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## The Secret Notebook

by Sho Botham

I make notes in my notebook. I make notes about people. Everyone is very much alike, really. But fortunately, they don't realise it. They think they are unique. But I know they're not.

Take old Mrs Frobisher along at number 97. She had a brilliant career in the city but look at her now. She spends her days in the garden, chatting to people over the hedge and reading the paper. Okay, she might be reading the Financial Times and her neighbour, Nigel is reading the Daily Sport, but they are both reading a paper.

The twins in Old Road are another example. They worked together all their lives modelling. Being tall and slender in duplicate gave them lots of work and some say it was a unique feature. But truly, everyone just hired two models instead of one. It would have been cheaper on photo shoots to just photoshop a duplicate into the shot. So, nothing really unique here.

Everyone is used to me writing in my notebook. I have been doing it for years, for decades. No one ever asks what I am writing down or why I never run out of paper. They don't know that I do run out of paper but my notebook is really just a tatty cover.

I replace the paper regularly. I like my old tatty cover and don't see any need to replace it. It gives my note-taking some gravitas.

What none of the villagers have seen is my other notebook. The one that I use for important notes – copying important things from my tatty everyday notebook into my, well, secret notebook. It is kept in my safe place. A secret drawer in an old mahogany desk. You need to kneel on the floor in front of the desk and reach right to the back under the top to release the secret drawer. All that is in the drawer, is my secret notebook and the secrets it contains.

Once a year, I have an annual tot up of the total number of secrets in my secret notebook. At the last count, I had details of 13 affairs in the village, five swinger parties, together with the names of all attendees and, what I'm most proud about - two murders. The village don't know yet that these two suicides were actually murders. They will find out when someone opens my Secret Notebook that I'm leaving to the village in my will. Then they will discover what really goes on in their country village, behind the wisteria façade and afternoon teas.

It's a shame that I won't be around to see the looks on faces when they discover that the village note-taker kept these village secrets to herself for so many years. I know they will be surprised to discover that my other talent lay in committing the perfect murder. Not once, but twice.