

Death in the Family

It was as I was standing by her bedside holding her withered, wrinkled hand, looking at her frail, ghostly grey, old face that it really hit me what I had done. I had been waiting for this moment for months. It had taken no end of hard work and effort on my part. All the planning, sneaking, plotting, trial and error had finally brought us here to this moment. Mrs. Wilkins, an upstanding member of the community, loving mother to my father, Nana Wilkins as she was known to me and my brother, lay here in this hospital bed having breathed her last. She had departed this world and left us all behind along with her estate and riches. As I looked down at her little body and her eyes staring, looking at nothing at all; with her mouth slightly open as if in mid sentence, I had to hide the excited glint in my eye. I had come too far; I couldn't risk it all now at this crucial moment. My father, David Wilkins, a 35 year old office worker, put a hand on my shoulder in an effort to provide some comfort. My performance must have been more convincing than I thought. My dad was falling for it. Ok good. I just have to keep up this façade for a little while longer, until I could be alone.

When I was growing up I had no idea what my doting grandmother was worth. She lived in a simple terraced house in an ordinary street. She wore the usual 'old people's' clothes that she would find in various charity shops and cheap markets. She did nothing out of the ordinary. She didn't go on expensive holidays. In fact the 'best' holiday of her life was a week in Cyprus with her sister Margery. Why is it that most old ladies are called Margery? As it goes I didn't like Margery very much. I thought she was a nosy busy body, always sticking her nose into everybody else's' business. She also smelt of old people that stale perfume, sweat and smoke smell. I don't remember too much about her if I'm honest, but I do remember that because she was a heavy smoker her teeth were yellow which made her smile more scary than pleasant. Whenever we saw her she always insisted on pulling Karl (my brother) and I in close so we could get a really good waft of her stench, and giving us a kiss on both cheeks and the lips. I don't know why, but she made the kiss on the lips a sloppy one. Did she save up saliva especially for this occasion? I don't know but Karl and I would have to wriggle free before one

of us wretched. We used to get her 'smellys' as gifts for Christmas and her birthday in an attempt to combat the smell, but she never took the hint. Luckily we didn't have to put with it for too long. She died of pneumonia when I was 6. When Mum and Dad helped Nana to clear out Margery's house they found drawers full of the same smellys we had been buying her for years.

My Granddad George or Mr. Wilkins as he was known by many, had died when I was only 8 years old. He was a well liked man, always the centre of attention who always had a funny story up his sleeve to keep all and sundry entertained. His favourite stories were usually about pranks he had played as a boy with his three younger brothers. I can't remember any of them now which is a shame because I used to really enjoy them. Maybe it was the way he told them, rather than the stories themselves. He died of a respiratory problem. I was too young to understand at the time. I just know that he wheezed when he breathed, I remember it sounded like air being squeezed through a thin straw. I must admit, although I loved my Granddad very much, it used to scare me when he went into a terrible coughing fit. At that age, I had no idea that he was actually dying. He was only 52. I loved spending time with him though, not least because he would usually have a little white bag in his pocket filled with chocolate covered toffees. We would sit for hours at a time, talking about all kinds of random topics, making each other laugh (and cough and wheeze) while sucking on those lovely toffees. That was what I missed most about him after he was gone. I can't make my mind up whether it was the laughter or the toffees. I have a feeling it may have been the toffees.

Granddad George had been a chef during the war. It wasn't something I would brag about to my friends, who all had Grandfathers who had fought and died, or fought and had terrible war injuries to contend with for the rest of their lives. I thought that Granddad George was a coward, hiding away in the back of the kitchen making soup for all the brave warriors who risked their lives every day. I learnt later of course, of the value that my Granddad's role really held. Without him the troops wouldn't have lasted two days. He kept them nourished, strong and healthy. He was also trained in combat and could have been expected to drop everything and fight at a moment's notice, which did happen on more than one occasion. He rarely spoke

about his time at war and to be honest, due to total lack of interest I never asked. As a result I never had a chance to tell him I was proud of him. I did tell him however, that his broth was awesome. Another reason I miss him now. Lamb broth with carrots, potatoes and peas. Just thinking about it makes my mouth water, I can almost smell it. He used to make it on a Sunday afternoon and then freeze some for later in the week. Nana would bake fresh crusty bread to go with it. The delicious smell would fill the house and tempt our taste buds for hours while it simmered on the stove. "Can't rush a good broth," Granddad would say when I pleaded with him to let us have some, "Now!"

