

THE EDITOR - Book 6

Marianne or Mary-Anne

A Daphne Taylor Mystery

Plot Summary - Chapter by Chapter Breakdown

Notes: We have left several details of this story vague, so you can give them a personal touch. You can tailor this outline in several of the following ways to make it unique, without changing the main plot. 1) Daphne Taylor could be much younger and a magazine editor instead of a literary editor. 2) The story may be set in any town, village or community of your choice. 3) You may want the grandfather's presence (or death) made more prominent throughout the story. 4) Alicia Bainbridge may have a meeting with Daphne before the detectives question her. 5) Reverend John Lucas may have tried to kill Phillip before being murdered himself. 6) Perhaps change the ending – Alicia tells Lillian that her husband is the killer before the detective has to break his alibi.

Part One - Rising Tension

Chapter One

CH 1/ Scene 1 – Comfortably ensconced in her little townhouse, Daphne Taylor lives a quiet life. She is retired but still working at her own pace, doing what she loves best: editing and writing books. She finds Bridgeton, Oregon, to be the best suited to her taste. Located in North Portland on the Columbia River, Bridgeton is bordered by Hayden Island and the Jantzen Beach. The little houses perched on the river banks, the marina, the floating house boats, townhouses and bungalows provide the surroundings and backdrop Daphne needed when she moved to the States.

CH 1/ Scene 2 – This morning, Daphne is on her way to the shopping center to have coffee with John Lucas. John Lucas is the neighborhood church minister. He phoned Daphne the day before asking her if she wouldn't mind meeting him outside the church since he wants to discuss something rather personal. Although generally reluctant to be someone's confidante, Daphne agreed to the meeting. She has not known the reverend for very long. Not being a churchgoer herself, Rev. Lucas was referred to her as a budding novelist by her publisher, Adrian Hansel.

CH 1/ Scene 3 – As soon as she arrives at the mall's food court, Daphne notices that the reverend's right hand is bandaged. He welcomes her with a wide smile and invites her to sit at his table. Before sitting down, Daphne goes to the nearby counter and buys herself a tall latte. When she returns to the table and finally sits down, she asks John Lucas what happened to his hand. He replies that someone came to the church the previous morning and forced him to hand over the church records of births and baptisms. John does not know the two people that stole the records. He does not know why they did and why they injured his right hand.

CH 1/ Scene 4 – Daphne does not understand. Same as John Lucas she is puzzled by the theft. But the more puzzling thing about this incident is John Lucas's injured hand. He tells her that it will take months for him to return to holding a pen with his right hand, and typing will be equally as difficult. Apparently the perpetrators told him they wanted to ensure that he would not write another "lie" for a while. Daphne asks John if he phoned the police. He says that yes, he phoned Lillian Keaston but she said that, although the records have no real value, the fact that someone willfully caused him injury, she will see what she can do.

CH 1/ Scene 5 – Daphne asks John what the doctor said when he went to the hospital. John Lucas replies that the doctor had to repair a few things – does not know exactly what – but that he might have to undergo another operation. But he tells Daphne that his hand is not really what concerns him – he can always dictate what he needs to be typed to his computer – "that's not a problem" – but what really concerns him is the reasons why the thieves took the records. Daphne asks why that would be of concern to him. John Lucas tells Daphne that the records are not the same sometimes as the civil records. The

church records are true, sacred records, whereas the civil records are legal records of marriages, births, deaths and adoptions.

Chapter Two

CH 2/ Scene 1 – Daphne is at a loss to see the difference. John Lucas explains that when a mother has given birth in the past few days, for example, she can come to the church, register the birth of her child and give the name of the father freely and before God, whereas, in the civil records, the name of the father will be her husband's name. The reverend adds that the most common discrepancies are the marriage dates. Once you have obtained a license you can have a civil marriage first and then a church ceremony days or even weeks afterward. Daphne begins to see what the reverend is afraid of. She asks if the reverend can recall where the notable discrepancies were. John Lucas is not sure he can because he was transferred to Bridgeton only five years ago. If the thieves are interested in anything that happened before that time, he would have to refer the matter to his predecessor.

