

Murder Overseas

SPECIAL DETECTIVE CHAU

Murder Overseas

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BOOK 8

Police novel

Cozy Crime

Fiction

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PROLOGUE

The eighth book in the series about Special Detective Chau is about the investigation into three murders, in which Special Detective Chau soon turns out to be suspect number one, of at least one of the murders. The moment Chau is taken off the investigation, she makes a rigorous decision. This decision does not improve her position, but she is supported by hidden help from an unexpected source. Actually, it is that person who leads Chau to make the decision. An unlikely story comes to life, and puts Superintendent Sam Archer's detective team under inhumane pressure. In addition to leading the investigation. The chief commissioner also has the fight to be able to keep the investigation in his own hands. The superintendent also receives help from an unexpected source, but he will only discover this late in the investigation. A web of intrigue and deception becomes clear, but there is a lack of evidence, because the origin of the story appears to have originated in Vietnam, the country where Chau originally comes from. This fact also makes it extremely difficult to rule out Chau as a suspect, which only increases the pressure on the detective team. Fans of the series will follow the story with fascination, sometimes gnashing teeth, emotionally, but also with a constant curiosity for new developments. Unexpected developments and an unusual course of research certainly make this story a story that will keep the reader looking for the long-lacking, but much-needed motive.

Chapter 1

***I**t is the end of October, and Chau has been a student at the police academy for two months. It had not been the easiest months for Chau.*

The fact that it had not been the easiest months for Chau was mainly due to the fact that she had been the target of a group of annoying second-year students at the academy, from the start.

Chau was immediately placed in the second year of the master's program because of her experience and training with the detective team in Highfields, and the fact that she had already studied criminology for one year at the university. This was not appreciated by everyone, and especially not by the group mentioned.

Fedor Biggs, Bart Pigeon, and Petra Schwartz all came from Kent, and therefore already knew a lot about Chau when she started her studies at the academy. The three were all five years older than Chau, who would turn nineteen the following month. From the beginning of the academic year, the three did everything they could to make Chau's life miserable. Partly because Chau was not a snitch or complainer, they were able to cleverly hide it all from the teachers of the academy. Of course, there were fellow students who noticed, and Chau had already made a few friends in the short time she was at the academy, and that made them a group of three as well.

Arnie Brothers, Ann Burke, and Chau, were having their lunch in the academy restaurant when Arnie posted a comment.

"Say Chau. Isn't it time that you at least inform our mentor of what has been done to you during these first two months by those jealous misfits?"

It is getting really crazy now, don't you think so yourself? We know that you can take a lot, but destruction of your property, now even an expensive laptop, that is really not done, is it? Where is this going to end if you do not work on it?" Chau had apparently already thought about this question herself, because her answer was not long in coming.

"I understand you, Arnie, but I am just not like that, and I am not going to lower or change myself to their level and behavior. You are absolutely right when you say that something has to be done, but I will wait a little longer. I am going to confide in someone about this problem, maybe even two people. This weekend we can go home again, and I have already made an appointment for Saturday with Susan, one of the detectives of the detective team in Highfields. She has become a real friend of mine during my time there, and I want to ask her for advice first. However, I am afraid that she will want to involve the superintendent immediately, which is why I said maybe even two. I can also call the superintendent a friend, but only privately, normally he is still my boss. If possible, I hope that I can persuade Susan that if she wants to involve another person, she will choose someone else, but preferably no one."

Then suddenly it became restless in the restaurant, and what caused this unrest could be seen at the entrance of the restaurant. Chau was completely surprised when she saw the two detectives enter, whom she had only just talked about.

Superintendent Sam Archer, her boss, and Inspector Susan Saxton, her colleague and friend, immediately approached Chau. He could already see on their faces that something was wrong, and when the superintendent spoke his first words, the surprise became complete, and dramatic at the same time.

"Chau, I have to ask you to come with us to the station in Highfields, where we will have to interrogate you because of the violent death of Fedor Biggs."

The superintendent did not get any further, because an even greater unrest broke out in the restaurant. Of course, there was already a loud discussion at the other tables in the restaurant, but that was not the main reason for the current uproar. Suddenly, Chief Commissioner Otto Daimler, in uniform, also stood next to the Superintendent and he interrupted the latter.

