be wise over the telephone, you never know who's listening in these days."

After finishing the call Leslie informed the rest of the team of the decision to prosecute and they all had mixed feelings about it but were professional enough to know that it wasn't up to them to decide. They had their job to do and the CPS had theirs. In the end it would be the Jury who had to decide whether Keith was guilty or not.

Chapter 13

Keith telephoned Wendy's parents that evening and told them what the Inspector had said. They were as curious as him to know what it was all about and said they would return to his house as soon as they had taken the children to school.

"I hope they have founded the person responsible," John commented to his wife.

"I can't think why else he would want to see us all together, unless they have another suspect," Angela replied.

The following morning Keith arrived early at work and as soon as Lynne came in he explained that he would have to take an hour or two off as the Detective Inspector in charge of his ex-wife's case was coming to the house to update them on what was happening.

"Oh I hope they have some good news for you Keith. Good luck," she said assuring him that she would 'phone him if any problems occurred with the business while he was away.

As he left Keith thought how lucky he had been to have found Lynne. She was a really sweet person and very capable. She was someone he could rely on. He hoped she would agree to stay on a permanent basis.

He arrived home in time to set a tray for hot drinks for the expected visitors and arranged a plate of plain and chocolate biscuits. Angela had a sweet tooth as Wendy had and he suspected that D.S. Sloman did too although he wasn't told whether he was coming as well.

When his visitors arrived he found that it was D.S. Jane Lewis who accompanied the D.I. Angela and John arrived a few minutes later and Angela made straight for the kitchen to bring in the tea which she knew Keith always prepared when he was expecting visitors.

When they had finished their drink the D.I. explained why he had asked to meet them all together.

"I'm so sorry to have to put you all through this but I wanted to come and see you to let you know that we have heard from the C.P.S. that they intend to take you to court Keith as they believe there is enough circumstantial evidence to charge you with Wendy's murder."

Keith became very pale and said, "I swear to you I didn't do it Inspector and would never hurt anyone especially Wendy. I still loved her and would have come back if she had agreed to it."

Angela had started crying and John said, "There is no way he would have done it Inspector. We have always regarded him as a son and we were very upset when Wendy wanted him to leave. We kept telling her to grow up and start acting responsibly. In the beginning we kept urging her to sort things out with Keith but after some months they seemed to settle into an agreeable enough routine so we kept quiet and tried our best to support them both."

"What's going to happen to the children. It is so unfair on them. They deserve none of this turmoil in the lives?" Keith asked.

"The C.P.S. has agreed to us delaying your arrest Keith until just before the trial which will probably be in about three to four months time. There are a couple of conditions though. They agree to it only if you Angela and John have the children to stay at your home and Keith you hand over your passport to us. These arrangements need to start from today I'm afraid."

Angela interrupted before Keith could reply. "Keith you come and stay as well. We can tell the children you are all coming over for a holiday. It will give us time to decide how much to tell them and it will give you more time together."

Keith went over to her and gave her a hug and kissed her cheek. "You are one in a million," he said gratefully. "You too John," he added.

"Do you agree to all of this then Keith," asked the D.I.

"I do, of course Inspector," replied Keith. "I have to say though that it is a waste of public money as again I swear I had nothing to do with it."

"We know you didn't son," said John sympathetically.

"We are sorry Keith but it isn't up to us I'm afraid," said the D.I.

"I know inspector and thank you for being so understanding and doing what you can but please keep looking for the real criminal. We just can't let him get away with it."

"I can promise you that we will keep looking Keith and I hope the jury's verdict goes your way," replied Leslie Marshfield as he and Jane got up to leave. "What you need to do immediately is to find a solicitor, Give them time to work on things before we have to officially arrest you."

"I will do Inspector," replied Keith.

"Before you go Inspector, when are we allowed to arrange our daughter's funeral," asked A tearful Angela.