CH 2/ Scene 2 – Daphne tells John Lucas that she does not think that will be necessary. The only thing she wants John Lucas to do is to make a list of the people who came to him to register a birth, a marriage or even a death that he believes *differs notably* from the civil records. John Lucas says that the best way for him to do that is to consult the civil records and try recalling if there were any *remarkable* differences between his records and the civil ones.

CH 2/ Scene 3 – In the meantime that John Lucas tries to put the list together, the following day, Daphne asks Detective Lillian Keaston if she would be free to come for a coffee that evening before going home. Lillian tells her that yes; it would be fine, since her husband is out of town again. At five o'clock, Lillian arrives at Daphne's house bearing gifts. She says that instead of coffee, she and Daphne could have 'Chinese' for dinner with some wine. Daphne is all smiles. Detective Lillian Keaston has been a friend since the two met months ago now. Although the circumstances were not that friendly at the time – Daphne was accused of murder – Lillian quickly became a close friend.

CH 2/ Scene 4 – While the two have dinner they discuss John Lucas's case. Daphne explains the reasons why the thieves have taken the records. These records, according to the reverend, are personal declarations before God of an important event that occurred in the lives of his congregants. Lillian nods and says that for example if someone knows that a parent or friend died before or after the official time of death, it could throw a wrench in an investigation. Daphne agrees that it could be a problem if the time (or date) of death was of importance to the descendants.

CH 2/ Scene 5 – In the case of inheritance, Lillian goes on, it could be vital. If the executor of a will can only release the estate to an heir if the father (or relative) dies before or after a certain date, the reverend's record could prove beneficial or quite detrimental to the heir. Daphne now sees how John Lucas's records could be important to the thieves. "But why cutting his hand?" Lillian asks. Daphne then repeats what John told her the day before: "So that he could not write a "lie" for a while". Lillian sees how the perps would think his records are false in some ways. And if these guys have a lot to gain by the records' disappearance, they could have killed the reverend even.

Chapter Three

CH 3/ Scene 1 – Two days later, Daphne receives an email from John Lucas. He recalled three of his congregants coming to him with declarations that differed from the civil records. The first is a woman whose first born is not her husband's son. The second is the son of a well known manufacturer who died a day before the date stated in the civil record. The third is a little girl whose christening name is quite different from the name she has in the record. Daphne calls the reverend on the phone and asks how recent were these declarations made. The reverend says that all three happened in the last three years. The little boy is now two-and-half years' old; the manufacturer died six months ago; the little girl was christened Marianne Bainbridge two months ago. Her name in the civil records is Mary-Anne Lavers Bainbridge.

CH 3/ Scene 2 – Daphne argues that her name is probably a clerical error. John Lucas does not agree. In fact, he wants to show Daphne a copy of Marianne Bainbridge's birth certificate. He believes it has been

altered in some ways. When Daphne asks who Marianne Bainbridge is, John Lucas tells her that she will be the sole heir of the Bainbridge fortune when she reaches the age of twenty-one. Daphne invites the reverend to come for coffee that afternoon.

CH 3/Scene 3 – When he arrives, he parks his car in the back alley behind Daphne's townhouse. As soon as he sits down in her living room He tells Daphne that he believes he's been followed since he's gone to city hall to consult the records. Daphne asks to see the copy of the birth certificate and wonders how she could put her hands on the original. John Lucas tells her that Phillip Lavers may not be the father of the child. Daphne agrees that Phillip Lavers possibly wants to get his hands on Marianne's promised fortune.

CH 3/ Scene 4 – Daphne asks to keep the copy of the birth certificate. As soon as John Lucas has left the house, she phones Lillian. Lillian listens to Daphne's account of her meeting with John Lucas. Lillian is afraid that the reverend is now in real danger. If Phillip Lavers is behind the theft, and has seen John Lucas go to city hall, he might think of eliminating the one person who could come between him and his daughter's fortune. Lillian asks Daphne not to go any further with this investigation – to let her handle it. Daphne agrees and says that she's got too much on her plate anyway to bother with someone else's millions!

