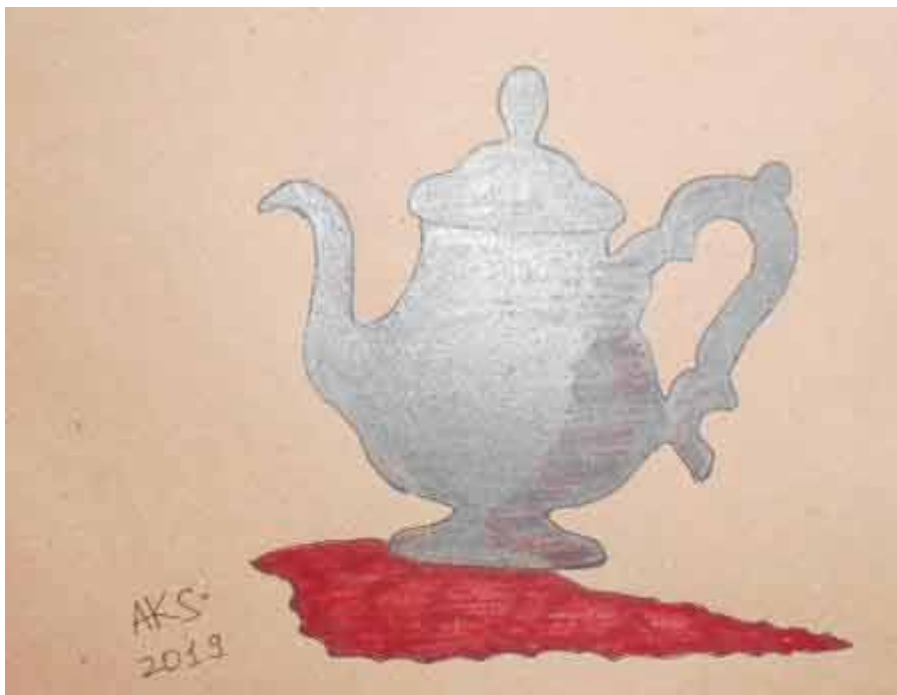


Deadly teapot.

by Kate AKS



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Tuesday.

- Police! Please open the door. - Man's voice accompanied doorbell.

- Coming. - Said Summer Key and more snuggled up in pink morning bathrobe.

Summer opened the door to tall, attractive Police officer 45-50 years old.

- Summer Key? Your phone didn't answer. Sorry. - Police officer smiled. - Detective Inspector Adam Alpha, could I ask few questions?

- Yes, sure. - Summer looked one more time to his documents. - Come in, some coffee?

- Yes, please. - Man entered after her and couldn't look at anything instead enormous golden palms on the back of her fluffy bathrobe.

- Awful, isn't it? - Asked woman.

- I beg your pardon? - Detective Inspector was embarrassed that glanced such attentively.

- Gift from one of my fans. Enormously warm, so I couldn't refuse.

- Tough day? - Inspector pointed at two bottles, one of which was empty and other had some red wine in it, only one glass was used.

- Not worked welcoming party.

- You leave here not long enough? - Asked Adam and checked little water bowl on the floor, he didn't see any pets.



- Technically I live in this house as owner for the week. Before that were six month of renovation of all buildings. Years before that I visit this place yearly when here was writer's retreat. I bought this place, because knew it very well and wanted to return. Water bowl is for cat, which I babysitter for few days. Coffee is ready. - Summer put red teacup with white dots in front of Inspector. She had the same teacup herself. On the shelves in her kitchen were few pair of equal cups and eight similar teacups from tea-set.

- Thank you. - Said Adam. It was really good coffee, which she prepared on the hot sand, Turkish style.

- It's cups for gossips, two of them and full tea-set for bigger company. I noticed where you looked. - Summer nodded in shelves direction.

- Here will be writer's retreat again? - Asked Inspector Alpha.

- No. Knitter's retreat. It's my hobby, I not only write and talk about writing. - Summer looked at Inspector and waited when he starts to explain why he came. - Even when writer is strange profession, we still need hobby.

- And what are you writing? - Adam noticed that even curtains in the kitchen were knitted.

- Clean romance. - Summer noticed that Adam was confused and decided to explain. - Fluffy, sweet, first kiss only after marriage. I don't think it's what you usually read. But it's not because of what you came to me in the morning, Detective Inspector.

- How good you knew Mrs Nolly Julian? - Asked Adam.

- Accident or murder? - Asked Summer and made one more sip of coffee.

