

A Perfect Murder

By Eileen Everitt

After the detritus of my surprise 65th birthday party had been cleared away, I sat in my favourite chair and spent some time analysing my life, coming to the conclusion that apart from one small problem I was a very fortunate man. My problem was that just lately my dear wife Maud had given me cause to believe that the peaceful retirement I hoped for would never be mine. She had taken to visiting the herbal remedies shop in town far more frequently of late, as a result of which she now had more energy than a nuclear power plant. She woke up each morning with fully charged batteries and from then onwards her mouth never ceased in its constant stream of verbiage, not even to take a breath.

I was not alone in bewailing this disturbing trend. I noticed the invitations we used to receive from friends to drop in for drinks at the weekend were becoming much rarer. Even the vicar ceased to call and I overheard him telling his wife I should be sainted for the trials and tribulations I now face on a daily basis. Imagine that. Saint Alan! I don't think there has ever been a Saint Alan...

Maud did not notice or maybe ignored - the little hints I gave her. She never ceased to believe everyone welcomed her advice on any subject. I was her prime target of course. I would try to bury my head in the newspaper at the breakfast table, however it would be snatched away from me with a plaintive whine "Give me that, Alan. I need you to listen to what I'm saying at the table. I hate it when you ignore me!" She would then proceed to read aloud items from the said newspaper and I had to face her tirades against any luckless soul in the news, her telling me what the quoted minister or financial wizard needed to do - although he would be sure to do exactly the opposite which course she would then outline in minute detail before moving on to the next item. I had good cause to fear that the peaceful life I yearned for was never going to happen. If I did not find some way to solve this problem, I was doomed.

There was a chink of light on the horizon however. At a routine medical checkup with

our family doctor a few weeks ago, he informed me that my hearing ability had deteriorated. He broke this news to me very gently, fearing I would be upset. "I believe I did warn you before of the likelihood that this could happen Alan, but we needn't despair. Now is the time to get you fitted with a hearing aid. This should improve your range considerably."

This was of course wonderful news, since I would be able to enjoy my favourite television programmes without having to have the sub titles on. Maud found them too distracting so I have often been reduced to not very satisfactory lip reading so I looked forward to getting the gadget very much. Being a bit of an electronics fan, when the hearing aid duly arrived I had great fun discovering how it worked and found it quite soothing to turn down the volume on the tiny earpiece and enjoy a daydream or two at every possible opportunity. Maud found this new habit of mine extremely annoying. She began to develop headaches bordering on the psychotic.

As I am a caring husband, I made an appointment with a specialist for her. The specialist was very nice to Maud and gently suggested a scan was needed "to have a little look inside". Predictably, Maud knew better and told the doctor so in no uncertain terms. "All I need is peace and quiet" she said. "Alan will make sure everyone knows they are not to upset me. All I ASK IS A LITTLE CONSIDERATION. As for medication, Alan will get everything I need. I only have to tell him what I want. He has always been exceedingly conscious of my fragile health." and with that, she swept out of the consulting room, with me in tow.

Later that day, Maud announced that she had decided it would be a good idea to go for a little holiday to "get away from it all." so I booked a short break with the local coach company. Unfortunately, soon after we boarded our coach I found my hearing aid had stopped working. I couldn't hear a thing Maud said, although she did her very best to reach a pitch at which I (and our fellow holidaymakers) could enjoy her constant commentary on the scenery and the traffic etcetera. Poor Maud found this problem difficult to bear. She would get redder and redder, her eyes would bulge with her every effort to get a response from me to her monologue.

Eventually we arrived at our hotel, at which point she informed the receptionist that the strain of the journey had been too much for her and she was extremely unwell suffering, she said, monumental migraines. At dinner, Maud announced that she was so worn out she couldn't possibly eat a thing and pushed her plate away.

"I can't manage anything I'm so ill" she said.

"Why don't you go to our room and rest" I suggested.

Ignoring my advice, Maud insisted on staying at the table, explaining to our fellow diners "I need to make sure poor Alan has a good meal". I tried to get her to order something light for herself, but that was out of the question, although half way through the meal she began helping herself to food from my plate, even though I warned her it was a rather spicy curry.

Immediately after dinner my dear wife announced that she would now go to our room for a rest, expecting me to accompany her of course, however I was looking forward to enjoying the slide show promised for the evening entertainment so I said I would join her later. Without my hearing aid, I couldn't be sure what she said but when I eventually returned to our room I found her lying senseless on the bed. The hotel receptionist telephoned for an ambulance, but it was too late for Maud.

Afterwards, there seemed to be quite a lot of forms to be filled in and although I couldn't move on with the coach party, the hotel staff were very kind and allowed me to keep the room while the formalities were concluded. Luckily I found the vital screw that had been missing from my hearing aid so it was all fairly painless. I managed to spend some time strolling through museums and parks during the day and in the evening enjoyed a few hours of television, particularly old western films which are my all-time favourites. Two weeks later I returned home to receive the sympathy of my kindly neighbours on my sudden loss. They were not surprised when the post mortem found that Maud had suffered a massive stroke which had proved fatal. I think I may now safely look forward to my yearned for peaceful retirement after all.

Writing Raw

All work appearing below is copyrighted by the author.

The End

Eileen Everitt bio: I am 75. I am a Londoner by birth, but lived all my married life (38 years) in a small village on the Essex coast. Later I moved to Wiltshire but as a leaving present to the village I produced a booklet outlining how the village came to be. This was only sold locally and made over £2000 for the village. I was quite proud of it, as you can imagine. Since retiring I have more time to write and got through to the national final of a W.I competition. As my interest grew I joined Fareham Writers, who have given me lots of encouragement. Last winter I won a short story competition in Prima magazine which was included in their March edition this year and in April I had a poem included in the W.I Hampshire magazine.