Part Two - Main Action

Chapter Four

CH 4/ Scene 1 – Easier said than done – an hour later Daphne is on the phone with the maternity hospital in Portland. Marianne Bainbridge was born two months ago and with the certificate in front of her, Daphne asks the administrator to confirm the baby's birth – date and time – and if the father was present during the delivery. Fortunately, the administrator is happy to oblige. She confirms that the little girl was born at 3:30 a.m. on the 24th of the month before last. The mother's name is Alicia Bainbridge. The father was not present.

CH 4/ Scene 2 – Once Daphne has passed the information onto Lillian, she returns to working on one of the manuscripts on her desk. She is about to close shop for the day, when her cell phone vibrates its way to the edge of her table. She catches it in time before it takes a dive and answers it. Lillian is on the line. John Lucas has been killed. Daphne sits down in shock. She would never believe someone would do that. John Lucas was kindness personified. Why would anyone want to kill the dear man?

CH 4/ Scene 3 – Lillian replies that he probably stumbled on some information that should not have come to light, or information that could prove that Phillip Lavers is not Marianne's father and does not have the right to manage her trust or inheritance. Daphne agrees that Phillip Lavers might be a 'person of interest'. However now, Lillian is afraid that Daphne may be next on the killer's list. Daphne does not want to make mountains out of mole hills and does not want any sort of protective measures. "I'll be fine, I'm sure," she tells Lillian.

CH 4/ Scene 4 – Nevertheless, Daphne asks how the reverend was killed. Lillian says that he fell down the stairs at his home. Daphne turns around and thinks about the set of stairs going up from the ground floor to her bedrooms. She shivers at the thought of being pushed down those stairs. She would not survive the fall. As for the person who pushed John Lucas, he or she must have been quite strong. The reverend was not a small man.

CH 4/ Scene 5 – Lillian decides to have a chat with Alicia Bainbridge as soon as possible. Lillian and her partner, Bill Adams, go to Alicia's place, a very nice house in one of North Portland's posh neighborhood. As soon as they arrive, they are welcomed at the door by a young woman holding a baby in her arms. Lillian asks to see Alicia Bainbridge. The young woman says that she is Alicia and that the baby is Mary-Anne. Alicia's furtive look around her tells Lillian that the young mother is afraid of being heard. At that moment, Phillip Lavers comes out of the den and introduces himself. *That's a poser, if I ever saw one*, Lillian says to herself. The two detectives follow him and his wife to the sun room.

Chapter 5

CH 5/ Scene 1 – As soon as they are seated, Bill Adams dives head-long into the subject of proof of paternity. Phillip is taken aback by the detective's forwardness, but answers calmly that he is not Mary-Anne's biological father. Lillian and Bill exchange a glance. All of their conjectures and suppositions were totally wrong. If Phillip Lavers admits not to be the father, how could he ever hope to be nominated as trustee or executor of the grandfather's will? The will is very clear. At the birth of Alicia's first child, the father will assume management of the estate belonging to the child and that until the child's twenty-first birthday. Therefore, Phillip has no claim on Mary-Anne's inheritance. Phillip tells the detectives that perhaps they should look further afield. Alicia's family is an extended one.

CH 5/ Scene 2 – Before leaving, Lillian asks Phillip why he or Alicia changed their daughter's name from Marianne to Mary-Anne. Phillip says that he found Mary-Anne prettier – that's all. Bill Adams, for his part, asks to see their marriage certificate. Alicia produces it after fetching it from the bedroom. The couple was married two weeks after Mary-Anne's birth. Phillip smiles and adds that they will go on their honeymoon once Alicia is through nursing the baby.

CH 5/ Scene 3 – Walking back to their car, Lillian and Bill are silent until Bill asks, "Where do we go from here?" Lillian shakes her head. She is still bothered by what she observed in the Lavers Bainbridge's house. Alicia was terrified of her husband. Since he can't get his hands on Mary-Anne's money, why bother with killing the reverend? There's no motive for either crime. Phillip had nothing to gain by steeling the records and he had no reason for pushing John Lucas down the stairs.

