
PROJECT DEADHEAD

BOB FAIRBROTHER

scythe
BOOKS

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To Janet for countless years of support.

'The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government'

Thomas Jefferson.

Holroyd

The first November rains of winter were washing away an arid year with a vengeance, causing the gutters to run red with Saharan sands.

Miss Holroyd arrived early at her school desk, taking a tissue to her splattered shoes.

She'd planned quiet time to get ahead of the day, before the hordes of pupils descended. Only, Harry Butler with his irritatingly non-symmetrical Chelsea Football Club badges on his jumper, was at her desk. Up until now his only contribution to her classes was an air of indifference, so this was a sea change.

And she thought had an idea why.

A skittishly friendly colleague, Jan Sanderson, had told her to *watch out* for Harry, whispering in conspiratorial tones, that a student teacher had left her post in a hurry. Because of Butler's *attentions*. Sanderson must have sensed her veiled euphemisms were annoying her confidante, because she quickly added that the student teacher hadn't revealed what had happened. Fearing claims of sexual harassment would damage *her* prospects.

'It's 2046 but how times had regressed', Holroyd had replied.

Butler leaned onto her desk, looming over her. His stomach protruded over his belt. A corner of white shirttail arrowed towards his right thigh from under his sandy coloured jumper, slovenly yet fashionable.

Miss Holroyd forced a professional smile. ‘Harry, what can I do for you?’

Butler moved around the desk, a further advance into her personal space. She caught invasive notes of peppermint gum, blended with the sharp tang of body odour.

‘I really like you, Miss.’ He reached a hand towards her, destination inappropriate.

Droplets of dirty water fell from him, catching the weak morning light.

‘You are obviously the type of male I would be interested in, Harry.’ said Miss Holroyd, each word buttressed with steel, a contradiction to the persona she normally projected.

The boy, for a moment, almost preened. Then frowned. ‘Wait a minute, you’re being *sarcastic!*’ The word crowded his mouth, as if he wasn’t used to saying it.

‘How perceptive of you, Harry.’

His face scrunched in bafflement at this unexpected resistance, hand now frozen in pre-grope, assurance flailing like a sail on a windless sea. Then Harry’s face flashed red anger, fists clenching.

She rose sharply from her chair, forcing Butler to step back; an unbalanced retreat from the space he had so confidently occupied.

‘And if I am not interested? Then what, Harry?’

‘Eh?’

‘I suspect this consideration has never occurred to you before. Maybe you need a lesson – and not in maths.’

The boy's eyes widened; insight gained 'You're threatening me! I'm reporting you, you... you're a teacher... you can't say that!'

'And your behaviour is acceptable?' she hissed her question.

Harry Butler turned, exiting the classroom in a hurry. 'You're raving mad, Miss.'

His Pavlovian response required him to add a 'miss', even after his casual abuse. *That's education in action.* She swiftly followed him.

Harry may be a victim of circumstances, and without access to rehabilitation, he'll probably trample a path through many lives, aspiring to emulate his father, the paedophile.

They both deserve to be on her list.

She followed Butler out into the hallway and called out to him.

'Harry, stop, I've not finished with you yet.'

He halted at the top of the staircase, then made an exaggerated effort at turning to face her, shrugging contemptuously.

'I ain't worried about you, miss. You're just a temporary teacher. You can't do anything, can ya? None of you can. And you, miss, I'm gonna catch you outside, then we'll see how smart you are.'

The boy stood close to the edge of the top of the stairs, careless, cocky.

'My dad told me...'

'Your *dad* told you to do many things, didn't he? Like how to bring those boys to your home.' Her blunt words, hitting him like ice cold sponges.

Harry Butler looked shaken, at having a secret part of his world spoken out loud. He stoically stuck to his mantra '... th..that I'm to tell him if you lot take

any liberties, he'll...he'll be down here so fast you lot won't know what fuckin' hit...'

'He's dead. This morning. In a road incident.'

Blood vacated Butler's face, now a graven image of stone shock.

'What? You're... you're lying!'

'I could've broken this news more softly to you, I know. But I feel we have a rapport, Harry' She stepped closer to him. 'And *rapport* means we understand each other.'

'I... I don't believe you.' Defiant, tearful burning eyes, hoping.

'I assume you are referring to your father's death and not about our *rapport*. He was wearing a blue Chelsea scarf with badges, like yours. Only it was marked with his blood.'

