

## April Newsletter

Hi All,

This has been a super busy month. Glass Arrows is now with the publishers, Silverwood Books, tentative publication date early July. Secret Places set off on its blog tour, organised by the marvelous Anne Cater at Random Things Tours.



It's a little nerve-racking to submit your baby to review, but very exciting when the reviews come back so positive. A common theme was that this was a different sort of thriller, but in a good way, and lots of people liked the locations (Norfolk and North Yorkshire), the dog Brizo, and the local characters as well as the detective Greg Geldard. I was particularly pleased that the reviewers found the domestic abuse story thought provoking. And that a reviewer from N America got the use of the Yorkshire vernacular, which had been a worry. I'll permit myself one quote, this one from Zoe's Book Nook

‘Wow, this held me enraptured and enthralled from the first page. I was hooked and engaged in this fascinating and intriguing story.’

Thank you so much the Random Tours bloggers.

I also made some progress with book number three, and am quite excited by the story line. I hope you will be too. I'll share the title next month.

Finally, I ended the month doing my first shift as a volunteer vaccinator. As the supervising nurse said to me at the start of the day,

‘folk who are used to injecting animals usually take to the same job on humans without difficulty, provided they remember not to smack them in the leg as cattle farmers do, or ‘scruff’ them, as vet nurses do with small furrries.’

I added, ‘and remember not to mark the backs of their necks with wax crayon to show which have been done.’

You will be pleased to know that I did remember all that, and have now successfully added humans to my list of species (previously sheep, cattle and alpacas).

Seriously, it was a great day, working with wonderful people in a super team.

And now, here is the short story I promised you last month. Enjoy!

### **The Battle of The House in the Woods**

It was the dogs that woke me. It's not unusual for one of them to hear a muntjac calling, or the screech of a barn owl and respond accordingly, but that's usually a single, indignant 'uff'. This was a series of barks, both angry and frightened. This was the alarm call. Inevitably, the first barks woke the second, rather deaf old dog, who equally inevitably joined in, without the slightest clue what she was barking about. The cacophony in my bedroom was not conducive to further sleep. After various injunctions to shut up and pipe down were ignored, I gave up and got out of bed. My husband was away, hence the dogs sharing my bedroom, so it was down to me to investigate.

By now I was a little concerned, and the more so when, peering out of the window in the en-suite which overlooks the front of the house, I saw a strange car by the front gate. Still shushing the dogs, to no avail whatsoever, I cautiously opened the bedroom door keeping the dogs behind me. At last the dogs fell quiet, perhaps because I was heeding their warnings. I could hear movement downstairs and the sound of muffled voices from the dining room.

I retreated back into the bedroom, closed the doors and with a strength born of panic, pulled the chest of drawers in front of the door. Looking round and seizing a bedroom chair, I wedged it between the chest and the end of the bed. There was no way that door was opening now, unless they used an axe to remove the top half altogether. I wished I hadn't thought about axes and grabbed the phone. Whoever was downstairs had to have heard the dogs. It surely was only a matter of time before they came up to investigate.

Damn! My mobile with all the phone numbers in it was downstairs on charge. Hang on, my contacts list was in my iPad, and that was upstairs. Great. Something was going my way. Booting up my iPad with one hand, I rang 999 on the landline.

'Police,' I said, and then, 'I have burglars in the house. I'm barricaded in my bedroom. Yes, I think I'm safe for now, but not for long. Please hurry.' And gave my address.

Next I rang my nearest neighbours and explained the situation to shocked silence. 'I've told the police,' I said, 'but it'll probably be a while before they get here. No, don't anyone try to tackle them. There's at least two, possibly more. But if you could block the road beyond their car without putting yourself at risk, that would be great. Perhaps the chap at the farm would help?'

There came a bang on the bedroom door and it pushed open slightly, but only a millimetre or so.

‘We know you’re in there, a voice said. If you know what’s good for you, you and the dogs will stay there.’ I heard steps going back downstairs and someone else walking along the landing.

I pushed the door back on the latch and looked round me for a weapon. The bleach from the en-suite occurred to me and I put it handy, on top of the chest of drawers. If anyone did get the door open, they were going to get a face-full. The bleach usually stood in an antique chamber pot adorned with the Flags of all the Nations. I regarded it thoughtfully, some vague recollections of castle sieges and ways of repelling invaders running through my mind, and placed it in the basin under the en-suite window.

As I stood near the window, I saw a tractor pull up behind the strange car and park across the roadway. I regarded this development with considerable satisfaction. If my burglars left now, it would have to be on foot. That should limit what they could take away.

Judging from the shouts, the burglars had also spotted the tractor. There was a thunder of feet on the stairs and the door rattled again.

‘Get that tractor shifted, or we’ll smash up the whole house.’

I picked up the bleach and took the top off it, just in case. ‘Smash away,’ I shouted back. ‘It’s all insured.’

There was a growl of frustration and more shouting. I made out some more threats but the dogs were barking again, which leant colour to my next reply.

‘Can’t hear a word you’re saying,’ I shouted back. ‘Go the window at the front and I’ll talk to you from there.’

More shouting, more angry threats, but I persisted with my ‘can’t hear you’ line. Finally I did distinctly hear the words ‘deaf old bat,’ and the footsteps went back down the stairs. I went to the window and opened it. Out of sight below the ledge, I picked up the Flags-of-All-the-Nations and held it ready. It was a fair weight. Then I leaned forward, through the open window.

There were three dark figures below, all wearing hoodies. ‘Tell that old fool to shift his tractor, or someone’s going to get hurt,’ one of them shouted. I stuck my head out.

‘Sorry, I can’t hear you very well. Can you come a bit closer?’

There was another uncomplimentary comment about age-related hearing loss and the figure moved closer. It was the work of just a moment to drop Flags etc out of the window. Watching the fall, I realised I’d missed his head, but hit his shoulder. It seemed to cause some considerable pain and he dropped to the ground. His two mates, a wary eye on me at the window, rushed forward to pick him up as the distant sound of sirens made itself apparent.

‘She’s broken my shoulder,’ the victim moaned, and the two of them helped him to the gate, straight into the waiting ambush of my two nearest neighbours. One of them was ready

with a power hose. The second, a nonagenarian friend, got them with the indelible spray I had bought for her on Amazon only a week or so earlier, as a legal alternative to the pepper spray she had announced she was buying. For good measure she then let off her rape alarm, also from Amazon, which meant that the blue lights had little difficulty finding the source of the disturbance.

I sank back on my bed, reflecting that she'd always wanted to find out how loud the alarm was. Now she and most of Norfolk had a pretty good idea. A bang on the bedroom door and the police were there to assure me that all was now safe and I could come out.

'Only one problem,' I said. 'I don't think I can move the chest of drawers.'

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