"Superintendent, stop, and listen. All three of you are now coming with me. I have already arranged an office, here in the building, where we will go first. Now, not a word more, follow me!" Both the superintendent and Susan, and Chau were now surprised, and they meekly followed their little big boss.

Taken a seat in the office, the chief commissioner immediately started to lash out at Archer.

"Superintendent, do you feel well? What is this? I would have expected at least some caution from you. I, like most others in that restaurant, heard your words about the upcoming interrogation of SD Chau here. What nonsense! So, nothing comes of it, I can tell you. SD Chau, do you even know what this is all about? Do you know what happened about an hour ago?" Chau reacted as everyone was used to from her, unperturbed and to the point.

"I did not know, chief commissioner, but I can guess it by now. And if it is indeed true what I think; that Fedor Biggs was murdered, then it is not really strange that people look at me in the first place. I therefore believe that the Superintendent simply followed the procedures and did his job. I do not blame him." The chief commissioner still prevented Archer from speaking and continued.

"Well, yes, you really do not get upset about anything, that is clear again.

First of all, the following. So, this morning at eleven o'clock the dead body of Fedor Biggs, one of your fellow students, was found.

He turned out to have been murdered, and soon all kinds of evidence was found that led to you. The probable cause of death is also easy to relate to your special abilities. Now, of course, a whole game started after that, from above my head even, because there was doubt from above whether we even should handle this case. Anyway, I have been able to make sure of that, but some conditions and rules have been imposed on us. I will explain all that to the Superintendent and his group later, but unfortunately, SD, not to you.

We simply cannot avoid placing you on the suspect list in the first place, and that now even means that you are the only suspect for the time being, because the investigation has barely begun. I now have one simple question for you, dear SD, and I hope you will understand that I do have to ask it, but maybe you also understand, and I sincerely hope so, why I am asking you this question right now.

"Do you have anything, no matter how small, to do with the murder of Fedor Biggs?" Chau's answer came within a second.

"No, Chief Commissioner, at least not directly. Of course, it could be that someone is after me in one way or another, and wants to deliberately blame me for this murder." The chief commissioner smiled broadly, and continued.

"Good, then that is clear. So now we go to our office in Highfields. You, Superintendent, SD Chau, and I. Susan stays here and assists Chief Inspector Savage and the group. That group has been expanded with Sergeant Brown from the head office in Kent, which was one of the conditions of my superiors. Come, let us go."

It was two o'clock that afternoon when the chief commissioner, the superintendent and Chau, were sitting at the usual table in the canteen, each with an equally customary steaming cup of coffee in front of them. Superintendent Archer wanted to be the first to say something, but this time it was Chau who prevented him from doing so.

"Boss, excuse me, but please, listen to me now." The two men opposite Chau were already looking at her admiringly, because of her total sobriety, her calmness, and her professional way of talking, and just let her finish.

"Boss, I think I know what you are going to say, and do not worry. I know that you were just doing your job, and I also know that after what you had said, there would have been other words to make things clear, but you did not get the chance to do so. I really do not blame you at all, I actually think that there was nothing wrong. Now, I do not want to be the cause of unnecessary time wasted in this new case, so I would like to ask one question first. I hope you trust enough to get an answer to that too. Is the time of death already known?" The chief commissioner and the superintendent looked at each other again, and it was the Archer who then quickly answered.

"Yes, SD, that time has even been established quite precisely. How, that will come later, but the time of death must have been between nine o'clock and half past nine this morning." Chau immediately responded to this.

"Well, at least then I have a very clear alibi for the murder. Of course, my total innocence of the murder can still not be established. After all, I could also have just been the initiator or organizer. However, I also have a few things to say against that. I therefore request you to have Sergeant Brown record a complete statement of mine, in the interrogation room, which I will sign. After that, he can also take statements from Susan, Arnie Brothers, and Ann Burke. Later you will have your hands free again, but now I would like to go back to the academy with you, to my room there.