Nana Wilkins was distraught when Granddad George died. She was literally lost without him at first (she probably missed his broth too). As kids my brother, Karl and I would go and stay with Nana Wilkins and Granddad George almost every weekend. It was wonderful; we were spoilt rotten with sweets and late night movies. I loved going there. Karl and I would run amok in the quiet little street, but no one seemed to mind. The neighbours would often invite us in for soft drinks and biscuits. We always obliged, it would have been rude not to. Now that I think about it this was probably their way of getting us off the street and to give other neighbours 15 minutes of peace while we refreshed ourselves. They did seem to take it in turns to call us in. A couple of weeks after Granddad George died Karl and I went to stay with Nana Wilkins as usual, for the weekend. She spent the whole weekend crying in the kitchen. I have to admit, it really did put a dampener on our weekend. I remember thinking "I don't like it at Nana Wilkins' without Granddad George."

It was during these stays at Nana's when I would let my imagination run loose. I had an over active imagination in those days and I still do to some extent. Nana's back yard has been home to various invisible farm animals which I made her swear she would feed everyday in the week while I was at school; a mine field which couldn't be stepped on under any circumstances lest the ill fated 'walker' wanted to lose a limb, and the castle of a Giant who would sooner eat us all up than share his vegetables, which made gardening in the vegetable patch very trying for Nana who "Just wants some carrots for dinner!"

More often than not I would become an explorer on a mission. While everyone else was sitting quietly in the living room, eyes glued to the image on the T.V. screen I would sneak upstairs and 'explore'. My exploring expeditions basically meant me rummaging through Nana's things. I was looking for 'treasure'. I was sure I would find a pot filled with money or lots of expensive jewelry hidden away. I don't know why I expected to find anything of the sort, as I mentioned Nana lived in a very simple house and she certainly didn't wear any expensive jewelry. I'd convince myself that this was because it was hidden away somewhere secret where thieves and pirates couldn't find it. I would open every draw and cupboard and look in every nook and cranny. She must have known what I was doing. I'd excuse myself from the living room by saying I needed to visit the bathroom and then I'd be gone for hours. There couldn't have been anything THAT interesting on the telly that she didn't notice my absence.

It was during one of these 'expeditions' when I came across her will. It was inside a brown envelope, in a tin box hidden inside a closet behind some of Granddad's old gardening boots and tweed jackets. Nana Wilkins had obviously felt too attached to these items to dispose of them along with all of his other things. Either that or even the charity shops didn't want them. The closet had a very dry and musty smell. It must not have been opened for a long time. When I opened the closet the first thing to draw my attention was an SLR army issue rifle (I later found out that Granddad had procured this illegally). A strange thing to keep I thought, especially as she doesn't know how to use it...or does she? I lifted it out of the closet careful not to touch the trigger. When I put the butt of the gun on the floor the nozzle end just about reached my shoulder. This would not be an easy gun to fire seeing as how it was almost my height. I cautiously opened the chamber which was so stiff the little round knob on the end of the handle made a red mark on the palm of my hand where I had clutched it so tightly. Empty. I was searching the closet for ammunition when I came across the tin box. I was 13 years old when I found it. I was pleased to see that the envelope was not sealed. I eased the paper out, unfolded it and read it. My eyes nearly popped out of my head as I read it. I must have read it 5 or 6 times that afternoon. There was a lot of legal jargon which I didn't really understand, but I did understand that my father, Karl and I all stood to inherit a very tidy sum each upon her demise. Where had my nana got her hands on 60,000 pounds sterling? The only job I have ever

known her to have been as a cleaner at the local mental institute. There is no way she could have saved up this much money from doing that 3 times a week. Unless...maybe she had become great friends with a patient who was quite affluent. Maybe they had given her the money to look after and she had decided to keep it and then pass it on to us. Alternatively, maybe Granddad George had more 'tales' than he ever divulged to us and this was actually spoils of war. It didn't really matter how she had got it, and I didn't spend too long deliberating over it. The fact was, according to Nana's will Dad would get 40,000 and Karl and I would get 10,000 each. At 13, 10,000 pounds was *a lot* of money.

