

March Newsletter

Hi All,

I suppose it's a sign of the times when an event of note is the receipt of a vaccination. But I'm delighted to say that's not all that has been happening over the last month. No, there was the day one of my canine assistants barfed on the carpet just as the carpenter arrived to fix the rotting back door. Closely followed by the morning the other canine barged through wood and wire to get into the hen pen and was only apprehended (by me) when a crescendo of squawks indicated something was seriously amiss. If P D James had these issues, it's never mentioned anywhere in the literature.

Nonetheless, I have progress to report. Not only is Glass Arrows (the sequel to Secret Places) receiving its final edit before going to Silverwood Books, but I have started on book three. I am really excited about the first three chapters of what is provisionally entitled 'Burning Pyres'. I will share more in future newsletters.

In the meantime, many thanks to those of you who voted on the name for the kitten in Glass Arrows. There was a lot of support for Felonious, but Bobby just edged it.

Stop Press:

Just yesterday I completed the training and qualified as a volunteer Covid vaccinator. The course was excellent and great fun too. Especially the vet volunteer who, when warned by the trainer that we only give injections IN THE ARM (with considerable emphasis) replied that he wanted a longer glove!

I am very excited about my new role and looking forward to my first shift.

I promised a look inside **Glass Arrows** this month, so I have copied the opening pages below.

In April, as a special thank you to you all, you will find a new, unpublished short story.

First: Glass Arrows

Glass Arrows

Chapter 1 Cambridgeshire, 29 March 2018

The call came Sunday evening. Emma and her husband Sam had been half way through the traditional BBC 'bodices and bonks' drama, when the phone rang. Sam hit the pause button and picked up the receiver.

‘It’s for you,’ he said, and de-reclined his side the sofa in order to fetch a fresh glass of wine from the kitchen while Emma took the call. On the big screen were two maidens with bosoms frozen in mid heave and a generously hirsute horseman leaning down from the saddle.

‘Hi it’s Emma.’

‘And this is Kate, with the call you didn’t want to get.’

‘Oh Lord. Tell me it’s not foot and mouth. Or pheasants again.’

‘No, not foot and mouth nor Newcastle disease in pheasants again.’

‘Swine fever? Equine flu in Newmarket?’

‘How about I tell you what it is, rather than we go through the list of what it’s not? It’s bird flu in turkeys and possibly ducks. In Norfolk. We’ll be managing it from the Vet Office in Bury St Edmunds. Can you get yourself there by eight am tomorrow? The Regional Chief Vet will be expecting you and I’ll let your Director General know you’ve been taken off your usual beat.’

‘I was due to see the Minister of State about genetically modified maize on Tuesday. The DG’ll need to deputise someone to do that.’

‘I’ll let him know when we speak. Don’t you worry about that. It’s not your problem now. We’ll speak tomorrow when you get to Bury. There’s a bird-table scheduled for eleven am. Do you know the vets at Bury?’

‘Not well. Anything I need to be aware of?’

‘No. Easy chaps to get on with. Speak tomorrow. Thanks Emma,’ and Kate rang off.

Sam came back with his brimming glass of red and sat down again.

‘I assume you’d better not be drinking anymore this evening if you’re off early tomorrow.’

‘At least I’ll be able to stay home for this emergency. It’s bird flu and I’m to be based in Bury. I will need to be off early though, so let’s watch the rest of this and then I’ll go and get everything sorted for the morning.’

‘Ok. Although I must say I’m beginning to lose interest. It’s all a bit predictable isn’t it? There’ll be more heaving of bosoms that would fall out altogether if they weren’t fastened in with gaffer tape, followed by a nude male torso doing something energetic with bales of straw, and we’ll both sit here wondering how they’re going to cover the ensuing rash with make-up. Then all parties will run gaily through a field, ruining someone’s hay crop, before a lot of rumpy pumpy that flattens more grass than a band of rampaging badgers.’

‘You’re right,’ said Emma. ‘Working in agriculture does tend to ruin period drama, especially when you sit there pointing out the tramlines in fields supposedly sown by hand. Perhaps I’ll just go and look out my things for tomorrow.’

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