CATCH YOUR DEATH

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To my family, for all your support

First published in the UK in 2023 by Usborne Publishing Limited, Usborne House, 83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England, usborne.com.

Usborne Verlag, Usborne Publishing Limited, Prüfeninger Str. 20, 93049 Regensburg, Deutschland, VK Nr. 17560

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Cover illustration by Violet Tobacco © Usborne Publishing, 2023

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 9781803705422 JFMAMJJAS ND/23 8000/01

Printed and bound using 100% renewable energy at CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY.



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CATCH YOUR DEATH is a work of fiction but it deals with many real issues, including descriptions of violence and domestic abuse.

THE DEADLIEST DINNER: SUDDEN DEATH OF PHILANTHROPIST EMILY VANFORTE BEING TREATED AS "SUSPICIOUS"

By Janice Evernight

A police spokesperson has confirmed the sudden death of Emily Vanforte is being treated as "suspicious", though no new details are being given at this time.

Initially reported as a heart attack, the police spokesperson has confirmed something more sinister may have happened to Emily Vanforte on Saturday night when she died suddenly at her multi-million-pound estate, aged fifty-eight.

According to an insider, Emily Vanforte was hosting a family dinner for her husband, celebrated politician Charles Vanforte (57), her nephew, Tate Astur (17), her daughter, Lottie Vanforte (17), and Douglas Treefair (17), son of controversial car tycoon Nicholas Treefair and reportedly Lottie Vanforte's boyfriend.

The Bramble Estate had been snowed in, having lost power earlier in the day. The combination of the snowstorm and the estate's

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isolated location meant it was cut off from the outside world for over fifteen hours. The police were only informed of Emily Vanforte's death late on Sunday morning, when Lottie Vanforte and Douglas Treefair braved the extreme conditions in order to hike to the nearest village.

"It was very odd," said Shelly Jones, a local resident. "I thought I was seeing things when they showed up on my doorstep – the Vanfortes have always kept themselves to themselves, no interest in the community at all. Douglas Treefair asked to use my phone. Lottie Vanforte never said a word – just started sobbing. Next thing you know, police are swarming the village and driving up to the estate."

"It's bizarre," added Peter Harkin, owner of the village pub. "There's something off about the Bramble Estate. Us in the village have always said so. We all steer clear of it, if we can. And I think— [cont. on page 5].

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PART ONE

THE HOUSE

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Extract of Transcript of Interview 7
Re: Death of Emily Vanforte

In Attendance – Inspector Adams (IA), Devi Mistry (DM)

IA: So, just so we have it on record, you'd never met the deceased before the night of her death?

DM: Nope. [Pauses] We weren't exactly in the same circles. Her being a super-rich old woman and me… er, not being super rich. Or old. And living like a million miles away from the Bramble Estate – although she had a London home, didn't she? All those rich people have London homes. I'm from London, but the crap part—

IA: Great, thank you. A simple yes or no would suffice for these basic sorts of question.

DM: I'm just trying to paint a picture.

IA: Thank you, Devi. We do want to find out exactly what happened.

DM: And you're the best person to solve this, right? We need the *best* people on this case to solve it ASAP,

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before someone tries to kill me for seeing something I didn't know I saw. In fact, I still don't get why I'm not in witness protection, or why you're not giving me twenty-four-hour security—

IA: I'll keep those suggestions in mind. Now, what would be very helpful is if you could set the scene of your arrival at the Bramble Estate: who you spoke to and what you did when you got there…and just your general impressions of the others at the estate.

DM: But this is what I'm trying to tell you – the murderer has to be one of those four rich prats. What if they come after me for telling you what I saw? I've got *more* than a theory about who did it. I've got those four suspects all sussed out; I know which one of them did it.

IA: Oh – well, good, I would love to hear your suspicions. But to begin with, it would be most helpful to get a straightforward account of what happened.

DM: There's nothing straightforward about it – you know this whole thing is weird, right? It's like a murder-mystery scenario you see in films. The death happened in a locked room with only five people, including the victim, inside. No one else entered or left. The poison must have been in Mrs Vanforte's *glass*. Not the wine bottle, because everyone else drank from that. And she'd been using that same glass all evening, which means someone in the room put the poison in her drink at some point during

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dinner. Which *means* there's only four suspects. So, let's go back to the whole thing about how *I'm in danger*. The killer thought they could get away with murder in front of three witnesses in that room – but they knew those people, so maybe they knew how to fool them. And there should have only been one other possible witness to everything going on in the house: old Ms Bromley, the housekeeper – but her hearing's going and her eyesight is *bad*. The trouble is, the killer was unlucky, because the snow meant we were stuck there too – three strangers who *weren't supposed to be there*. Three strangers who might have noticed something the family didn't. We're the flaw in the plan, Inspector... You know, poisoning someone when there's three other people in the room? That's the action of someone who isn't afraid to take risks. And...

IA: Yes?

DM: I'm scared.

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