You may remember that in my room at home, during my absence, I always had a camera on, of which I could later watch the recordings, if I saw reason to do so. Well, I also have that in my room at the academy. I can give you recordings of a number of incidents, concerning Fedor Biggs, but especially the last one will not only be interesting for this investigation, it will also completely exonerate me from any guilt of the murder. I hope that after that I will also be able to be part of the team again, because that was one of the special privileges granted to me when I started at the academy. As far as my studies are concerned, I can just interrupt them." Now she stopped, and waited for a response, which finally came from the chief commissioner. Superintendent Archer was stunned for a moment. The chief commissioner, however, was having fun.

"Ha-ha-ha, I believe you have us and everyone else completely in control again, don't you SD? I am not going to waste a word on this either. Superintendent, I am now going back to the head office to satisfy the public prosecutor and my superior, and to chase them back into their cages. They stay away from our SD, and you have your best detective back in your group. The suspect list is empty now, so you have to get to work now, ha-ha!" The chief commissioner got up and, still roaring with laughter, walked out of the canteen, and then out of the office.

Chapter 2

***T**hat afternoon, five o'clock, in the briefing room of the station in Highfields. There was again the necessary noise from discussing colleagues.*

Jack once again took on the task of getting everyone quiet, and did this in his familiar way.

"SILENCE!"

That had the necessary effect again, and allowed Archer to start the briefing. Chau sat next to the right screen, at her usual place, and on the left screen, under the photo of the victim, showed no less than five possible suspects. The photos were of Bart Pigeon and Petra Schwartz, the two friends of the victim, and the photos of Arnie Brothers and Ann Burke were also on display. They belong to Chau's group of friends, and the latter was the fifth photo on the screen. Archer began to speak. This brought some commotion within the group of colleagues.

"People, attention now, please, it is almost half past five, and we have quite a bit to discuss now." Now Archer was interrupted again, and it was Jack who was the cause of this.

"Sorry boss, but I understand that you just want to start the briefing now?" Sorry again, because that does not go down with me, and I say sorry again. I think that everyone should know clearly what happened this morning at that academy with our SD, and before that, without her having any idea of it, at the station, with the chief commissioner and the public prosecutor, and who knows more.

What a bunch of bagpipes, excuse my words again, but it was precisely that chief officer, who himself, of course in consultation with others, ensured that Chau could go to that academy because of her excellent record.

And now act as if she is a suspect? What a bunch of idiots. Yes, sorry again, and Chief Commissioner, I do not mean you by that. We witnessed you, probably speaking in a more politically responsible way than I did, also questioning the whole thing. I also know that you never believed in Chau's guilt for a moment. But those others? Brrr. It just makes me shiver, such a pure form of amateurism, without any evidence or knowledge and with so much disrespect to Chau, but also to our group as a whole. I keep saying it, sorry, but I think we should not accept this, and again not only for Chau, but also for our whole group. I think those two big men from this morning, should come here tomorrow, and apologize to our entire group, including Chau." And then everyone stood up and the noise was unbeatable again. The chief commissioner and Archer were sitting together in the front row now, and tried to exchange some words with each other, after which the chief commissioner stood up and stood in front of the group. He saw Chau sitting next to him with a desperate face, at the small table next to the right screen. He understood that Chau saw herself as the cause of this more or less revolt within the group. Yet everyone now understood that the chief commissioner had the right to address them, so the noise died down and the chief commissioner could address the group.

"People, come on, listen for a moment. Chief Inspector Savage, I understand the emotions, and I understand what you just wanted to make clear, but now take a look here to my left. Is this what you wanted? Or are you now going to apologize to SD Chau? She now feels guilty for causing your rebellion. Is that what you wanted? No, do not respond, I do not mean this as it might sound.

Again, I understand you very well, and I understand the reactions very well, but let us be realistic for now, please. Of course, I was also angry this morning when the gentlemen made it clear to me what they wanted. But I was able to do something about that in my own way, and that is why we are still in charge of this investigation, and now even with the usual deployment of our SD.

I do not think your demand, Chief Inspector Savage, to see the gentlemen here tomorrow is so bad, and I am going to arrange that. But apologies? Come on, you are going a bit too far with that, and now I will say sorry, because I understand that those aforementioned emotions will not be completely gone yet. But, even the aforementioned high lords were only doing their job, perhaps a little more inhumane than we would have liked to see it, but they have done nothing wrong, on closer inspection. All you have to do now is look at that right screen. What can be seen there now is because of what our SD has brought into our search system here, because of the statement she made to Sergeant Brown. Of course, these are only indications from the system, because too few other details are known and introduced. But this is actually a bit the same as how our superiors thought and acted this morning. So, I will talk to them, but do not make a big deal out of it now, please. We are better than that, and now have more important things to occupy ourselves with, don't you think?" And now there was a modest applause from the group, and the chief commissioner decided to break the ice for good.