The boy's eyes stared into the past, perhaps recalling what his dad had worn that morning. Harry's shoulders slumped, the fight leaving him like foul air from a punctured tyre. His heated tears breaking ranks.

'No, it's not true,' said Harry, guard down, hit by the first punches of grief.

Then Holroyd gave him a firm shove.

Sixteen-year-old Harry Butler snatched reflexively for the staircase railing, only succeeding in grasping stale corridor air. Mouth open, eyes shock wide, as he travelled backwards. Gravity taking the baton, pressing down on him.

Holroyd watched Butler tumble in a series of inelegant cartwheels. He lay in a heap at the bottom. Body misshapen. His scream had echoed around the wide, vacant staircase and halls. The noise would bring others.

Holroyd glided down the stairs, crouched to check

on the boy. Found him still breathing. *If he got immediate medical attention, he might yet live.*

‘I can’t have master Butler surviving and reporting all kinds of stories, can I?’ she whispered conspiratorially to him, her breath on his ear, her blonde hair draped across his cheek. A proximity to her that he had probably dreamed of before.

His eyes conveyed a desperate fear; spinal nerves probably damaged, speech now beyond him.

Miss Holroyd had scant seconds before anyone arrived, but still said, ‘I don’t like killing teenagers, Harry but, when they are budding little monsters, I can make an exception.’

Harry’s terrified eyes, full of the dreadful knowledge of imminent death. Pleading.

‘Don’t worry Harry, it’s a rhetorical question, which means no answer is required’.

She pinched his nose and placed a hand across his mouth. She felt the vacuum on her hand as he vainly sucked for air, his chest convulsing. A few rolls of his eyes and Harry Butler was gone.

DCI MacGillivray

DCI MacGillivray stood up from his office chair, back complaining. He stretched and stared out through the cracked, dirty police station window. The rainy, flat grey morning light gave him a surly greeting.

A stray shaft of sunlight broke through the cloud cover, hurting MacGillivray's eyes. making his bones ache. He'd always preferred winter. When the landscape had been softened by the day's dying light. When he could *breathe* in the dark.

Now the first rains at least offered a relief from the heat. From another hard year of dry, cracked earth. Of trees that caught fire. Of soil blown away to dirty brown dust from super farmed fields. A gritty constant in the air, joined by the desert sands that had been whipped up by mistral winds, that could turn the sky a shell pink. The last few years had made it de rigueur to wear a scarf, to cover the face. Now the rains signalled the start of extreme storms and flooding.

He'd lacked the momentum to go home last night. To an apartment of unpacked removal boxes. Instead, he'd tried to turn his attention to the neglected police cases on his desk; piles of printed paper - a sign of a

world without computers. And yet he could not distract himself, could not escape his mind's compulsion to rake over Yvette and Lucia's deaths. And of the killer, Sam Marsh, who, six months ago, had walked free from court. His celebrating entourage of family and legal representation had accompanied him; the latter wearing their smug victory with a tinge of embarrassment. As if acknowledging their complicit part in releasing the guilty back into the wild.

MacGillivray also had his shame for what he'd done. It caused a stress line of pain to cut across his stomach.

Before his wife and daughter's deaths, MacGillivray had always strived to deliver justice in the right way. But then he'd got *that* call of a double homicide. When he'd heard his own address. When everything changed. He didn't remember driving, only that he'd arrived, a line of police cars blocking his usual parking spot. Another jolt of reality that nothing was as it should be.

DI Crozier met him in his driveway. When she put a hand on his shoulder, a simple act, it had taken away any vestige of hope; *it's his family dead in there*. His shoulders strained against dropping. Suddenly this little island of shock had created a strange watery distance from the real.

'You can spare yourself this,' Crozier had said.

'I have to see,' he'd said.

He hadn't needed his key to his own door because it was open. The traffic of Scene of Crime Officers, all offering sympathetic glances. *It's strange how death gave strangers license to roam in your private world*.

He'd crossed the threshold of this place he'd never call home again.

His Yvette and Lucia lay in the hallway. Faces pale

white, leaden. Lacerations of knife cuts had opened channels in their flesh. Had freed blood to flow among the floor tiles of green and adding their own type 'O' red diamonds.

His wife's body, an arrow pointed towards their daughter, hands stretched, trying to protect.