- I beg your pardon?

- Detective Inspector, you used past tense when asked me about her. It could mean only one thing, that Mrs Julian is not alive, and you couldn't use present tense for her. Before romances I wrote mysteries. Don't worry, I know what to ask.

- Probably glad to hear that. What about my question?

- Yesterday evening I throw welcoming party to my new friends from Camfordge's town. I bought yarn there in the "1001 yarns" shop, met Mrs Nolly Julian, and also owner of tea house – Bridget, Bidy Clarence. Bidy's daughter, Jessica will work at my retreat as cook, she needs more experience before decide to open own restaurant. I waited for Bidy and Nolly's visit yesterday evening. They didn't come, didn't answer to phones. I decided it was a little bit rude and drank some wine myself. When you woke me up in the morning I still was asleep after not worked welcoming party. You want to know what I did in which time exactly?

- A lot of information. Yes, what you did before four o'clock yesterday evening. - Adam checked his notebook.

- I was in yacht club. Yacht club "Blind pirate". I talked with their manager, I think he brought me here at quarter after four, I checked time, because I need to change clothes before guests arrival, between five and six o'clock. Then I waited for them. - Finished Summer.

- Do you have a boat?

- Yes, she is beautiful. “Red Wings” as most proper name for yacht with red wings. It will be distinct at every yacht club.

- Red wings?

- Why not? Pink was too girlish, if you understand what I am talking about. - Winked Summer.

- You are successful writer, if I dare to make such assumption

- No. My ex-husband was total jerk. He was such afraid that I will be cheating on him that he invented amazing marriage contract, where were money sanctions for cheater spouse, it played against him. So now I write about true love. Always wanted to try my hand in fantasy. What happened with Nolly? Murder, at home?

- Previous experience as mystery writer is noticeable. Why at home? - Asked Inspector when Summer stood up and poured one more cup of coffee for both of them.

- You didn't ask me about the car. - Sat back on her chair Summer.

- Yes. At home. And your car? - Asked Inspector.

- Which one? - Summer now teased him.

- Which you used yesterday?

- Red Maserati in the garage. I told you about manager of yacht club, he was impressed by car and agreed to find place for my yacht. At the evening I didn't use any of my cars, but you didn't interested in that time slot.

- Yes. Thank you for answers and coffee.

- She had last meeting of the day with me. Am I right? - Asked Summer.

- Yes. And we just check...

- Did she mention something? No. I am afraid not. I planned to receive new gossips yesterday. How she was murdered? I know that it's investigation, but in town I will find out everything during cup of tea.

- Murdered with silver teapot.

- Deadly teapot. - Said Summer.

- What? - Asked Adam when stood up.

- If I wrote this story, I will name it like that. Deadly teapot, good name for cozy mystery. Explained that there is murder and weapon is on the place. Now is time to find out who and why?

- I don't need help of amateurs, I just asked questions. - Abruptly said Detective Inspector.

- And Bridget, why she didn't come yesterday? - Asked Summer.

- Mrs Key, Mrs Clarence found a body, because they planned to use Mrs Julian's car. She was shocked and spend evening with our officers. She is unhurt.

- Good. Less luck to Mrs Julian. If you will have more questions, please be welcome, here is my phones. - Summer opened one of the drawers and put from there pink business card with golden numbers and letters on it. - Anytime.

- Thank you for collaboration. By the way, when start your knitters retreat?

- This week, long weekend. From Friday till Sunday. But Detective Inspector, I am afraid we are already full booked, maybe next time. - Summer opened other drawer and took from there little pink book with golden yarns and needles on it. - There is list of knitter's starter kit, if you are interested.

- Thank you, you are very kind. If will have time. - Adam could swear, that Summer flirted with him, and he wasn't against it. - But now I should return to work. Goodbye and have a nice day.

- Yes, thank you. Was water in the teapot? - Asked Summer before close after Adam door.

- I beg your pardon? - Adam turned around.

- Was water in the teapot, maybe left some inside of it? Cups on table? - Explained herself Summer.

- I am afraid I can't open such details.

- Yes. Sure. Just it explains if it was spontaneous act of violence or planned. But who could plan to kill with teapot. Sorry, Detective Inspector. Impulsive decision, for sure. - Summer smiled and closed the front door.

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Detective Inspector took from pocket his phone when returned to his car.

- I need conclusions of experts if there was any water inside deadly teapot. Yes, weapon of murder. And more photos of kitchen and living room from Percy. I know that for Sam personal life is at first place, but remind him that he still works at the police.