"People, your boss and I just put our heads together, and I want to make the following announcement on behalf of both of us, now. The briefing we wanted to start here now was thoroughly prepared, thanks to SD Chau of course. It is now well past six, and we are not going to hold that briefing today, but tomorrow morning at seven o'clock. Now we are all going to defrost together, and put our noses in one direction again.

I invite you all to follow us to our local pub The Three Crowns, for an end of day drink with a snack. SD Chau? Will you join us for a while?"

"Yes, Chief Commissioner." That way of answering again ensured that all the ice had melted immediately, and everyone walked out of the station in good spirits, in the direction of The Three Crowns.

They had all decided to walk the distance to the pub, because the walking distance was less than ten minutes. Jack had walked next to Chau, and put his arm over her shoulder.

"Chau, I am sorry, me with my blunt way of talking, sometimes. I did not think of you, and I should have, knowing you. Again, I am really sorry, Chau."

Once seated at the large regulars' table, it turned out that the chief commissioner had invited even more people. At the table at the entrance sat Doctor Harris, notary Brand, Francis Hedwig, the owner of restaurant VIP in Kent, and Chau's father, where the chief commissioner also took a seat. On the other side, between the window and the regulars' table, sat Sophie, the superintendent's wife, and Chau's mother and her brother Minh, and now also Chau herself. Meow was already at Chau's feet, and was the first to be provided with a meal, a plate full of bones.

The superintendent, Jack, and the rest of the detective group were all just sitting at the regulars' table having their first beer when Chau saw her boss end a phone call and whisper something in Jack's ear. Chau once again got a strong feeling and walked to her boss.

"Something happened boss? Not a second murder, I hope?" Now she saw Archer and Jack looking at her perplexed and it was Jack who reacted first, now slightly different than last time.

"Is it that time again? Did you have a feeling again, SD? But, of course, you are right again. Jeez, and we haven't even had a decent briefing for the first murder." Archer had not waited and he had already informed the chief commissioner and his other detectives. Then, just before everyone went out the door again, a yell was heard from the bar. It was Nathan Fox, the garage and gas station owner, on the outskirts of the village.

"We will make sure that those freshly tapped beers find their way, you know.

You just go back to work, you have no peace anyway, ha-ha." There was a lot of laughter at the bar, but none of the departing detectives had really heard anything, because they were all already focused on what would loom up in front of their eyes.

When the last one closed the door behind him, it was the chief commissioner, who also walked back to the station, and of course had something to say again, this time exclusively to Chau.

"Now, SD, of course we do not know the time of death yet, but you might have the best alibi a perpetrator could wish for, ha-ha." There was not much time for reactions because the first of the group already reached the parking lot in front of the station. Archer stopped everyone and handed out his orders.

"Good, people. A second murder, and again at the academy. Now it concerns Bart Pigeon, and so there is only one left of that group of friends, Petra Schwartz.

Now listen carefully. Of course, we have to go to the crime scene first, but we are going to do this with a small group. The doctor is on his way and I have already heard from Harry that there is little to see again, and that all the details are almost the same as with the first murder. So, Jack, SD Chau, and Sam and I, along with two uniforms, go to the scene. Susan, you also go to the academy, but immediately track down Petra Schwartz and bring her to our station. Just use the excuse that it is for her safety.

Peter, you, together with Jim, are now going into our station and request a search warrant for the rooms of Petra Schwartz and Bart Pigeon, but also for the rooms of Arnie Brothers and Ann Burke. When that is done, you will investigate everything you can find, about all the people just mentioned, and of course the first victim, Fedor Biggs." While he wanted to address the chief commissioner, Archer saw out of the corner of his eye a totally serious and calm-looking Chau.

She apparently again fully understood and approved his orders, but he also saw that she wanted to say something, and so he let her.

"Boss, I am sorry, but I would appreciate it very much if you would adjust the orders to Peter and Jim a little, and also have my room included in the searches. I assume I do not have to explain anything further to you about this request?"