His sweet daughter. The home-made bracelet, delicate, at home on her wrist. He remembered it banging against his wrist as he held her hand as she skipped. A simple joy, never to be repeated.

Her eyes stared at nothing, death giving her a cold indifference – that was never like her.

Could his heart freeze? He thought so now.

That's when his good philosophy for delivering justice the right way, slid.

Crozier had later said gently, 'CCTV footage from the street corner has placed Sam Marsh and his son Troy in a car approaching the scene at about the time of your...the victims' deaths. For MacGillivray, it was too much of a coincidence.

He knew what he had to do.

A THUMPING ENGINE outside drew MacGillivray back to the present.

He followed the sound to the window; a tractor chugged past, churning accumulated mud, belching black diesel fumes, trying its best to befoul the wet air.

MacGillivray stepped back, seeing his reflection in the semi-dark glass, under the flickering fluorescent light. Flecks of grey in the fringes of his brown, unkempt hair, his stubbled face, unruly He looked older than his thirty-eight years.

He wore a tired-looking shirt, scuffed around the

neck. His suit carried a dull sheen, fibres crushed. Not a brilliant look, he conceded.

He disliked self-pity, his stubborn pride holding himself together. But sometimes he couldn't see beyond this bitter, black dog, despair. *What's he going to do without his wife and child? How would he live with his failure. His shame?*

His office door jabbed open. Detective Inspector Crozier walked in without ceremony, whistling *Summertime*.

She took off her dark blue police peak cap hat, revealing her jet-black hair, tucked into a bun, like tight black brush strokes against her coffee and cream complexion.

Crozier's whistle cut off mid tune, eyeing MacGillivray's crumpled clothes. 'Didn't you make it home last night?' She gave an experimental sniff, her nose wrinkling.

Yes, I could use a shower. He thought, embarrassed. The replied. 'Eh, no.'

He rubbed his eyes, trying to massage clarity in, and exhaustion out.

'So,' she said. 'You have a lot to feel bad about. Losing your family. And the killer, Marsh, getting off. Poor you, right?'

Her words were a firehose of iced water, smashing into MacGillivray.

He looked at her, eyes wide, startled. Her style, not unfamiliar territory but, even for Lerato Crozier, it is brutal. He felt his blood pulse. Unable to breathe, like the room's oxygen is being sucked out. He could feel anger igniting.

It's my bloody pain. I'm entitled to it. Leave me be. He wanted to shout at her.

He fought the urge to lash out, to send the case files on his desk flying.

The feeling surprised, untypical of him. He slammed his hands down on the desk, grappling for control of himself. He looked at her. Despite his anger, because of his anger, his words dammed in his throat.

Crozier gave a merest nod of satisfaction. Perhaps he had given her something she wanted to see: *a spark of fight, of life, in him.*

And she's not finished.

'Look around you. Other people have lost loved ones. A. While the economy is crashing, and the wild swing of climate gets worse, they live in fear in a dog-eat-dog world, as the criminal elements runs riot. Forgive me for trampling over your sensibilities, but it's our job to protect them. So, could I respectfully ask you to get your head out of your backside and help? Sir.'

He knew what she's doing: it's a peculiar brand of kindness, well camouflaged.

He could feel a shadow of a smile on his face, his jaw muscles twitching as they relaxed.

'Your bedside manner could do with some work,' he croaked, pulling breath in. 'Has it slipped your attention that I am your boss?'

'I can only protect you for so long. Coffee?' she offered.

He nodded. Crozier left the room, her tall figure set in her default determined pose, her act of care in the community, temporarily suspended.

Crozier had a point—she had been covering his backside. But even she couldn't work miracles forever. Her ambition was to climb higher, yet she stayed loyal to him, refused to throw him to the dogs.

He sat back in his chair, opened Marsh's well-thumbed file on his desk. He massaged the web of flesh between his thumb and forefinger.

She's right. He needed to focus on other cases more now, to pull his weight.

But if he found evidence, he'd still bring Marsh down.

A knock at the door broke into his thoughts.

'Come in.'

PC Grey came into MacGillivray's office. Stale cigarette air wafted in from his uniform. Grey, one of the many who smoked. It had become the cool retro drug if you could afford it. Not that MacGillivray's an anti-smoking zealot, it's just that the smell that made him feel nausea. And he had a selfish desire to avoid cancer.

