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Friend of the Devil

Written by Peter Robinson

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PETER ROBINSON

Friend of the Devil



HODDER

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To Dominick Abel, my agent, with thanks.

I

She might have been staring out to sea, at the blurred line where the grey water meets the grey sky. The same salt wind that rushed the waves to shore lifted a lock of her dry hair and let it fall against her cheek. But she felt nothing; she just sat there, her expressionless face pale and puffy, clouded black eyes wide. A flock of seagulls quarrelled over a shoal of fish they had spotted close to shore. One swooped low and hovered over the still shape at the cliff edge, then squawked and headed back to join the fray. Far out to sea, a freighter bound for Norway formed a red smudge on the horizon. Another seagull flew closer to the woman, perhaps attracted by the movement of her hair in the wind. A few moments later, the rest of the flock, tired of the squabble over fish, started to circle her. Finally, one settled on her shoulder in a grotesque parody of Long John Silver's parrot. Still, she didn't move. Cocking its head, it looked around in all directions, like a guilty schoolboy, then plunged its beak into her ear.

Sunday mornings were hardly sacrosanct to Detective Chief Inspector Alan Banks. After all, he didn't go to church, and he rarely awoke with such a bad hangover

that it was painful to move or speak. In fact, the previous evening he had watched *The Black Dahlia* on DVD and had drunk two glasses of Tesco's Finest Chilean cabernet with his reheated *pizza funghi*. But he appreciated a lie-in and an hour or two's peace with the newspapers as much as the next man. This afternoon, he planned to phone his mother and wish her a happy Mother's Day, then listen to some of the Shostakovich string quartets he had recently purchased from iTunes and carry on reading Tony Judt's *Postwar*. He found that he read far less fiction these days: he felt a new hunger to understand, from a different perspective, the world in which he had grown up. Novels were all well and good for giving you a flavour of the times, but he needed facts and interpretations, the big picture.

That Sunday, the third in March, such luxury was not to be. It started innocently enough, as such momentous sequences of events often do, at about eight thirty, with a phone call from Detective Sergeant Kevin Templeton, who was on duty in the Western Area Major Crimes squad room that weekend.

'Guv, it's me. DS Templeton.'

Banks felt a twinge of distaste. He didn't like Templeton, would be happy when his transfer finally came through. There were times when he tried to tell himself it was because Templeton was too much like him, but that wasn't the case. Templeton didn't only cut corners; he trampled on far too many people's feelings and, worse, he seemed to enjoy it. 'What is it?' Banks grunted. 'It had better be good.'

‘It’s good, sir. You’ll like it.’

Banks could hear traces of obsequious excitement in Templeton’s voice. Since their last run-in, the young DS had tried to ingratiate himself in various ways, but this kind of phoney, breathless deference was too Uriah Heep for Banks’s liking. ‘Why don’t you just tell me?’ he said. ‘Do I need to get dressed?’ He held the phone away from his ear as Templeton laughed.

‘I think you should, sir, and make your way down to Taylor’s Yard as soon as you can.’

Taylor’s Yard, Banks knew, was one of the narrow passages that led into the Maze, which riddled the south side of the town centre behind Eastvale’s market square. It was called a ‘yard’ not because it resembled a square or a garden but because some bright spark had once remarked that it wasn’t much more than a yard wide. ‘And what will I find there?’ he asked.

‘Body of a young woman,’ said Templeton. ‘I’ve checked it out. In fact, I’m there now.’

‘You didn’t—’

‘I didn’t touch anything, sir. And, between us, PC Forsythe and me have got the area taped off and sent for the doctor.’

‘Good.’ Banks pushed aside the *Sunday Times* crossword he had hardly started and looked longingly at his still-steaming cup of black coffee. ‘Have you called the super?’

‘Not yet, sir. I thought I’d wait till you’d had a butcher’s. No sense in jumping the gun.’

‘All right,’ said Banks. Detective Superintendent Catherine Gervaise was probably enjoying a lie-in

after a late night out to see *Orfeo* at Opera North in Leeds. Banks had seen it on Thursday with his daughter Tracy and enjoyed it very much. He wasn't sure whether Tracy had. She seemed to have turned in on herself these days. 'I'll be there in half an hour,' he said. 'Three-quarters at the most. Ring DI Cabbot and DS Hatchley. And get DC Jackman there, too.'

'DI Cabbot's still on loan to Eastern, sir.'

'Of course. Damn.' If this was a murder, Banks would have liked Annie's help. They might have problems on a personal level, but they still worked well as a team.