Adam opened pink book, on the page was advertisement of yarns in all possible colors and on the other page needles to them.

- Knitting retreat. Since when women need to gather in one place to knit. Three days? It's crazy idea of perfect weekend.

Adam looked at the white doors of the Key's garage and with the thought "how many cars has she?" drove back to the work.

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Summer after breakfast worked at the simple scarf pattern – knit two, purl two. Usually it's manageable for everyone to repeat how it looks like. She visited few knitters workshops and weekly read magazines, she hope at that she had enough experience to created simple pattern to beginners. And owner of "1001 yarn" promised to be present and help as additional teacher, if will be necessary.

On the phone was call from Edna Louis, student of creative writing course at Camfordge's University. Year ago Summer was on workshop for students and some of them found out, that she returned in the town.

Summer agree for meeting with Edna and in the moment heard door bell.

- Could I drop by now? - Asked Edna, who already put her green bike near porch.

- As I said. Come in. What happened? - Summer show were to go, now she was knitting in living room, because still was windy early spring.

- Murder. - Edna was exited.

- Murder? - Summer sat in front of Edna.

- Nolly Julian. Real murder, not our imagination. - It looks like Edna stopped herself from clapping at hands.

- I already heard about it. Police was here, she supposed to visit my house yesterday. How you connected with it? - Asked Summer.

- Did they say details about teapot?

- Teapot?! - Repeated Summer, she wanted to know at first what role in this story plays Edna.

- Nolly is in the puddle of own blood and silver teapot as murder weapon. - Edna told about it as about marvelous Christmas present.

- Edna from were are such details? - Asked Summer.

- Look at this. - Edna opened her bag and there she had bunch color photos of crime scene.

- Oh my God. - Summer took from the table glasses. - Such details.

- I told you, it's amazing. - Edna was proud of herself.

- From were are they?

- Our former Professor Stonewall told that to write we need to know about what we write. Now I work at police, in archive. To receive real life experience.

- Not bad. - Agreed Summer, when one more time checked fotos. - Is it legal?

- I didn't plan to publish it. I talked with our Dean Laurence Morgan, you should remember him, he was already Dean.

- Yes, I remember. Did you talk with him about this fotos? - Summer put stash on table.

- No. I mentioned that there is possibility for students who writes mysteries to receive access to real crime's scene photos. He didn't accept it with support.

- To the level?

- Out of University.

- Did you tell him about which crime you had information? - Asked Summer.

- No. But he still was angry and I hope for your support. - Said Edna.

- Edna, what support do you need?

- Call me Ed, it's now on the cover of my draft. "Ed's stories."

- As you wish. What support you need from me, Ed?

- We are group of students. Six, we can't use our students room to put it there, we need place where to meet and discuss it. You are a writer, you know how it's important for us. Did you already finish decorate your research room?

- How did you receive photos? - Returned to main question Summer.

- One more time send files on printer, I was asked to help with printing. - Edna already sat on the edge of the chair and Summer was nervous that in the moment she will kneel.

- I won't support your idea, but you have my place and time till Friday, when I will receive first participants in knitter's retreat. Today is Tuesday, wait for you at evening. Is it clear?

- Mrs Key. You are the best. - Edna hugged her.

- Fine. But any own ideas, you should tell me everything and only research, no amateur's investigation. This is clear?

- Everything on your rules. - Agreed Ed.

- Fotos will be there also. You will see them in evening at research room with everyone. Return back at University. If Police ask you about anything, say truth, no matter what. It's my condition. - Reminded Summer.

- You are the best.

- Someone should look after you all. Go.

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After Edna's bike disappeared from view, Summer one more time attentively looked through fotos, took her glasses in other hand and entered her library. On the white desk stood retro phone with golden holders.

Summer sat on the arm-chair with height back and started to deal long number.

- Appointment 005. - Said she when finally heard real person's voice. - Code name "Storyteller". Yes, I will wait to back call.

Summer took her knitting and decided here wait for call. They always call, they never forget. Investigation ended three years ago, she proved that wasn't guilty, but didn't find it's important to her new life to turn back to book club. Now was situation 005 and she needed permission to her work, rules stay the same.

Phone called as always in the middle of the raw.



- Storyteller?

- Listen. - Answered Summer. She didn't recognize this man's voice.

- Which involvement you plan to take in Appointment 005. Students, aspiring writers are interested in investigation of real murder. I need permission to manage their initiative. -

Answered Summer.

- Name of victim?