I immediately let my overactive imagination get to work. What would I do with the money? I could invest it; too boring. I could buy a car, but I would not legally be able to drive for another 3 years. I could quit school and go travelling, just think, America – Hollywood and meet all the stars. I could upgrade my computer. No; I could throw my computer away and buy the latest model. The possibilities were endless. I knew then and there that life without this money was no life at all. I needed it; I wanted it with every iota of my being. There is no point being given lots of money when you are an adult. You do sensible things with it like pay bills and debts, get a mortgage and other ridiculous things. Money is meant to be spent on 'stuff'. The only people who can enjoy money properly are kids, with no inhibitions and no responsibilities. After some time, I put the will back in to the envelope careful not to bend it or tear it. I placed the tin box and the rifle at the back of the closet behind the boots and jackets where I found them, quietly closed the door and went back to join the others in the living room. I sat staring at the T.V. but not seeing what was on the screen. My head was in a dream land of money, shopping and travel. If I did go to Hollywood, who would I want to meet first?

Later that night as I lay in bed unable to sleep, I realized that there was one great big obstacle in the way of me and this money. Nana Wilkins. I wouldn't see a penny of that money until she had passed on. It had been 5 years since Granddad George had passed away. Nana Wilkins was only 55 years old now. She would probably live to be one hundred knowing her. She was the type never to give in. I could imagine her on her one hundredth birthday looking as young and healthy as she did now, holding her will to her chest shouting "You're not getting this until I die!

I am going nowhere, not now, not ever!" By the time Nana gave in to old age it would be too late. I would be grown up. Probably married with children, a mortgage and dead end job in an office like my dad. The thought sent a silent shiver down my spine.

I woke up with a start, sweat dripping off the side of my face. My heart was pounding in my chest as remnants of the previous night's nightmare drifted away. It took me a while to get my bearings. I was at home, in my bed, still young and reckless. Only one thought entered my head now.

Nana Wilkins had to die.

For the best part of the day I began to plot my dastardly deed.

I sat in my bedroom at my computer, opened a word document and started to make a list of various ways in which I could get rid of Nana. There were of course the obvious ways:

- 1) Shoot her. This wouldn't work for a number of reasons. First I didn't have a gun, nor did I know where or how to get my hands on one, apart from the rifle in the closet but that was no good because it was too big and had no ammunition. Second there would be a lot of blood and I am afraid to say I am the squeamish type and third it would mean that people would know she had been killed by a person and the police would eventually find out it was me. I may be excellent at Math and Geography but I am not a criminal mastermind...yet.
- 2) Stab her. Again there were some glaringly obvious issues with this option. The blood would still be a problem and this would be worse than shooting because you would have to get up close and feel the blood on your hands. Then there is the fact that I would have to get up close to her, she would be able to fight me off and then she would know what I was plotting and would probably, at the very least be more careful around me and at the very worst tell my dad about what I was trying to do. Finally, there was that reoccurring police issue. It would need to look like an accident.
- 3) Hit by a car. This would be very effective if I could drive, which I couldn't only being 13. I would have to bribe someone to do it for me and they might tell the police. Anyway, who would I ask? Dad?

My fourth idea was nothing less than a stroke of genius. I go to her house every weekend. I have access to all number of things inside her house. I could set a trap and no one would know it was me. Maybe I am a criminal mastermind after all.