Banks went upstairs, showered and dressed quickly. Then, back in the kitchen, he filled his travel-mug with coffee to drink on the way, making sure the top was pressed down tight. More than once he'd had a nasty accident with a coffee mug. He turned everything off, locked up and headed for the car.

He was driving his brother's Porsche. Though he still didn't feel especially comfortable in such a luxury vehicle, he was finding he liked it better each day. Not so long ago he had thought of giving it to his son, Brian, or to Tracy, and that idea still held some appeal. The problem was that he didn't want to make one feel left out or less loved, so the choice was proving to be a dilemma. Brian's band had gone through a change of personnel recently, and he was rehearsing with some new musicians. Tracy's exam results had been a disappointment to her, though not to Banks, and she was passing her time rather miserably working in a bookshop in Leeds and sharing a house in Headingley with

some old student friends. So who deserved a Porsche? He could hardly cut it in half.

Outside, Banks found it had turned windy and cool, so he went back to switch his sports jacket for his zip-up leather jacket. If he was going to be standing around in the back alleys of Eastvale while the SOCOs, the photographer and the police surgeon did their stuff, he might as well stay as warm as possible. Once snug in the car, he started the engine and set off through Gratly, down the hill to Helmathorpe and on to the Eastvale road. He plugged his iPod into the adaptor, on shuffle, and Ray Davies's 'All She Wrote' came on, a song he particularly liked, especially the line about the big Australian barmaid. That would do for a Sunday-morning drive to a crime scene, he thought. It would do just fine.

Gilbert Downie didn't particularly enjoy walking the dog. He did it, but it was a chore. The whole thing was one of those typical family decisions gone wrong. His daughter Kylie had wanted a puppy, had talked about nothing else since she was eight. Finally, Gilbert and Brenda had given in and bought her one for her birthday, though Brenda wasn't especially fond of dogs, and they sometimes made her sneeze. A few years later, Kylie had lost interest and moved on to boys and pop music, so it was now left to Gilbert to take care of Hagrid.

That Sunday morning, the weather was looking particularly nasty, but Gilbert knew he shouldn't complain. At least Hagrid gave him an excuse to get out of

the house while Brenda and Kylie, now fourteen, had their usual Sunday-morning row about where Kylie'd been and what she'd been doing out so late on Saturday night. There weren't any decent walks near the village – at least, none that he wasn't sick to death of – and he liked the sea, so he drove the short distance to the coast. It was a bleak and lonely stretch, but he enjoyed it that way. And he would have it all to himself. More and more, these days, he preferred his own company, his own thoughts. He wondered if it was something to do with getting old, but he was only forty-six. That hardly qualified as old, except to Kylie and her deadbeat friends.

Gilbert pulled up the collar of his waxed jacket and shivered as the damp wind hit him. The grass was slippery from a previous shower. Hagrid didn't seem to mind. In no time he was off, sniffing clumps of grass and shrubbery, Gilbert ambling behind, hands in pockets, glancing out at the choppy water and wondering what it must have been like to go out on the whaling ships from Whitby. The crews were gone for months at a time, the women waiting at home, walking along West Cliff day after day watching for a sail and hoping to see the jawbone of a whale nailed to the mast, a sign that everyone was safe.

Then Gilbert saw a distant figure sitting at the cliff edge. Hagrid, ever gregarious, dashed towards it. The odd thing, as far as Gilbert was concerned, was that a seagull was perched on each shoulder. The scene reminded him of an old woman he had once seen on a park bench, absolutely covered with the pigeons she

was feeding. When Hagrid got close enough and barked, the seagulls launched themselves languidly and floated out over the sea, making it clear from their close circling and backward glances that this was only a temporary setback. Gilbert fancied they squawked in mockery that mere earth-bound animals, like him and Hagrid, couldn't follow where they went.

Hagrid lost interest and edged towards some bushes away from the path, probably scenting a rabbit, and Gilbert walked towards the immobile figure to see if he could offer any assistance. It was a woman, he realised. At least, something about the way she sat and the hair curling over her collar indicated that she was. He called but got no response. Then he saw that she was sitting in a wheelchair, wrapped in a blanket, her head propped up by something. Perhaps she couldn't move. There was nothing unusual about a woman in a wheelchair around Larborough Head – the care home wasn't far away, and relatives occasionally came and took parents or grandparents for walks along the coast – but what on earth was she doing there all by herself, especially on Mother's Day, abandoned in such a precarious position? It wouldn't take much for the chair to slip over the edge, just a change in the wind. Where the hell was her nurse or relative?