Archer smiled again and answered by addressing his boss.

"Chief Commissioner, could you please assist Peter and Jim with the requests? It will not be very easy for them to get such a number of warrants arranged quickly," and while he also looked at Chau, he went a little further. "So there is actually no need to ask for an order for Chau's room, because she has already allowed this herself, but do it anyway. This is to be able to exclude or refute any form of partiality or prejudice, if this would be pointed out. The chief commissioner was already sticking his chest out again.

"Of course, Superintendent. See those warrants as obtained. Before you reach the academy, you have them on your phone, and that room of SD Chau, I will do it myself, together with Sergeant Brown, ha-ha." Archer wasted no more time.

"Well, we will determine there who else we will have transported to the station. It will be little sleep for most of us this night. It is now almost seven o'clock. As soon as we are all back here, we will hold the briefing previously planned for tomorrow morning. We cannot wait until tomorrow; we are now dealing with two murders. Get to work people!"

When they arrived at the crime scene, the doctor came to the three right away.

"For me, there is little to do here. Everything is pretty much the same as with the first victim, except of course the time of death.

If I had to take a shot at that now, this time is less than two hours ago, but more precisely I can only tell you after I had him on my table. When you are done with the victim here, I would like to see the body in my examination room as soon as possible. Greetings, yet again."

Next was Harry, who did not have much news either.

"Yes, you will have heard it from the doctor, everything almost identical to the first victim. The only difference I can tell you is that this time there are signs of burglary at the door of the room. A bit strange, given the presumed time of death, and the fact that this victim was certainly killed in his own room. Anyway, that is for you to find out. Oh, there was actually something else that was different from the first victim. This time we did not find anything that could point to our SD, except, if you were really suspicious, a girl's blouse made in Vietnam. However, this blouse is of a different size than SD Chau's, I checked that immediately. I am now going back to the lab to start everything up again. There is no ordinary straightforward murder for you these days, is there, Archer?" He did not even wait for an answer and left. Archer spoke to his two detectives.

"Ok, Jack, SD, we will take a look inside ourselves, and then have the body removed. When the room is empty again, we let the people from the forensic service who are still here, finish their work.

We then go into the restaurant, which fortunately is still open. I crave a cup of coffee.

Chapter 3

At nine o'clock in the evening, the briefing room at the station in Highfields was fully occupied again. The chief commissioner was also sitting in the front row again, but he now left the floor to Superintendent Archer.

All right, folks. Let us make a quick start, and try to make sure that we can get a few hours of sleep tonight, because tomorrow will be a busy day.

"What do we have, so far. First of all, we now have two victims, two friends from the infamous group of three friends, who together had made life miserable for our SD, the first two months at the police academy. Of course, we cannot yet say with certainty whether this is also important for our case, but we will have to take it into account. The third member of this group, Petra Schwartz, is still here, but as it looks at the moment, she has nothing to do with the murders, and so, just to be sure, we will start a security procedure for her. She will be taken back to the academy in a moment, but for the time being she will constantly have a uniform near her, or in front of her room.

Then the victims, starting of course with Fedor Biggs, twenty-four years old, second-year student of the master's program in detective work at the police academy. Both victims by the way, and Petra Schwartz, but also our SD and her two friends, are following or followed the same subject, and are or were all in the same year. Back to Fedor Biggs. His body was found in his room this morning at about eleven o'clock, by our second victim, Bart Pigeon. Time of death of Fedor Biggs was between nine and half past nine this morning. In his room all kinds of things were found that showed a clear hatred towards our SD.

For example, on the inside of his door there was a dartboard with a frequently hit photograph of Chau in the middle. All kinds of things were also found that were stolen from Chau at an earlier stage. All this caused the unpleasant start of this investigation, but our SD very quickly made sure to be cleared of all blame. Now, before we continue with the statements of all friends and of the mentor of the class, I will go to our second victim, Bart Pigeon.

Bart Pigeon, twenty-four years old, was also found in his own room, but unlike the first victim, traces of burglary were found on and near the lock of the door of his room. A bit strange, given the probable time of death, between two and four o'clock this afternoon, but we will continue with that later. So, nothing was found in the room of this Bart Pigeon that could lead to our SD, and we are now just going to park that story for the time being, probably for good. Of course, there was the Vietnamese-made blouse, which our SD looked at, and has something to say about. SD, your turn." Chau stood up and started talking.