- Mrs Nolly Julian.

- Could you prevent civilians involvement?

- Too late, they received access to fotos from crime scene.

- Was it fault of Police, Storyteller? - Summer knew that all her words now checked on the base.

- As far as I know, it was personal curiosity of students. - Assured she.

- Name of the person with initiative? - Asked man.

- For now it's not important to involve this person in this level of checking.

- For your responsibility, Storyteller.

- As usually.

- Is it important for us story?

- I haven't enough information in this direction.

- Fine. - Man made pause. - Could we count your phone call as prolongation of work with book club "Purple butterfly"?

- Yes, I will be glad to be present at your book club meeting. - Said Summer, it was decision which she made not today.

- Fine, till the end of the day you will receive new catalog with samples from our post shop.

- I think you doesn't need reminder of my address.

- No. We remember all members of our club.

- And never send a tiny Christmas card. Till evening. - Summer put phone and returned to unfinished raw in knitting.

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When students came to her at evening, she already put all photos on board. Students were on the bikes, which they put near porch. Each of them introduced themselves to the Summer. Their uneasiness disappeared when they saw Summer's research room with photos of victim on the wall.

- So, let's start. I am Summer Key, if someone doesn't know, and I am here to keep you far away from troubles of amateur investigation. - Started Summer. - As writer, I know how it's exiting. I propose to you shelter where you could tell about your theories. Edna, sorry, Ed was participant of one of my writer's workshops and I see now that she received interest to the knitting also. I explained that even writers deserve hobby. This time there is murder. What you could tell me about this?

- We write mysteries and now we could discuss it. Patrick Tybald, I write mysteries about serial killers. - Said young man with long beard.

- You don't like when puzzle solved in one novel, you prefer that nightmare return again and again. - Asked Summer.

- Yes, at the end of each part of my book in jail is wrong suspect. - Patrick liked own idea. - And here we could solve murder before police.

- Just using your brain I assume. - Proposed Summer. - Your suspect, Mr Tybald?

- Owner of the tea-shop Bridget Clarence, she found body. What was the reason of her checking friend at home?

- Suspect accepted. Reason was, Bridget should accompany Nolly at welcoming tea yesterday at my house. This house. - Summer with smile looked like they all became nervous. - I met them in the knitting shop "1001 yarns" and Detective Inspector Adam Alpha this morning already questioned me about this.

- He is sexy, don't you think? - Asked Edna.

- Ed you have now Sam or you want all of them? - Asked angry Constance Arnold.

- Yes, I noticed that Mr Alpha is tall and attractive. - Said Summer. - Who is Sam?

- Samuel Percy. - Answered Edna. - He works at police as criminal photograph.

- And it was him who gave you this fotos, correct? - Asked Summer.

- Yes, it was he and to impress us and add more pain to me, Edna brought them at University. - Continued Connie. - Sam was my boyfriend before.

- He tells to aspiring mystery writers details of crimes and all girls are his. We forget about imagination and all mystery novels canon, when we have him. Mathew Monty and I suggest as suspects all of us.

- Why? - Asked Summer.

- Drafts of last year. Dean will give them to police, for sure. - Started Florence Lucas. -

There was only one Julian's family scholarship and we decided to write novels in three parts and made it as one project to receive three scholarships instead.

- And? - Asked Summer.

- It doesn't work as we wanted. - Agreed Margaret Douglas.

- What went wrong? - Summer hoped that this students weren't connected with all this.

- Mrs Julian talked with each of us before choose to whom gave this scholarship. - Said

Edna.

- What about? - Summer saw that case was more simpler than it looked like at the beginning. Revenge of one of the person, who didn't receive what they wanted. Mrs Key hoped that murdered now is not present in her research room.

- Future plans. - Answered Patrick.

- You also was there? - Asked Summer.

- Yes, two years before. I invented murder with teapot and suggested plot to them. -

Patrick said that in calm voice.

- Amazing, Patrick. How long it will take for police to find this out? Why? Did you received that scholarship? - Summer had a lot of questions.

- Yes, Mrs Key I received it. - Answered Patrick.

- Who received scholarship, had tea with Mrs Julian and as main attraction was silver teapot to underline importance of meeting. - Added Floy.

- You know that you should inform about this Police? - Asked Summer.

- Yes. If they found out themselves, we are suspects. - Agreed Connie.

- Yes. And what you are planning to do? - Asked Summer.

- It couldn't be anyone of students. - Said Floy. - And we need to prove it.

- Why? - Summer now get why they need details of this crime, to prove own innocence.