MacGillivray was yet to fathom Grey out. He came highly recommended; the government assigned emergency help, parachuted in to help clear police station backlogs. He gave off the air of a team player, but something about him which did not fit. Crozier had said to MacGillivray that Grey's hair reminded her of *wet black slates on a stormy day*—she'd been making fun of him – but had she inadvertently got him?

'There's been a report of a pupil's death at the Forêt School. A fall downstairs, sir,' said Grey, as Crozier walked in.

'Thank you, we're on our way,' said MacGillivray.

'There is something else you should know. The victim's father was the fatality in the car wreck this morning,' said Grey.

'The paedo?' said Crozier.

'Unproven, DI Crozier,' said MacGillivray, wearily.

'Sorry, you're right. The dead, unproven, paedo.'

Grey's eyebrows raised.

'Given time, you may get used to DI Crozier's *unique perspective*,' said MacGillivray.

'Dark humour is a way of surviving the wave of human tragedy we face, sir,' said Grey.

'I agree,' said Crozier. Of course, it is awful that these things happen. But if we allow everything to get to us, we might not function. We'd risk going crazy,' She revealed a hint of brilliant white teeth, as she spoke.

'This is you *not going crazy*, right? Let's go, shall we?' said MacGillivray, shaking his head.

MACGILLIVRAY COAXED the aging dark blue BMW i3s towards the Forêt school. Rain hammers on the roof. A feeble waft of warm air drifted from the vents inside the cold interior.

'Are you sure the heater's working?' said Crozier, hunching her shoulders, rubbing her hands vigorously together. It wasn't so cold, though it felt it compared to the higher temperatures of only last week.

'It's only a quick trip—you can survive that?'

'Are you implying women feel the cold more than men? The patriarchal wedge of superiority driven in just a little further, perhaps? Or are you saying people of colour feel the cold more...?'

'No, of course not... I meant...'

'I know what you *meant*,' she said, smiling. He felt himself unhooked, dropped back into the water.

He said, 'Anyway, you are a few years younger than me. It's me who should feel the cold.'

'Yes, opa.'

Crozier had told MacGillivray she had never lived

in the Netherlands but had picked up some of the language from her Amsterdam integrated mother. They were her memorial words, of keeping her mother's memory close.

And MacGillivray had even absorbed a few Dutch words. '*Opa?* I am not quite old enough to be your grandfather, thank you.'

He turned on the car radio to catch the news. He missed the local radio station, but with independent broadcasting gone, the BBC feed is the only game in town.

The radio presenter spoke, an inflection of north-eastern brogue at embroidered her words.

'The Chancellor of the Exchequer is today delighted to announce that the UK inflation rate has plateaued and is showing signs of heading downwards.'

'It is still eighteen per cent, but any good news is welcome,' said Crozier.

The radio presenter continued, 'As riots escalate in the cities and the growing crime epidemic presents a sterner challenge to the police, the government has released more good news. The National Security Surveillance and Action (NSSA), responsible for investigating police corruption, has had its mandate increased to deal with syndicate crime. And will also manage ad hoc gatherings of excessive numbers.'

'Manage?' said Crozier. 'That's code for pulling anyone off the streets, even those that voice a peaceful opinion. The government wants the illusion that they're in control of the country. And just before the general election, too. It's all about staying in power.'

MacGillivray had some sympathy for a government having to deal with a desperate situation. But is

the NSSA the right way to change it? Rumours followed the organisation, and they were not all good, with reports of a heavy-handed approach, growing by the day.

And the organisation's encouragement of people to report their neighbours' *suspicious behaviour* with the promise of units of electricity or free food. The government couched it as self-policing, but it felt like an attempt to split society. Taking the focus away from the government. Not that the public gathered often in Hawham, the town's despair bringing its own brand of apathy.

'The government has announced the release of an AI machine to help make policing safer for all concerned. They've been fast track testing a prototype that'll provide basic curfew policing duties in the capital.'

'Wow,' said Crozier. 'Isn't the Government's budget too tight to even maintain normal policing, much less provide funds to develop this line of enforcement?'

'Perhaps they've interest from external investors, big business. A sign of lobbyists finding new, creative ways of getting their way, of protecting what they have and hold,' said MacGillivray.

They passed a council driverless two-seater car, abandoned on the street after the network collapse. Traffic had compacted accumulated summer dust and dry earth around it, where rainwater now carried the mush away to the gutters.