"Yes, that blouse raises some question marks, because I happen to have exactly the same blouse. Even though the blouse turned out to be of a different size than the one I have, I still called my mother to check at home if that blouse was still in my wardrobe, which was later confirmed by her. I have my blouse here now" Then she showed the blouse to her colleagues, and continued.

"Some of you, and certainly Susan, may conclude that you will not find a blouse like this at the C&A." Now a loud laughter erupted within the group, and Chau had to wait a while before she could continue.

"Yes, hi-hi, uh, I have investigated this further and have been able to determine that such a blouse is not sold anywhere in England. Furthermore, I could also see from the label that the blouse found was probably once purchased in Vietnam. Of course, we do not know whether this was also done by the wearer, but we may find out later, when the forensic examination of the blouse is completed.

Now, all this gave me an idea, and I was able to establish something very quickly, with the help of the facts that Peter and Jim had already established during their investigation into the people involved. Something that surprised me, because the person concerned never told me anything about this. It has now become clear that Ann Burke has lived in Vietnam from the age of two, until she was fourteen. Her mother turns out to be Vietnamese, and that mother still has a business there. This is how far we are with these facts at the moment, so there needs to be a thorough further investigation, which I, in consultation with our boss, will do myself, together with Susan." It became quite restless among the group again, but this gave Chau and Archer the opportunity to switch places. Archer took over again.

"What we also found out during the search of the room is that it seems that these three friends carried out the same harassment campaign as Chau in the first year of their studies, when our SD was not even at the academy yet. Then with Ann Burke as the victim. And so there we have our second strange observation about this young lady. This Ann Burke never mentioned this when she was later questioned by Susan. I have since heard from Chau that this Ann never told her this either. The other friend within this group, Arnie Brothers, has not told anything about this either, and Chau has never heard anything about it from him as well. In itself remarkable, because you would say that if he knew about it, which can actually be assumed, he would have discussed it at least once. Certainly, because he was the one who had proposed to Chau, even this morning, just before we arrived at the restaurant, to finally do something about these harassments, and to report to their mentor.

Then we come directly to the mentor's statement. He was therefore aware of the harassment of Ann Burke, but to Chau's surprise, he was also aware of the fact that this group of friends had now made Chau the target of their harassment, and had therefore already carried it out for two months. This mentor indicated that he had already compiled a whole report, of which we now also have a copy in our possession.

He also said that he had already taken steps to take action. He was able to demonstrate that he already wanted to make an appointment with Chau, and with Ann Burke.

For tomorrow, this mentor, and all the friends who are still alive, have been invited back here to the station, but the first, the mentor, only at eleven o'clock. Before that, Jack, Chau and I first go back to the academy, and talk to other people there, and look around again. With Ann Burke, we wait a little longer, until Chau has finished her research. I did have the young lady placed under observation.

For now, I think this is enough for you to sleep on again. Chau is already working, as you can see, to load all the details and statements into our system and for you, for tomorrow the next one; Sam, you go with us, and Sergeant Brown to the academy. We leave from here, tomorrow morning around half past seven, after the coffee of course. Susan, you are taking charge of our home base right here, and with the help of Jim, Peter, and Fred, you are working on what you have been working on. Provide as much information as possible about all those involved in this investigation, of course also the two victims, and whatever you find, you enter directly into the system. As it stands, I think we can have another briefing at four o'clock tomorrow afternoon, and I hope that we will have a slightly clearer picture or scenario than is the case now. That was it. Then Archer heard someone coughing, and he saw that this was the chief commissioner. He understood immediately.

"Oh, chief commissioner, sorry. Of course, you are free to go with us to the academy, but since you do not live too far from there, and our car will be full, you might be better off just going there from home." This apparently satisfied the chief commissioner again, because he already got up with a smile on his face to leave, which everyone else did, except Archer, Jack, Chau, and Sam. Archer had a recognizable comment.

"Come on people, just a little longer. I see that Chau has finished her typing work. Let us grab a cup of coffee or tea in the canteen and discuss the tactics for tomorrow."