"I will get back to you tomorrow Mrs. Chard. If the forensics people have finished their work I see no reason for any further delay," came the reply.

John saw them to the door and went back to do the best he could to comfort the shattered family members. Later Keith started packing things to take over to his in-laws while Angela washed the tea cups and cleared up.

Chapter 14

The Inspector was as good as his word and telephoned the Chards and Keith the following lunch time. They could go ahead and arrange the funeral whenever convenient.

It was agreed that John would make the arrangements and that afternoon he rang the local undertaker and made an appointment to visit the following morning.

That evening they discussed it with Keith who said he would help financially but would leave the arrangements to them.

They discussed whether the children should attend but felt that it would be too much for little Jack and it would be better if one of the neighbours would look after him. Keith was certain that Mrs, Sefton would be only too glad to have him as she used to baby sit for Wendy now and again. Keith said he'd explain to Gary and Amelia what would happen and if they wanted to attend they could but if not they could stay at Mrs, Sefton's too. He said he'd go around after work and ask her. She could come to the buffet meal afterwards and bring Jack back with her.

After work he called on Eleanor Sefton and she was as helpful as always and said it would be lovely to have Jack again and the other two if they wanted to come. They chatted about how things were going and Keith said he'd let her know the time and date of the funeral as soon as he had seen the undertaker.

The following day Angela and John kept their appointment with Mr. Swift the undertaker and found him a very pleasant man to deal with. His kindly and understanding attitude helped put them at ease and he discussed the funeral arrangements from every aspect. They decided on a simple ceremony at the crematorium, the details would be announced in the Bristol newspapers and they would have three small posies from the children and a large bouquet from Keith and themselves. Friends and others attending would be asked to put money in a box for cancer research instead of sending flowers.

"Wendy was always keen to her bit for cancer research and used to take things to the local cancer research charity shop," Angela explained.

"Very commendable," responded Mr. Swift. "We will take care of the collection for you and send a cheque off to cancer research They in turn will contact you with a letter of thanks and receipt for the amount collected. Going by past experience I think you will be pleasantly surprised at the amount people give," he added.

He informed them that the price would be in the region of £2000. They were not surprised as they thought it would be around that.

After a call to the crematorium, Mr. Swift was able to inform them that date could be arranged for the following week on Thursday at 2.0 p.m. The car to take them to the crematorium would arrive at 1.30 p.m.. That decided, the Chard's shook hands, thanked the undertaker and made their way home.

Chapter 15

Keith discussed the forthcoming funeral with the children and they knew what to expect. They both wanted to attend and throw a rose on to the coffin to say good-bye to their mother. They were not worried as it had been explained to them that it was only the outer shell of Wendy in the coffin and that she was up in Heaven having a wonderful time. She would be watching probably and blowing them kisses.

Jack was quite happy to go to Auntie Eleanor as she always gave him sweets and played games with him.

When the day came it was bright and sunny and all went according to plan. Jack was taken to Mrs. Sefton at 1.0 p.m. and waved happily as Keith left.

The cars arrived a little before time and the three adults and two children got into the car. First they had a peep at the flowers which lay on top of the coffin

in the first car. "Aren't they pretty?" said Amelia. "Mummy will love them and be pleased we chose roses."

"Yes she always loved them since she was a little girl," replied Angela.

The journey was a short one and when they arrived the children were given a rose each and told they would be asked to go forward by the minister. When they went in they were amazed at the number of people who had already arrived. Many of Wendy's old school friends were there. Quite a number of the neighbours too. Len from work had attended to represent the men but intended to return straight after the service had finished. The police were represented by the D.I. and D.S. Brian Sloman who spotted Terence Anstey sitting at the back. "Oh well, he had hoped to marry her," whispered Leslie Marshfield to his D.S.

The short service was conducted by a woman minister who gave a short and suitable sermon. The family found her words comforting and the children were thrilled when she mentioned them by name and asked them to come forward and throw their rose on the coffin. The minister then announced that friends were invited back for refreshments at a community hall in Ashton if they could attend.