CH 5/ Scene 4 – Instead of returning to the precinct, they decide to swing by Daphne's place. Bill feels that Daphne might have some idea about what's going on here. As soon as they arrive, Daphne opens the door with a broad smile on her face. She invites them to come in and to have a taste of the cookies she baked that afternoon. Once coffee and cookies are on the coffee table, Daphne takes a seat in her favorite chair and asks her guests what's going on. Lillian tells her that they're short of answers. They have no idea who could have stolen the records or why; and they had to conclude that Phillip Lavers is out of the picture for the murder of John Lucas. Besides which, "the guy has an alibi" for the time the reverend was pushed down the stairs.

CH 5/ Scene 5 – Daphne sits silent for a moment and then asks if they've interviewed John Lucas's family – wife or children. Bill and Lillian shake their heads. Lillian says that John Lucas's wife died a year ago from cancer and that they had no children. Daphne then says that they both need to take their blinders off and go over their interview with Phillip Lavers. They also need to interview Alicia alone. She knows something and obviously she could not speak in front of her husband.

Part Three - Resolution

Chapter Six

CH 6/ Scene 1 – Lillian has to smile. She shakes her head. To Daphne raised eyebrows, Lillian explains that Daphne's clarity of thoughts is always helpful. Bill burst out laughing. "Yes, of course, I see what you're getting at," he says, taking another cookie from the plate. As soon as the two detectives leave the house they contact Alicia and ask her to come to the precinct for an interview. She can come with the baby, Lillian tells her. Meanwhile, Bill Adams asks one of the officers to verify Phillip's alibi. The officer comes back with a response that is not exactly what Bill wanted to hear. Phillip's alibi seems solid enough. He was in his office signing a contract with a client.

CH 6/ Scene 2 – Daphne, in the meantime, goes to John Lucas's church. She is looking for the vicar or the person who will eventually replace the reverend. His name is Reverend James Archer. He welcomes Daphne warmly and asks her if she wants to talk in his office. Daphne agrees and follows the man to the vicarage. Before Daphne sits down she asks to see where the stolen records were kept. Rev. Archer smiles and shows her a locked wooden cabinet. He tells her that either the records were never stolen or they were returned because they are in the cabinet – intact.

CH 6/ Scene 3 – Daphne tells the reverend that she thought it was the case. The reverend shows her the records for the past year and points to the three items Daphne is looking for. Mary-Anne Lavers Bainbridge was in fact christened Marianne Bainbridge. Daphne thanks the reverend for his time and leaves the church. She knows what must have happened. She phones Lillian and asks her if she read the grandfather's will. Lillian says that it's still in probate but she will get a copy from the lawyer.

CH 6/ Scene 4 – The following day when this puzzle is finally pieced together, Daphne is able to offer her conclusions to her favorite detectives. She tells them that when John Lucas asked to meet with her, he offered to do so away from the church. He did not want Daphne to poke around. When he was asked to give her a list of possible discrepancies, he gave three of them, when in fact there would be dozens of them during the past five years. "He wanted you, Lillian, to investigate Phillip Lavers." Lillian nods. "If Phillip was found guilty of fraud, he would not be able to have any standing in the execution of the will."

CH 6/ Scene 5 – But the motive for the crime is what Daphne says she struggled with. If Phillip is not the father, why killing the reverend – he has nothing to do with the inheritance. Or does he? In fact both men had a lot to gain. First, Mary-Anne's father: who is he? John Lucas was the father. He wanted Phillip out of the way to marry Alicia. Phillip, on the other hand, needed John Lucas out of the way so that he could be declared sole guardian of Mary-Anne – as per the grandfather's will.

CH 6/ Scene 6 – Once Phillip's alibi crumbled, the man was arrested for John Lucas's murder. Alicia and Marianne retire to Southern California where they will live with Alicia's eldest brother. The courts have decided to award him Marianne's guardianship. Daphne likes nice endings. She has witnessed too many stories ending very badly indeed.

(###)