The voice from the radio continued, 'Experts say the malicious strains of malware that signal blocked Wi-Fi, disrupted the internet and damaged GPS satellite systems will take more time to be corrected.'

'They've been saying that for almost a year. And

we stay in the technological dark age for a while longer,' said Crozier.

MacGillivray could see the pitch through the gate of Hawham's football club's stadium: a pool of water now covering its entirety. A sign, white with red letters, read Season Suspended Until Further Notice. One addiction, or religion, that had been closed off to the public.

Smoke trails rose, issuing from unused chimneys, opposing the vertical downpour.

Crozier said, 'So many people are forced to hibernate in their homes, deciding between food and heating. As if it's the government's passive way of culling the burden of sick, old, and vulnerable in the country.'

'That is cynical. Crozier.' Though he, too, had his doubts. The collection of bodies in the morgue had quietly grown, many of those souls dying alone, gone and forgotten for ever.

The radio presenter said, 'During the rainy season, the government advises the public to only venture out if necessary and keep a close watch on the vulnerable.' The BBC couldn't give weather forecasts until they had contact with satellites again, so they issue general creative warnings of rain or heat, instead.

Forêt school came into view; yellow police ticker tape surrounded the entrance, like inappropriate bunting, fluttering.

MacGillivray parked in a corner of the car park next to other police transport and, he presumed, school staffers. The area resembled a beach against the lapping water blossoming from a failed drain. He switched off the engine, the noise of rain battering the roof of the car now more pronounced. Even in this torrential downpour he caught the familiar hint of

rotting waste in rubbish piled outside of homes nearby, waiting for the striking dust persons to return to work and collect only to dump them out of sight and mind.

After enduring a year's heat, it's odd to see their breaths making fine white plumes in the cooler air. They walked under the protective wing of a concrete canopy, passing temporary prefab classrooms, stagnating into permanency when the extension wasn't built.

'It's got the look of a detention centre,' said Crozier.

Her comment too close to the truth for MacGillivray's comfort. The school, one of seven secondary schools in the town, had morphed into a dumping ground for those with educational and behavioural problems. A depressing production line of the police's future workload.

The entrance front is an expansive foyer, part of the stalled aspiration of becoming an academy. A solemn silence of a near empty school met them; the floor smeared with weather trailed feet of hundreds of children and the smell of boiled cabbage and anti-septic, transporting him back to his school days—*some things stay constant*.

MacGillivray and Crozier bypassed the scanning machine, flashing their ID cards at the security staff.

'It's hard to believe there used to be a time when scanning for weapons wasn't required,' said Crozier.

PC Jacobs greeted them. 'The SOCOs are still at the Butler crash scene but they'll be here soon.'

'Thank you, Jacobs. Let's look at the site, anyway.' Jacobs, short, his trousers a size too small to his feet and a size too big to fit his waste. His black hair needs cutting, and he carried a crown of pale white flesh on

the top of his head. His face carried a sallow complexion, spider veins anointed the side of his nose, an excessive red flush implied a man who was never far away from his next drink.

Crozier, with disposable plastic gloved hands, lifted the cover so they could see the victim. A youthful body, now lifeless—a terrible contradiction. A few scuff marks on the wall, barely discernible from day-to-day wear and Harry Butler’s fall. Nothing screamed incompetence or malicious intent, a case they could swiftly close, MacGillivray would wager.

They walked back to find a sore-eyed receptionist hovering, waiting for their return. She confirmed the headmaster would meet them shortly. A grandiose coat of arms hung on the wall, quartered with a prince, a tree, a shield, and a sword. Headmaster Fawngate appeared from his office, like a wary lord, protective of his fiefdom.

‘Headmaster Fawngate. I am sorry to meet you in such circumstances.’

‘A French Prince gifted a forest,’ said Fawngate, nodding towards the object of MacGillivray’s attention. ‘It’s since been cut down to make way for school and residential housing. I often wish they’d kept the forest.’

Crozier flashed MacGillivray an arch eye as they were ushered into Fawngate’s office. ‘A tragic accident,’ Headmaster Fawngate said, as if remembering the grim business of Harry Butler’s passing. He placed himself behind his desk, more comfortable in his seat of power.

‘We’ll need to complete our enquiries before we can ascertain if it’s an *accident*, sir,’ said MacGillivray.

