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Jeffrey
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Over My
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ONLY DETECTIVE WILLIAM WARWICK
CAN DISCOVER THE TRUTH...

OVER MY DEAD BODY

Jeffrey Archer



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Dedication

To Jack

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CHAPTER 1

‘ARE YOU A DETECTIVE, SIR?’

William looked up at the young man who’d asked the question. ‘No, I’m the assistant manager of the Midland Bank in Shoreham, Kent.’

‘In that case,’ continued the young man, not looking convinced, ‘you’ll be able to tell me what the exchange rate was between the dollar and the pound when the currency market opened this morning.’

William tried to recall how much he’d received when he changed a hundred pounds into dollars just before he joined the ship the previous evening, but he hesitated for too long.

‘One dollar and fifty-four cents to the pound,’ said the young man, before he could reply. ‘So, forgive me for asking, sir, why aren’t you willing to admit you’re a detective?’

William put the book he was reading on the table in front of him and took a closer look at the earnest young American, who seemed desperate not to be thought of as a child, although he hadn’t started shaving. The word ‘preppy’ immediately came to mind.

‘Can you keep a secret?’ he whispered.

‘Yes, of course,’ the young man said, sounding offended.

‘Then have a seat,’ said William, pointing to the comfortable chair opposite him. He waited for the young man to settle. ‘I’m on holiday and I promised my wife that for the next ten days, I wouldn’t tell anyone I was a detective, because it’s always followed by a stream of questions that turn it into a busman’s holiday.’

‘But why choose a banker as your cover?’ asked the young man. ‘Because I have a feeling you wouldn’t know the difference between a spreadsheet and a balance sheet.’

‘My wife and I gave that question some considerable thought before we settled on a banker. I grew up in Shoreham, a small town in England, in the

sixties, and the local bank manager was a friend of my father's. So I thought I'd get away with it for a couple of weeks.'

'What else was on the shortlist?'

'Estate agent, car salesman and funeral director, all of which we were fairly confident wouldn't be followed by never-ending questions.'

The young man laughed.

'Which job would you have chosen?' asked William, trying to regain the initiative.

'Hitman. That way no one would have bothered me with any follow-up questions.'

'I would have known that was a cover immediately,' said William with a dismissive wave of his hand, 'because no hitman would have asked me if I was a detective. He would have already known. So, what do you really do when you're not a hitman?'

'I'm in my final year at Choate, a prep school in Connecticut.'

'Do you know what you want to do when you leave school? That's assuming you're not still hoping to be a hitman.'

'I shall go to Harvard and study history, before going on to law school.'

'After which, no doubt, you'll join a well-known legal practice, and in no time be made a junior partner.'

'No, sir, I want to be a lawman. After I've spent a year as editor of the *Law Review*, I shall join the FBI.'

'You seem to have your career well mapped out, for one so young.'

The young man frowned, clearly offended, so William quickly added, 'I was just the same at your age. I knew I wanted to be a detective and end up at Scotland Yard when I was eight years old.'

'What took you so long?'

William smiled at the bright young man, who no doubt understood the meaning of the word precocious without realizing it might apply to him. But then William accepted that he'd undoubtedly suffered from the same problem when he was a schoolboy. He leant forward, thrust out his hand and said, 'Detective Chief Inspector William Warwick.'

'James Buchanan,' replied the young man, shaking William's outstretched hand firmly. 'Dare I ask how you reached such a high rank, because if you were at school in the sixties you can't be more than ...'

'What makes you so sure they'll offer you a place at Harvard?' asked William, trying to parry his thrust. 'You can't be more than ...'

‘Seventeen,’ said James. ‘I’m top of my class with a grade point average of 4.8, and I’m confident I’ll do well in my SATs.’ He paused before adding, ‘Should I presume you made it to Scotland Yard, Chief Inspector?’

‘Yes,’ William came back. He was used to being interrogated by leading counsel, not teenagers, although he was enjoying the encounter. ‘But if you’re that bright, why haven’t you considered becoming a lawyer, or going into politics?’

‘There are far too many lawyers in America,’ said James with a shrug of the shoulders, ‘and most of them end up chasing ambulances.’

‘And politics?’

‘I wouldn’t be any good at suffering fools gladly, and I don’t want to spend the rest of my life at the whim of the electorate or allowing focus groups to dictate my opinions.’

‘Whereas, if you were to become the Director of the FBI ...’

‘I would be my own master, answering only to the President, and I wouldn’t always let him know what I was up to.’

William laughed at the young man, who clearly didn’t suffer from self-doubt.

‘And you, sir,’ said James, sounding more relaxed, ‘are you destined to become the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police?’ William hesitated again. ‘Clearly, you think it’s a possibility,’ James continued before he could reply. ‘May I ask you another question?’

‘I can’t imagine what would stop you.’

‘What do you consider are the most important qualities needed to be a first-class detective?’

William gave the question some thought before he responded. ‘A natural curiosity,’ he eventually said. ‘So you immediately spot something that doesn’t feel quite right.’

James took a pen from an inside pocket and began writing William’s words down on the back of the *Alden Daily News*.

‘You must also be able to ask the relevant questions of suspects, witnesses and colleagues. Avoid making assumptions. And above all, you have to be patient. Which is why women often make better police officers than men. Finally, you must be able to use all your senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.’

‘I’m not sure I fully understand,’ said James.