

# DEAD AGAINST IT



**Katie Gray**

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by

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# **Acknowledgements**

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## **About the Author**



Katie has always enjoyed writing, although mostly just for pleasure. A few years ago she joined a writing group, and shortly after wrote a memoir - intended mainly for her grandchildren (for when they were a little older). She entered a number of writing competitions and was shortlisted a few times, and wrote some children's stories, once again for her grandchildren.

This cosy crime novel series resulted from an idea of her husband's.

Her books are not meant to be other than entertaining - the events are mostly improbable, highly unlikely and thoroughly implausible.

## **Chapter One**

It was all very well saying “we’re moving to the country”, but so far we’d looked at estate agents details until our eyes ached, and nowhere did we see the house for us.

This had been going on for weeks and I was getting sick of it. In fact yesterday, I’d been ready to throw in the towel.

“Let’s just stay here,” I said to my husband Jack. “If I have to look at one more set of pictures and dimensions, or read one more screed eulogising a house, its surroundings, improvements, refurbishments, blah de blah de blah...I’ll throw a real wobbly.”

He studied me for a while.

“O.K. Pippys my love, if that’s how you feel, so be it.”

So I studied him for a while. “Alright, let’s have one more go then. We’ll do it properly and drive into say, Buckinghamshire, ‘cos we know a bit about it, and give it our best shot.”

We beamed at each other. “Early up and off?” Jack asked. I nodded.

So, there we were on the road at what felt to me like dawn’s crack (half past eight in fact), hoping that today was going to be the day we found our dream home.

By some miracle the motorway traffic was fairly light, and when we finally hit the local roads most of the traffic lights were green. This could be a good sign, I told myself, not really believing it. Still I hung in for Jack’s sake if nothing else.

We pitched up at a likely looking agent with the name Studley and Studley emblazoned on the fascia, around an

hour later. The man and woman sitting behind their desks looked up. "May I be of help?" this from the woman, a mature blonde in a severe navy blue suit.

"We'd like to talk about houses in the surrounding areas," Jack was all charm. I stood looking glum I'm quite sure.

"Do sit down and I'll look out some details..."

"No, no," We chorused. "We've seen details until we're dizzy," I said quickly. "Let us tell you what we're looking for then you tell us what you've got." If anything, I thought.

It took about quarter of an hour. We described our dream home, and Miriam (that was the woman's name) produced a small sheaf of possibilities.

A couple of them looked reasonable, so we decided to make appointments there and then. The houses were within easy reach of each other. One was older needing - so the details said - "a little updating". My spirits sank. The other was about ten years old and "in immaculate order" - my spirits rose again.

Armed with directions after Miriam had made a phone call, we set off for the property needing the work as a starter.

"If it's not too bad we could get it sorted while we're living there," Jack said - a bit optimistically I thought. "I mean the surroundings sound quite decent, it's not overpriced, and we may be able to beat them down depending on what has to be done."

I wasn't too sure. When we were first together and bought our current home, a flat in a converted Edwardian house, it too had required "a little updating". It took two years and a small fortune, and if I hadn't loved him so much I would have cheerfully strangled my husband. He insisted on

keeping as many original features as possible, while at the same time having all the latest innovations. Admittedly he was mostly right. We ended up with a beautiful home that anyone would have been delighted to live in.

As we pulled up outside the house my spirits sank again. From the front it looked sad and run down. There were weeds the size of small bushes beneath the bay window, and around the front door which was in sore need of a lick (or more) of paint, a trailing creeper threatened to invade the letter box.

“Oh dear,” Jack murmured. We sat there just staring. At last we looked at each other shrugged and climbed out of the car.

The front path matched the house. It must have once been crazy paving, but now resembled a stretch of green interspersed with bits of stone. Close to, the front door looked even worse. It’s going to take more than a paint job to fix that I thought.

We rang the doorbell, then knocked to be on the safe side. Jack was doing his Fred Astaire impersonation with his feet. He always does that when he’s uneasy.

After a few minutes the door creaked open. Oh lor’ I thought, this reminds me of the Bates motel in “Psycho”.

Surprisingly, we were greeted by a good looking man of around fifty.

“Mr. and Mrs. Standage isn’t it? Do come in. I’m Charles Evans. We’re in a bit of a mess, what with packing up and clearing out and all that.”

The house was even worse than I’d expected. Dark paint on the skirtings and bannisters, and yellowing cream paint on every wall in sight.

“This was my parents’ house. They lived here for nearly fifty years. When my father died a year ago my mother moved into a care home. I’ve been living abroad for the last ten years, and I’d no idea just how serious things had become, as I didn’t come back that regularly. The house is sound enough, just needs updating. With some imagination it could be as lovely as I remember it from years ago.”

He was talking too much, as if trying to justify what I could see was a bad case of neglect. Jack walked around peering through doorways and not saying a word.

The kitchen looked like something out of a Grimm’s fairytale, and stuck on the back of what I thought must be the dining room was a broken down conservatory. Several panes of glass were missing and a bird had made its nest up in one corner.

“Mr. Evans,” Jack said. Oh thank heavens I thought, he’s going to say it’s not what we’re looking for. But he went on, “Could we see upstairs? Get a feel for the size of the house.”

“You’re welcome. I haven’t really looked around up there, just a cursory glance as you might say.” *You* might say I thought. The bannister looked slightly rickety, so I tried not to touch it as we climbed up to the first floor.

There were four bedrooms according to the details, two at the front. To be fair they were a decent size, even with all the big old fashioned furniture in there. Jack wandered about the rooms whistling soundlessly. He’s visualising, I thought. I on the other hand could only visualise getting out, soonest.

We ended up in one of the equally decent sized back bedrooms. There was a door in one wall which was presumably a cupboard of some sort. I opened the door



out of mild curiosity and the shock almost took my breath away.

“J..J..Jack,” I squeaked, “Jack come here.” He crossed the room and peered over my shoulder.

“Oh, for God’s sake Pippy. Not again?”

Lying propped up in the corner of the cupboard was a skeleton, wearing the tattered rags that could have once been a dress!