I went to school as usual that week, but my mind was elsewhere. I couldn't concentrate in any of my lessons and received several detentions from various teachers for incomplete work, being late for class and general absent mindedness. This was more than a little annoying as it took precious time away from my plotting and scheming, but hard as I tried I just could not concentrate on the tasks the teachers were setting. My mind kept drifting while the teachers were talking and then they would ask me some inane question or other as teachers are bound to do, which I couldn't answer due to not listening. Then invariably I would face a tirade from the teacher about how "disappointed," they were and how, "this was so unlike," me and other things of that nature. Sigh! I had more important things to contend with. School was least of my worries especially as I was going to quit as soon as I had the money. What is the point in spending endless hours, days, months and even years in a boring, mind numbing institution which teaches us nothing of relevance if we don't have to? We go to school in order to get a job apparently. Well...I won't need a job when I have all of that lovely dosh in my hand and Simon Cowell is my best friend and together we sign record deals left, right and centre. There goes my over active imagination again.

As if detention every night at school wasn't bad enough Dad made me sit at the table with him in the kitchen on Wednesday while he made dinner.

"What's going on James?" he asked as he put the spaghetti in the pot of boiling water.

"Nothing," I replied sheepishly as I played with the salt shaker on the table, tipping it ever so slightly to create a tiny salt mountain.

"Don't give me that. There is something going on. It's not like you to have detention at all, let alone three days in a row." He stirred the pasta sauce in the little saucepan for a few minutes while looking over at me drawing pictures in the salt with my finger. "You may as well tell me. I'll find out sooner or later. Is it that your mum has started working nights again?" He raised one

eye brow as he looked at me. My dad wasn't the most handsome of men with his once thick mop of black hair thinning at the back and his bushy eye brows meeting in the middle, but he was definitely one of the most hard working and kind hearted men I knew. His face was like an open book with various emotions written all over it. Today, right now, it was concern.

Yes. Thank you, Dad! He had just given me the perfect get out clause. Prior to his last statement I hadn't known what I was going to say. I guess I was just hoping that he would get bored with my silence and drop it. But, the idea that I could be struggling without mum here in the evenings to cook a decent dinner (Dad did his best, but it wasn't exactly Michelin Star), help me with my homework and tuck me in at bed time, was first class.

"Yes," I mumbled almost inaudible. Dad sighed, stopped stirring the sauce, which was thickening into a congealed mess at the bottom of the pan, and came to sit with me at the table. He sat across from me and put his hand on top of mine (probably to stop me making any more salty pictures on the table cloth) and said, "There's nothing we can do about it son. There's more money available in a night shift and we could really do with the money right now. You'll just have to suck it up like the rest of us." He smiled a gentle, encouraging smile, but I couldn't raise my gaze to meet his. He squeezed my hand, left his seat and returned to the now definitely burnt sauce and continued to stir. I left the table glad that the questions were over and went to my room to finalise my plan. I was going to be in her house in two days and there was still a lot to do. If I had ever questioned my motives before, I didn't now. Mum and Dad needed the money just as much as I wanted mine. It was selfish of Nana to cling on to it the way she was doing. It would be easier if she just handed it over, but as I very much doubted she would be doing that any time soon, my way was the only way.

As I drifted off to another dream filled and fitful sleep that night I wondered if Dad even knew about the money stashed away in Nana's bank account, with his name written all over it. I guessed not.

Finally it was Saturday. I had woken up early to make sure I had a hearty breakfast, but when the time came to sit down and eat my two soft boiled eggs, buttered toast and cereal drenched in milk, I found I couldn't face it. I was terribly nervous. My stomach felt as though it had snakes

writhing around inside it and the palms of my hands became moist no matter how many times I dried them on the kitchen towel. I was afraid I was going to go through a whole roll.

As we all piled slowly in to the car it seemed to take much longer than usual to get Nana's. I don't know whether Dad was driving especially slowly on this day or whether it was just my mind playing games with me, but either way I squirmed in my seat the whole way. Karl, who was sitting next to me in the back kept glancing over at me and giving me strange looks. He must have suspected something, but I just ignored his quizzical eyebrows and stared out of my side of the car window pretending to be very interested in the architecture of the buildings we passed. Mum and Dad were talking to each other the whole way there. I was too wrapped up in my own business to really hear what they were saying, but I do recall something mum said about how Nana was not looking after herself properly since Granddad's death and she was worried. "Well," I remember thinking, "You won't have to worry about her for much longer."