‘Of course,’ said the Head, bristling at the correction.

But MacGillivray thought the Head was right; there's nothing to suggest foul play, even if the boy's father had died that morning. Just a very unlucky family.

'What sort of lad was Harry Butler?' MacGillivray asked.

The headmaster pursed his lips, steeped his fingers.

'He wasn't without his challenges. A slow, uninterested pupil, who made up for his lack of academic industry with his close attention to his fellow pupils, shall we say?'

'A bully.'

'Indeed.'

'Is there any truth in the rumour he assaulted a student teacher?' asked Crozier.

Fawngate's eyes flared 'An unsubstantiated claim, with no action taken. I would be grateful if you could be discrete when discussing this matter, we've our reputation to protect.'

Said without a trace of irony, thought MacGillivray.

The receptionist knocked, ferried in a tray of tea and biscuits.

MacGillivray sipped his builder's tea, studied Fawngate, who sat stiffly.

'When did you learn of Harry Butler's fall?' said Crozier.

'We all heard Harry's scream. Mrs Holtershaw, my receptionist, and I came out of our office to see Miss Holroyd and the boy lying at the bottom of the stairs. I checked for a pulse, but he was dead. Mrs Holtershaw called the services. I don't envy your job of breaking the news to the parents. Awful business,' said Fawngate.

‘Unfortunately, his father died this morning in a car incident.’

‘Oh,’ said Fawngate, his empathetic vocabulary exhausted, saying indignantly, ‘Why wasn’t I informed earlier?’

‘The body didn’t have any ID on it. And, without technology, it takes time to get access to car records.’

‘Oh. It’s a shambles without the internet, isn’t it?’ said Fawngate.

MacGillivray bypassed the comment, saying, ‘That’ll do for now, Mr Fawngate. We want to see Miss Holroyd,’ said MacGillivray.

‘Yes. I’ve agreed for her to go home early. On full pay, of course,’ he said with a magnanimous tilt of the head. ‘However, I think she is still here.’

‘With the school being shut anyway, that is still benevolent of you, sir,’ said Crozier.

MacGillivray flashed a warning at Crozier to reign in her facetiousness - though, he couldn’t deny, her ability to ruffle people’s feathers got results.

Fawngate rifled through the papers on his desk, nettled that his part in this tableau of misery had been so easily dismantled.

‘Here’s her file,’ he snapped, passing the brown folder to MacGillivray, ignoring Crozier.

It didn’t help Fawngate’s mood when MacGillivray commandeered his office for the interview.

IT’S Miss Holroyd’s green eyes, MacGillivray noticed first. They carried a mortician’s professionalism. According to the file, she’s in her early thirties yet could pass for younger, lines absent from her pale white

skin. She had an air of calmness, at odds with the trauma of finding a dead child.

‘Please take a seat, Miss Holroyd.’

She moved across the room. Sat boldly in the middle chair of the circle, fronting Holroyd and MacGillivray.

‘How are you after your ordeal?’

‘I fared better than the boy.’

‘True. You were first on the scene of Harry Butler’s death?’

‘I was.’

‘Did you see him fall?’

‘I did. I came out of room 2A. He’d been running and tripped on the top of the stairs. I got to him. He was gone. Mrs Holtershaw and Fawngate arrived. They called for the services.’

An uncluttered, unemotional appraisal of a child’s death if ever MacGillivray had heard one. ‘Fawngate’s given me time off to get over the shock. If you need to question me further, you can contact me at home.’

MacGillivray glanced at Crozier, her right brow upturned. *Who’s in charge here?*

‘Thank you, Miss Holroyd. We’ve no more questions for now. If you decide to leave town, please contact us first.’

She gave a curt nod, then left.

Crozier said, ‘That is one cold morsel. Would you want her as a teacher?’

‘Perhaps she is what they need in this bear pit of a school.’

‘Or people to dispense compassion and understanding?’

‘I didn’t expect you to be peddling those, Crozier.’

She gave him a quizzical look, then said, ‘Grap-

pig,' the Dutch word for *funny* emphasised with the guttural *g*.

'Should we check out Butler senior's Road Traffic Incident just in case there is a connection?' said Crozier.

'That is a good idea,' said MacGillivray. Visiting the RTI might be a dead end. But maybe Crozier had a point, they should take a look.