

HELENA MARCHMONT



**BUNBURY**  
A COSY MYSTERY SERIES



A TASTE OF MURDER



interest in me whatsoever. Edith, who is no ordinary barmaid, but mother of the owner of The Drunken Horse and seventy if she's a day, has no romantic interest in me whatsoever. Following so far?"

Oscar gave a grunt that could have meant anything.

"Carlotta is happily married to the owner of The Drunken Horse and has no romantic interest in me whatsoever. She is only occasionally tempestuous, generally when her mother-in-law Edith describes her fine Italian cooking as 'foreign muck' but gobbles it up all the same."

"Ah yes," said Oscar. "After a good dinner, one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations. But you're suspiciously silent about the tree hugger."

Alfie felt vaguely cheered that Oscar was prepared to joke about his love life. He

wouldn't have dreamed of it only a few months ago, when Alfie was helpless with grief. Oscar must think he was better. He wasn't; he was just better at concealing it. But Oscar's flippant banter was a welcome distraction.

"I'm silent because there's nothing to tell. Edith has unilaterally decided that Betty Thorndike is my girlfriend, purely because I've been going to her Green Party meetings. Ms Thorndike, incidentally, hails from Washington DC, has enough metropolitan sophistication for both of us, and has no romantic interest in me whatsoever."

"They may not be interested in you, but which of the ladies makes your heart beat faster?"

"No contest," said Alfie. "Edith, the finest cook in England. In fact, I must go. You get on with doing whatever it is metropolitan

sophisticates do on Sunday – I'm meeting Liz and Marge in The Horse for the best Sunday lunch in five counties.”

## 2. §UNDAY LUNGH

Alfie took the packet of chia seeds with him and handed it over to Liz and Marge who had already commandeered a table in the crowded pub.

Marge peered at it gloomily. “Oh,” she said. “That’s not what I was hoping for.”

Alfie sat down opposite her. “They’re a superfood,” he said. “Full of protein, fibre and good fats. You can put them on your cornflakes or in smoothies.”

“I know what chia seeds are, thank you,” she said tartly. “But we had a bet on at the post office. I thought it was wild rice and Liz

thought it was macadamia nuts. That's 50p I'll never see again."

"I don't think anybody guessed chia seeds," said Liz. "The money can go in the charity box."

Alfie stared at them. "Sorry, there was a sweepstake on the contents of Oscar's parcel?"

"There always is," said Marge. "Ever since Dorothy said: 'I bet it's lemongrass,' and it was. Tell you what, Alfie, next time get Oscar to tell you in advance what he's sending, and I'll split the winnings with you."

Liz gave a warning cough. "Marge, dear, remember the rules. Anyone talking to Alfie about the parcels is immediately disqualified."

Marge patted Alfie's hand. "In that case, don't say a word. Text me," she said. "And you can tell Oscar to stop being so rude when