When we reached the house I got out of the car in nervous trepidation. My knees were trembling ever so slightly. "Get a grip!" I thought to myself. "This is ridiculous. You have a whole weekend to get through yet." I was quite right of course. I couldn't barge into Nana's house right now and immediately put my plan into effect. They would know something suspicious was going on. No. For my plan to be highly effective none of us could be in the house when the event took place. The police, my father, mother and Karl, must all believe it to have been an accident. If any of us are there then there is a chance that the aged old finger of blame could be pointed in the direction of any of us, and I definitely didn't want that. Especially seeing as how I *would* be to blame.

Nana greeted us at the door as she always did, full of smiles and kisses. I tried to hide behind Dad to avoid being smothered by Nana's hairy lip. It didn't work of course; she always got me in the end. As I sat in the living room sipping at my tea and listening to Mum, Dad and Nana's inane chat I made an important decision. It was vital that I be seen to be the dotting grandson from now on. It was vital that nobody suspect a thing.

"Can I get anybody more tea?" Nana asked as she started to ease herself out of her comfy chair in the corner of the room.

“I’ll get it Nana,” I said springing from my seat with such force I almost spilt the remainder of my tea down my front.

“Oh! How lovely. That’s not like you James,” Nana said as she smiled at me with a mischievous wink.

“Well done James. Good lad,” said Dad handing me his cup for a refill. I walked out to the kitchen and immediately began to panic. Did I make the wrong move? Was it a bad decision to begin to dote on her now, after all these years of allowing her to wait on me hand and foot? Have I inadvertently just placed myself at the top of the list of suspects? My thoughts were disturbed as Karl clumsily entered the kitchen tutting and huffing.

“Thanks James. What has got in to you? Now I have to help as well. Nana wants me to bring in some biscuits,” He grunted as he haphazardly started rummaging through the cupboards. Of course I knew where all the biscuits were from all my hours of exploring and hunting for treasure, but I didn’t let on to Karl. I let him get on with his search, without another word while I waited for the kettle to boil. “No,” I thought. “I’m going to be fine. Carry on like this for the rest of the weekend and all will be well.”

And so, that is exactly what I did. I helped Nana make the dinner and lay the table. I offered to do the dishes when dinner was over. I asked Nana if there was anything in particular that she wanted to watch on the T.V. that night instead of hogging the remote as usual. I even helped clean up before we went up to bed. Karl’s glimmering scowl couldn’t be missed as Nana occasionally asked him to chip in as well.

“It’s not fair to let James do everything is it?” she asked him as he grumbled about putting the dishes away after dinner.

“My my, I do like this new James. Where did he come from and how much will I have to pay him to stay?” Nana asked jokingly as she kissed my forehead before sending me off upstairs to bed. “Oh, not much,” I thought, “Just the 10,000 pounds you owe me.” I was actually quite tired after all the helping out I had done that day so sleep came easy. I drifted off in to a dream world

filled with celebrities, parties and fast cars. A sleep which was undisturbed until Nana called me down for breakfast the next morning. Today was the day.

In order for me to keep up appearances I again threw myself in to being the helpful grandson. I cleared the table after breakfast, made Nana a nice cup of tea to sit out in the garden with and offered to go to the shop for more milk and bread. Karl glared at me throughout breakfast. I couldn't blame him really. He had no idea what was going on in my head and why I was behaving this way. As far as he was concerned my being a goody two shoes meant that he would have to start helping too. If I knew anything about Karl, it was that he hated anything coming between him and his television, especially at the weekend when there was no homework to be done. If you ask me I think his fixation with the television is quite unhealthy. It is said to rot the minds of young people. You can tell it hasn't rotted mine because I am still very creative and imaginative. I'd have to be else I wouldn't have been able to mastermind my amazing plan which would be put into action in a few more hours, just before Dad arrived to collect us. But Karl, well I don't think he even knows what an imagination is, let alone possess one.

