



IT WAS MURDER, MY LORD

Michael Bacon

Chapter 1: Death

The area around Newcastle and Durham is still called Northumbria. Even today it sometimes seems to be a very wild place. You can find forests and woods, moors and small valleys with *streams* flowing into the River Wear. Not far away is Hadrian's Wall, a relic from Roman times. The Wall more or less follows what is now the border between England and Scotland.

Haddington *Manor* stands in one of these valleys, *surrounded by* woods and *ponds*. It is part of the Bellforth *estate* – a huge area just outside Durham. The English call this sort of building a “*stately home*”, which is not a very accurate description. From a distance the large house looks very romantic – but when you drive up to the steps you begin to notice that Haddington *Manor* is not in a very good condition. The massive doors are rotten in places, the kitchen garden is overgrown and the window *frames* – well, it isn't the sort of house where most people would want to spend a holiday. A little villa in Tuscany or Provence offers much more than Haddington *Manor*. But when the sun shines, particularly in spring, the huge house has a certain charm. And the present owner, Lord Alfred Bellforth, plans to restore the house and the *estate* to its old glory. His wife, Harriet, and his son from his first marriage, Gordon, are working on a plan to attract *wealthy* people for weekends. What can you do in Northumbria? Well, you can ride horses, you can *pray* in Durham Cathedral, you can visit the ruins of Lindisfarne, you can look for ghosts in old *stately homes* – or you can shoot ducks with the Bellforth Shoot Company!



ÜBUNG 1 ! Übung 1 Welche Wörter gehören zusammen? Ordnen Sie zu!

ÜBUNG 1

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. today | <input type="checkbox"/> not precise |
| 2. to find | <input type="checkbox"/> to finish |
| 3. accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> small |
| 4. to begin | <input type="checkbox"/> to lose |
| 5. huge | <input type="checkbox"/> husband |
| 6. wealthy | <input type="checkbox"/> yesterday |
| 7. wife | <input type="checkbox"/> poor |

“Mr Macey! Tell the *beaters* to start! We’re all ready and waiting, here!”

“Aye, aye, my Lord. They’re a good crowd. All local lads. You’ll have a fine shoot this afternoon. The weather’s perfect, sir!”

The sun is high in the sky. Lord Bellforth walks towards his guests and gives advice. The dogs are waiting. The silence is deafening. Then a whistle blows and all hell is let loose. The *beaters* shout and sing. The ducks come together in the middle of the *pond* and suddenly *take off*. Bang. Bang. One or two fall to the ground and then hundreds begin to fly to the north. More shots and wild cries. The dogs are busy, rushing off to *retrieve* the *booty*. And so it goes on, until around four o’clock. The shooting party finally lay down their guns and walk to a small table. Lord Bellforth points to the thermos flasks of steaming coffee and the bottles of malt whisky. He offers a toast.

“Gentlemen, my *gamekeeper*, Mr Macey, tells me that we have about 50 ducks resting over there. Not too bad; so thank you for such a good day’s shooting. Those of you who are staying longer can *look forward* to several meals with duck as the main ingredient. Until then, I *suggest* we refresh ourselves with coffee – plus, of course, a glass or two!”



He raises his glass of whisky and the others all do the same. Everybody is smiling and grinning. The first day of the Bellforth Shoot Company is *obviously* a success.

The shooting party is relatively small. Two of them are younger, about thirty years old. They're investment bankers from the City, who are quite happy to pay £1,000 for the privilege of shooting a few ducks in the North East of England. On Sunday they'll race down the motorway back to London in their off-road 4-wheel drive cars, and in the office they'll tell their colleagues how marvellous Northumbria is and how they're thinking about buying a weekend *cottage* "up North", where they can relax for a day or two. The locals, they'll say, are all so friendly. Not particularly *bright*, but ready and willing to do a week's work for less than a bottle of champagne costs at Creevers. Creevers is the wine bar where the bankers celebrate on Friday evenings after playing around on the *Stock Exchange* and making a million or two.

There are a few relatives and family friends. Gordon, Lord Bellforth's son from his first marriage and *heir* to the *estate*, is always present at the shoots. He *runs* a public relations company in London. In fact, it's his idea to organize the shooting parties for his father. In this day and age, he says, you must *preserve* the past by *exploiting* the present. He's already thinking about how he can describe the present scene in an advertising brochure. "Sun, good company, faithful dogs, plenty of ducks, woods, an old *manor* house, etc. etc." His good friend, David Barrington-Jones, is also present. It's his first visit to the Bellforth *estate*. He and Gordon went to the same school, Gosling College, one of the best independent schools in Britain. David comes from a well-established family in Cheshire. He's the managing director of Tingworth, a traditional firm that specializes in English *pottery*. Some people say



that he's worth at least £200 million. Like Gordon, he is aged 35, unmarried, and simply having fun. Life has so much to offer!

ÜBUNG 2 Übung 2: Welches Wort ist das „schwarze Schaf“? Unterstreichen Sie das nicht in die Reihe passende Wort!

- 1 awful, fine, marvellous, perfect
2. table, coffee, whisky, water
3. duck, dog, gamekeeper, horse
4. day, afternoon, motorway, week
5. family, stranger, friend, relative
6. pond, wood, valley, wine bar
- 7 organize, weekend, specialize, fly

As the shooting party chatter and drink coffee and whisky, George Macey, the *gamekeeper* and the real Master of Ceremonies, orders the local men to put the *booty* in a Landrover and deliver it to the kitchens.

“Jim, Jim Hardcastle! Be careful with those ducks. The gentlemen will have the breasts, but there's a good soup left in all of them. And that's for us, you know!”

Jim Hardcastle, the head *beater*, a middle-aged *fellow* from the local village, turns to Macey.

“Aye,” he says. “The gentlemen always get the breasts. Nothing wrong with that, Mr Macey.”

He grins and makes a rather obscene gesture. The *gamekeeper* laughs and *pretends* to *cuff* Hardcastle *round the ear*. He likes his head *beater*. They work well together, and if Gordon's plans are *successful*, there'll be plenty of work in the future. There's very little industry in the area nowadays and unemployment is high. For a