After the service they greeted some of the people who attended and were then taken back in the car to the church hall.

Quite a number of people managed to get to the community centre and there was quite a buzz of conversation as old acquaintances caught up with each other's news. Everyone had been upset to hear about Wendy's death and all hoped the murderer would be caught soon..

Later that night John, Angela and Keith said how glad they were that things had gone off so well and how good it was to see how many people cared.

Chapter 16

The following day a depressed Keith went back to the office still reeling from the Inspector's last visit. How could all this be happening to him? Life sometimes seemed too much to bear. What was he going to tell his employees? Would business fall off when the news became public? People could be taken in so easily by what they read in the press or saw on T.V. How could he ever have a normal life again? Even if he was found innocent of any crime, mud sticks. Unless they found the person responsible he would always be under suspicion.

"Hi Keith," said Lynne. "How did thing go yesterday? Should you be in today, we can manage another day if you need time off.?"

"Come into my room Lynne," replied Keith

They went into the small office and Keith told Lynne to sit down. "To tell the truth, I feel a total wreck Lynne, the funeral was fine and everyone so kind but the visit from the police the day before couldn't possibly have been any worse. They are going to charge me with Wendy's murder and I don't know which way to turn. There is no way in the world that this should be happening."

Lynne was silent for a while and then said, "I'm sure I can speak for all the employees Keith. None of us would ever believe you guilty and we will all stand by you and do whatever we can to help. I think you should take the men into your confidence straight away so that we can all make plans to keep the

business going. It'll give you more time to try and sort things out and to be with your family."

"Thank you Lynne, I appreciate your support and thoughtfulness. Could you let the men know I'd like to see them as soon as they finish work this evening? "

"Yes I'll get on to it straight away and if you feel up to it Keith there are three more queries about possible contracts. Shall I make you appointments to visit in the next few days."

"That, at least is good news! Yes please do it straight away. Let's get as much as possible done before word gets out."

Later that afternoon Keith explained to the men what was happening to him and was grateful to receive their full support. The air was blue with what they had to say about the police and the law.

When Keith arrived back at his in-laws he was immediately surrounded by his excited children who were delighted at the thought of them all staying at Grandma and Grandpa's for a holiday. "Come and see where you will be sleeping Daddy," squealed Jack.

He climbed the stairs to find he was in the same room as his youngest son.

"This is great Jack, it'll be fun for us to be together won't it?"

"Yes and come and look where Amelia and Gary are," ordered Jack.

Keith obeyed and the two older children proudly showed him their beds which had 'Dr. Who' duvet covers.

"Look Dad, here is the Tardis! Gary said.

"Your grandparents spoil you lot," exclaimed Keith.

Angela called from downstairs, "Tea is ready come and get it everyone!"

"We're coming Grandma," shouted Amelia as they all clattered downstairs.

After the children were in bed Angela and John told Keith that they felt he should get himself a solicitor as the Inspector had advised. He needed to find out exactly what help he could get. He would have to be represented by a criminal law solicitor who would need to engage a barrister for court, so the sooner he found someone who understood how these things worked the better. They started to look up details in the telephone directory and Keith promised to check a few of them out on the Internet in the morning and make an appointment for as soon as possible.

Chapter 17

After surfing the Internet for local solicitors Keith decided to contact one of them who looked promising. There had been a number of positive reviews on one website so it looked as though the man knew his job. Keith rang the number listed and was offered an appointment for the next morning at 10.0 a.m. He then contacted Angela and John to let them know about the appointment and they were relieved and said they felt happier now that he would be properly represented.

Later he confided in Lynne who also said it was a wise move as they were the experts and could advise him on the best way to handle things. They would be with him from now until the trial ended.

Keith had a busy day visiting the prospective clients and was pleased to be given the contract in each case.

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