That afternoon while I was 'playing' in Granddad's old shed in the garden, as I often did, I 'found' his old hammer. It was on a shelf alongside some old oil cans, exactly where I had left it last time I was in his shed. I put it under my t-shirt and tucked it in to the top of my jeans. I was wearing an old green, baggy t-shirt which was actually too big for me. I had chosen this one specifically for this purpose. I was hoping that it would be so big and baggy that no one would be able to see the shape of the hammer under it. I had a backup plan if they could. I would just pretend to be in one of my imaginary worlds where I would 'need' the hammer for an important mission. No one would question it. The cold of the metal against my skin made me flinch and the weight of the hammer was more than I expected. As I walked it kept threatening to fall out of the top of my jeans. I wouldn't be able to hide it here for long and would need to find an easily reachable hiding place in the house. Luckily I knew just the place. At the top of the stairs was Nana's wicker wash basket. I knew it was empty because she had done her washing

yesterday; I had helped her hang the clothes out on the line. No one would be going in there for a little while anyway. Perfect.

I took a deep breath and then with as much normality as I could I waddled out of the shed, across the freshly cut lawn, down the little stone steps, over the hand laid patio and in to the house through the back door, trying all the while to avoid Nana's gaze as she sat on the little garden bench on the patio, cup of tea in hand. Once in the house I checked on Karl. He was exactly where I left him sitting on the couch with a can of coke watching some rubbish game show on the telly. What a waste of time. It was a lovely summer's day outside. The sun was shining, the birds were chirping and all was well with the world. I couldn't blame Nana for staying out there and lapping it up. It isn't often we get days like this on our little Island. We live on a small Island in the middle of the Irish Sea. We usually have strong northerly winds blowing a gale or we are drenched in rain and storm clouds coming in from the ocean. Today there was barely a cloud in the sky.

I quietly backed up from the living room so as not to disturb Karl and I ran up the stairs two at a time. Soundlessly I lifted the wicker lid and reached in to place the hammer on the soft bottom of the basket then replaced the lid. So far so good.

As I began to descend the stairs I stopped and looked carefully at each one. I needed to find a step where the carpet was already coming loose. There wasn't one. Damn it! I had feared this. Now I was going to have to choose a step at random and pull up the carpet, which was stuck fast, while making it look like it had come free over time due to wear and tear. Tricky! I spent a good few minutes, taking advantage of the fact that Nana was outside and Karl was engrossed in the 'Game of...something or other', examining each step in turn. I eventually decided on the stair third from the top. I thought I would be able to get the hammer behind the tacks keeping the carpet down, quite easily and this would be a good distance for Nana to fall. I checked my watch. I had about an hour before Dad was due to come and collect us. I would go outside again now and continue to 'play' in order not to make Nana suspicious. Also it would keep her out there a little longer and away from the wicker laundry basket.

I actually enjoyed myself that day at Nana's. I was going to miss this when it was gone. Dad arrived bang on time at 2pm as usual (we had to be able to get home in time for the football kick off at 3pm). Nana put on the kettle as usual and made them both a cup of tea, which they took in to the living room, joining Karl who had not moved all day. It had just dawned on me how much tea Nana drank. I was starting to think she had a serious 'tea' problem, when my mind was drawn to the fact that the time had come and the coast was clear. I moved swiftly and silently up the stair case, my heart pounding in my chest. I had only the amount of time it took for Dad to drink his tea and then we would be called on to leave. As I effortlessly removed the lid and reached in to the wicker basket I was certain that someone was going to come out of the living room in to the hall way and catch me. The hammer felt strange and heavy in my hand. I was starting to doubt myself. "I can't go through with this. She is my Nana," I thought, my grip tightening on the cold wooden handle of the hammer. "Yes, but Mum and Dad need the money. Nana must know that and yet she has done nothing to help them. More to the point, you need the money. Focus on the money." With that last thought I knew I was going to go through with it. I slid down to the third step from the top and carefully used the back edge of the hammer to pry the carpet from the wooden step. It was glued down as well as tacked. It was much harder than I anticipated but I couldn't stop now. I was worried about the amount of noise I was making, but the clock was ticking and I needed to finish up here. My hands were sweating making it difficult to keep a good firm grasp on the hammer. I pulled, and pulled and pulled. Finally with a loud tearing sound the carpet came free from the step and as I had hoped it was flailing around loosely. I paused and waited, sure that someone would have heard the carpet being ripped from the wood and come to see what was causing it. No one came. I tested it a few times and sure enough when stepped on, the carpet slid forward. Nana would soon lose her balance and slip when walking on this step. Job done! Now what was I going to do with the hammer? My original plan had been to hide back under my shirt, but now I knew that wouldn't work and I couldn't leave it in the wicker basket because she would find it and know something funny was going on. As it happens I didn't have time to worry about it. Dad came bursting out of the living room and ran up the stairs passed me. I quickly pushed the hammer behind my back in the hope that he hadn't noticed it.

