

THE BUS STOP

By Denise Thorn

Little Mrs Anskey had lived in Coombe Cottage all her married life. Indeed she had lived in the cottage all her life. She was born Miss Sophie Bostock to middle class parents who embraced village life and all that it had to offer. Sophie had married the local postmaster but had refused to leave the village to settle nearer the town where her new husband worked so instead he had agreed to join her and her elderly parents at the cottage and travel daily. It had not been a difficult commute for Postmaster Anskey and it was not many years before they found themselves alone in the cottage enjoying married life to the full. Sadly they were not blessed with a family so contented themselves with the comings and goings of their close knit community.

Sophie Anskey kept their home as neat as a new pin. She was proud of her snowy white washing blowing in the breeze early on Monday mornings and her housekeeping skills were renowned throughout the village. Mr Anskey was a practical man and shared his wife's skills in the garden so, when the time was right for changes to be made, he built a thatched summer house along side the garden wall which gave them complete privacy while they were enjoying the delights of their well stocked flower borders and manicured lawns.

Sadly for Sophie her husband did not enjoy the long and happy retirement they had hoped and planned for and within 2 years of his last days as Postmaster he had died of a heart attack and she found herself alone. The villagers gathered around Sophie and supported her through the early days of grief and adjustment and slowly her strength returned and she began to pick up the pieces of her life again.

Village life is always full of gossip and intrigue and Coombe Sutton was no different to any other small community. Sophie Anskey made it her business to know all about the comings and goings and the carryings-on around her and the locals were constantly in wonder as to how she managed to know all their secrets and lies and all the scandal and shady deals that happened just beyond her cottage door.

Everyone was aware of Sophie's gardening skills and in addition to keeping her home as pristine as it had always been it was not unusual to find her outdoors tending her favourite roses at all times of the year. In the spring and summer she spent many hours digging and planting, and in the autumn she picked apples, tidied flower beds, pruned roses and generally put the garden to bed. During the long winter months, however, she liked to spend time in her quaint little summer house sited snugly by the garden wall. It was a cosy place kept warm by its thatched hat and pretty leaded windows but really Sophie liked the fresh air and often spent her time wrapped in scarves and a warm winter coat in the little garden house reading a book and enjoying a flask of hot chocolate.

It was no small wonder Little Mrs Anskey knew who the Colonel's mistress was and where they had eloped to. No surprise that she was able to help the Inspector with his enquiries when a dead body was found in the copse or what happened to the funds which had mysteriously disappeared from the safe in the solicitor's office. Some commented that perhaps Agatha Christie had taken Sophie for her Miss Marple character. It was generally agreed that she was a "good fit". In spite of this it was some time before the villagers put two and two together to complete the picture. The location of the little thatched summer house, just over the wall and so close to the busy bus stop, was all in the clue.

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