- Now is spring semester, next scholarship will be at autumn. Someone used our idea and we are ideal suspects now. - Said Edna.

- Fine, what you could notice on this fotos. What changed? You visited her house. Look and try to remember as many details as possible. Now you should go to Police and explain all this to them. Is that clear? You should prove to police that it weren't you. - Summer was convincing. - Tomorrow, after University, I wait for you here.

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Wednesday.

Summer was already at the kitchen and started to prepare breakfast, when she heard door bell.

On the porch stood Adam Alpha.

- Morning, Mrs Key. Today is second day in the row that we met on morning, so I decided to bring fresh croissants to breakfast. - Said Detective Inspector.

- Come in. Would you like an omelet? - Asked Summer.

- It would be too much. - Smiled Adam.

- If croissants are with chocolate, I could manage it. - Said Summer.

- Yes. I asked in all three bakeries, show your photo and found out which are your favorite. - Said Inspector.

- Work of Police such exiting. - Smiled Summer. - But till all gossips in bakeries will calm down, you will have to bring me daily dose of fresh croissants.

- As most important duty. - Nodded Adam

- This we solved. Hope today everyone are alive and your visit just friendly?

- Everyone are alive. I want to ask you about strange event at yesterday's evening.

- I am listening. - Summer put plate with bread on the table.

- Yesterday six students of Camfordge's University visited our police station and told interesting information connected with investigation. What do you think about it?

- Information was useful? - Asked Summer, when quickly added seasoning and grated cheese to omelet.

- Yes. But coincidentally each of students who helped police in investigation yesterday evening was at your house. After meeting they decided to came to police. Amazing omelet, my ex-wife always manage to made it cold. - Said Adam. - Did they mention something about their future plans?

- No. I just told them how I write, maybe they have this plan of visiting police before our meeting. - Proposed Summer and add more melted cheese on her plate.

- I want to say I am grateful to you that they came to police, it helped us a lot. New information, we move now in different direction. And thank you for breakfast. - Adam added to cheese more paper.

- I am glad that you enjoyed. What about investigation? - Asked Summer.

- In case you didn't already know from your little group of fans, they wrote a manuscript where predict or propose murder of victim with teapot, as was made.

- Interesting. What does it prove? - Asked Summer and stood up to make a coffee.

- If not mention that all of them are suspects. Nothing.

- Or anyone who read draft could use this not smart, but interesting idea. - Said Summer.

- Yes. And now we search everyone who could be connected with this. Most attractive that this time we should include everyone who knew about this idea in two years time period. - Said Adam, now he put melted cheese on the bread and papered it a little.

- Who will receive her money? - Asked Summer.

- Bridget Clarence will receive priority to buy the house, it's wall to wall with her tea-room. And all money will receive University, Julian's scholarship as memory, without teapot this time. It's evidence.

- Here is coffee. - Summer put the same red teacup as yesterday. - But who now will decide about this scholarship?

- University. - Answered Detective Inspector.

- It's never the building, each time it's people. - Summer took a bite of croissant, Adam looked at her with mute horror.

- I am so sorry. I just remember about one important meeting. - Adam quickly drink coffee.

- It's noting. If will be some news, you could drop by at evening. If you would like. Probably will be the same students. If you are interested. - Added Summer.

- I will try.

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Summer listened to the TV and knitted, when saw that in front of her house stopped Adam's police car.

- What happened? - Said she when opened the door.

- It's unbelievable. I need to go to London, their police caught Dean Laurence Morgan in Heatrow. He had tickets to five different plains with two hours intervals and at his personal account were fresh transactions of all money which were on Mrs Julian's accounts. I need to be in London to participate in interrogation. I am sorry, I won't be present at your evening meeting. - Adam forget his jacket in the car, he was a little bit lost. - It's just a miracle.

- Safe road, Detective Inspector. - Summer decided not to explain that miracles had nothing common with hard work and habit of before breakfast phone calls. - Don't forget about croissants to breakfast tomorrow, I will need details of investigation.

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At evening Summer listened to excitement talks of students about their Dean's arrest. They quickly proved that it should be he and no one else, because he read this drafts and supposedly was recent lover of Mrs Julian.

Summer added own comments and thought that as before bed reading she will need to read dossier of woman, in whom interested book club and accidentally she won free chance to participate in Summer's knitting workshop. But it's simple coincidence that Summer never proposed chance to attend her workshop for free. Storyteller returned to her work, book club's members waited for that.

March 2019.