“I’m just visiting the bathroom quickly and then we need to leave. Make sure you’re ready,” he said as he practically raced in to the bathroom and slammed the door shut. I took my chance, ran into Nana’s room and pushed the hammer under her bed and then ran back down the stairs careful to skip the third step from the top.

I sat on the couch next to Karl, my heart still beating wildly, trying to look normal and casual, but knowing that I must look slightly deranged if my face is telling tale of my inner emotions. I was terrified of what was about to happen and yet eagerly awaiting it at the same time. I don’t remember ever having such conflicting emotions before that point in my life. However confused I was feeling, it didn’t last long. Dad came out of the bathroom and began his decent down the stairs. I couldn’t warn him because then he would know what I had done. I had to let things play out. This is what happened.

I waited with baited breath as Dad began to run down the stairs. Thump, step one. Thump, step two and then with the third thump an unusual sound came out of Dad’s mouth. It was a cry of befuddled fear mixed with profane indignation and realization of what was happening. The subsequent thumps were much faster, each one accompanied by a shriek from Dad. Time seemed to have slowed down again and I was listening to Dad’s literal downfall in slow motion. Karl and Nana both jumped from their seats and ran to Dad’s aid. I didn’t move.

I couldn’t move.

I sat alone in the living room listening to the commotion in the hall way.

I hadn’t meant to hurt Dad. This was not supposed to happen. I felt sick to the pit of my stomach. What had I done? Had I killed Dad? What would Mum say? She would hate me forever. How was I going to get out of this?

Then Dad, supported by Karl and Nana on either side, came hobbling in to the living room. He sat in Nana’s chair in the corner, a look of shock and pain on his face. Nana went in to the kitchen to get some ice. A wave of relief swept over me and my heart finally began to slow returning to normal. Dad was alive. Thank God for that. He had only hurt his knee. Nana returned with the ice and placed it over his bad knee.

“What happened Dave?” she asked concern filling her voice.

“I was just coming down the stairs and I slipped on that loose piece of carpet. It’s alright Mum stop fussing,” he said as he batted her hands away from his knee.

“Why didn’t you tell me you had loose carpet on the stairs Mum? It’s a death trap. I’ll fix it for you now before I go.” He said a little anger in his tone. Mum and Dad were often saying that Nana was too proud to ask for help. He probably thought that she had known about the carpet for a while and had been too stubborn to ask him to fix it.

“What loose carpet? It’s news to me.” Nana retorted. Uh oh! This is where it could all unravel I thought, that familiar feeling of panic beginning to rise again.

“Whatever. I’ll fix it now.” Dad sighed as he thrust the ice pack back at Nana and got up from the chair wincing slightly. He walked out of the room and went out to Granddad’s shed. Oh No! He was going to be looking for Granddad’s hammer and won’t find it out there because it is under Nana’s bed. I gulped and turned to look at Karl whose attention had already returned to the television. I wouldn’t have time to run up and get the hammer, bring it down and hide it somewhere decent before Dad came back from the shed. I’d just have to ride this one out and fain ignorance if asked any difficult questions. So I sat back and stared at the television, my mind racing all the time with the possible outcomes of this scenario.

