



**PLACE
OF
INTEREST**

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**BY
ROBERT PRINS**



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Detective Inspector Ronald Marsh stepped out of the unmarked car and faced the building, his keen eyes scanning for details. His partner, Detective Sergeant Tracy Marsh slipped out of the passenger door and stood beside him. A thick hedge boarded the property. “Anyone could hide in there,” thought Tracy. They walked purposefully toward the 1960’s bungalow, were met by an agent, and signed in.

Paint was peeling and there were obvious scuff marks on the deck – probably from some heavy furniture being dragged over it. Someone should have done more maintenance on the place. Stepping through the entrance, Ronald noted the peephole set into the varnished wooden door. The front door opened into the lounge area. The stale smell of empty house hit them both.

DI Ronald Marsh pulled out his notebook and began to take notes with a stubby pencil. DS Tracy Marsh started to take photos. The lounge was empty. A threadbare carpet covered the floor and a fireplace stood prominently against the far wall. Tiles were missing

from around the fireplace. One had been cracked from the centre out when something heavy had landed on it. A thick layer of dust on the mantle-piece caught Tracy's attention. Wiping a finger over a short section, Tracy clicked another photo. Ancient wallpaper curled at the edges. Some had been ripped right off beside the door to the hallway. More photos. More notes.

In the hallway the Chinese-hat light-shade and bulb had been broken and not replaced. Judging by the dust, they had been broken for quite some time. Two bedrooms, a bathroom and a laundry that led to the back door opened off the hallway.

DI Ronald Marsh pulled out his laser measure, noting down the dimensions of the hallway, then working his way into the bedrooms. Both were empty. The carpet in the bedrooms was different to the lounge, and a dark stain coloured one corner by a wardrobe. Ronald opened the wardrobe door. Two coat-hangers hung from an iron rail, but apart from them, it was empty of everything except dust. He measured the room. The second bedroom was almost identical but without the stain.

DS Tracy Marsh inspected the bathroom and laundry. The laundry tub was stained with paint and there was no washing machine or dryer. The key was in the keyhole to the outside door. She tried it and it was surprised at how easily it opened. The bathroom had been painted blue over bare wooden floors. The toilet was filthy. Spying fingerprints on the mirror, Tracy took note.

DI Ronald Marsh and DS Tracy Marsh met in the hallway to compare notes. They had seen enough. Conclusions had been made.

The agent met them at the door. "What do you think?"

DI Ronald Marsh replied with a question. "How much money?"

"One and a half million."

Ronald and Tracy Marsh looked at each other and shared a discreet nod.

"We'll buy it," Ronald said, taking Tracy's hand. "Then we can renovate and start a family."



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