As it happens I needn’t have worried. Dad came back in from the shed with Granddad’s toolbox, which was interesting because I have searched that shed from top to bottom and I’ve never seen that toolbox. In it were another hammer and other assorted tools. Dad quickly got to work on the carpet, fixing it down against the wooden step very securely. Foiled! There was no way Nana was going to slip on that carpet. If she fell down the stairs now it would be a fantastic coincidence, but nothing to do with me. I felt quite deflated. I was now back to where I started and nowhere near inheriting that money.

The car ride home was uneventful. Nobody spoke. Dad was in a foul mood because of his sore knee and the fact that he had missed the first half of the football. Karl was feeling glum, I

presume, because he was missing some T.V. show or other and I...well I had already started plotting plan B.

When we got home Dad and Karl went immediately in to the living room and turned on the T.V. so as not to miss another second of the football and I ran up to my room. I was going to need some quiet time in order that I could think things through clearly in my mind. But when I reached my bedroom door I noticed that it was slightly ajar. "That's weird," I thought. I never leave my bedroom door open. I believe in privacy and I hate it when Karl goes in there and nicks my stuff. I cautiously pushed the door open and slowly stepped inside. I don't know what I was expecting to find, but it certainly wasn't the scene that greeted me as I stepped across the threshold. Everything was exactly as it should be nothing out of place. My shirts were still left in a crumpled heap on the floor next to my bed; my bed was still unmade from yesterday morning when I had got up so early for my 'big' breakfast and my school bag was still strewn across the floor by the window, where I had left it when I got in from school on Friday afternoon. The *only* difference, the *only* thing which was wrong and which caught my attention immediately, the moment I stepped one toe in the room, was my computer. It was switched on which is not how I left it and on the screen lighting up the dark room was the one thing I hoped that no one else would see. The word document I had made with the list of possible ways to commit murder. Suddenly my blood ran cold. I felt a presence in the doorway behind me.

"Well?" came the voice I had dreaded hearing, but knew I would inevitably have to face. I turned to face my mum who was stood filling the doorway, her arms folded tightly across her chest offering no chance of escape.

"What?" I asked as innocently as I could, although I knew what question was coming next and my mind was working at an impossible speed to find a suitable answer to it. I just hoped that while this process was underway my facial expression and body language would not give me away.

"Why do you have a list of possible ways to commit murder saved on your computer? And *who exactly* are you planning on killing?" she looked at me very pointedly, her mouth in a thin straight line and her eyebrows raised. My mum is a very good looking woman. At least I think

she is, but I may be biased. Her long brunette hair falls in natural thick curls to her shoulders. Her blue eyes are always beautifully made up with eye shadow and mascara which illuminates their brightness. I love the way her eyes seem to sparkle when she is very happy about something or when she gets excited. It is true that she carries a little more weight than she would like (she is perpetually on a diet) but she is by no means fat. As she stood in my doorway looking disapprovingly at me I noticed that she was wearing a light blue summer dress cut to her knees. It looked very nice. I wondered if now would be a good time to compliment her on her choice of outfit. Perhaps not.

“It’s for school,” Ah good save! Parents can never question or complain when something is ‘for school’ they are usually just happy that you are getting on with your homework. Problem solved I thought. But then...

“Why have you got a list of possible ways to kill someone for school?” she asked continuing to glare at me. It’s amazing how long she can hold that gaze for. It’s unfaltering. I wonder if they teach mums how to do this in a special class or something.

“Erm,” I begin to stutter. Come on think! “Erm, because...”

“Because?” Oh no. When she starts repeating the things you say, then it is an indication that she doesn’t believe it. I needed an answer quickly, but my usually over active imagination was suddenly completely and utterly, totally and unquestionably blank.

“It’s...well...I was...my teacher said...”

My eyes desperately skirted the room for inspiration, when I was struck by an idea. My shelves were filled with crime fiction books. I love reading and my favourite genre is basically anything to do with murders and detectives. That was it!

“I’m writing a book.” Saved!

“A book?” why oh why did she have to question everything I said?

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