When he arrived at the figure, Gilbert was struck almost simultaneously by two odd things. The first, bloodless scratches around her ears, he noticed because he approached her from behind, and when he moved round to the front, he saw the second: the

upper half of her body, including the blanket, from her neck to her upper thighs, was absolutely drenched in blood. Before he looked into her eyes, he knew that she was dead.

Holding back the bitter-tasting bile that surged into his throat, Gilbert whistled for Hagrid and started to run back to the car. He knew from experience that his mobile wouldn't get a signal out here, and that he had to drive at least a couple of miles inland before calling the police. He didn't want to leave her just sitting there for the gulls to peck at, but what else could he do? As if reading his mind, two of the boldest gulls drifted back towards the still figure as soon as Gilbert turned his back and ran.

Banks unplugged the iPod and stuck it in his pocket halfway through Tom Waits's 'Lowdown' and climbed out of the warm Porsche into the wind, which now seemed to be whipping sleet in his direction. The market square was busy with locals in their Sunday best going to the Norman church in the centre, the women holding their hats against the wind, and the bells were ringing as if all was well with the world. One or two sightseers, however, had gathered around the taped-off entrance to Taylor's Yard. On one corner stood a pub called the Fountain, and on the other Randall's leather-goods shop. Between them, the narrow, cobbled street led into the Maze, that labyrinth of ginnels, snickets, tiny squares, courtyards, nooks and crannies and small warehouses that had remained unchanged since the eighteenth century.

Short of knocking the whole lot down and starting again, there was nothing much anyone could do with the cramped spaces and awkward locations other than use them for storage or let them lie empty. The alleys weren't really a short-cut to anywhere, though if you knew your way you could come out into the car park above the terraced gardens that sloped down to the river below Eastvale Castle. Apart from a row of four tiny occupied cottages near the car-park end, the buildings were mostly uninhabitable, even to squatters, but as they were listed, they couldn't be knocked down, so the Maze stayed as it was: a handy hideaway for a quick knee-trembler, a hit of crystal meth or skunk weed before a night on the town.

The street-cleaners had complained to the police more than once about having to pick up needles, roaches, used condoms and plastic bags of glue, especially at the back of the Bar None club or down Taylor's Yard from the Fountain, but even though the Maze was just across the square from the police station, they couldn't police it twenty-four hours a day. DC Rickerd and his Community Support officers, the 'plastic policemen', as the townsfolk called them, did the best they could, but it wasn't enough. People kept away from the Maze after dark. Most law-abiding folks had no reason to go there, anyway. There were even rumours that it was haunted, that people had got lost in there and never found their way out.

Banks took his protective clothing from the boot of the car, signed the log for the constable on guard duty and ducked under the blue and white police tape. At

least the sleet barely penetrated the Maze: the buildings were so high and close, like the Shambles in York, that they blocked out the sky, except for a narrow grey strip. If anyone had lived on the upper floors, they could easily have reached out and shaken hands with their neighbours across the street. The blocks of limestone from which the Maze was built were dark from the earlier rain, and a hint of peat smoke drifted through the air from the distant cottages. It made Banks think of Laphroaig, and he wondered if he might regain his taste for Islay malt whisky before long. The wind whistled and moaned, changing pitch, volume and timbre, like breath blown through a woodwind instrument. The Maze was a stonewind, though, Banks reckoned.

As promised, DS Kevin Templeton was keeping watch on the building in which the body had been found, where Taylor's Yard crossed Cutpurse Wynde. It wasn't much more than an outbuilding, a stone-built shed, used for storing swatches and remnants by Joseph Randall, the owner of the leather-goods shop. The frontage was limestone, and there were no windows. Usually, if a building did have any ground-floor windows in the Maze, they were boarded up.

Templeton was his usual suave self, gelled black hair, expensive tan chinos, damp around the knees, and a shiny leather jacket slick with rain. His eyes were bloodshot from the previous night's excess, and Banks imagined him at a rave or something, twitching away to a techno-pop beat, or some DJ mixing Elvis with Eminem. Whether Templeton took drugs or not, Banks

wasn't sure. He had noticed no evidence, but he had been keeping an eye on him ever since the overambitious DS had attempted to ingratiate himself as the new super's toady. That had backfired, with a little help from Banks and Annie, but it hardly seemed to have dampened Templeton's ardour for advancement, or his apparent taste for arse-licking. The man wasn't a team-player; that was for certain. Now all they could do was keep their fingers crossed and hope he got sent as far as Cornwall or Hampshire and put on traffic duty.

'What have we got?' Banks asked.

'Doc Burns is in with her now,' Templeton answered.

'SOCOs?'

'On their way.'

'Then we'd better have a look before the little Hitlers take over.'

Templeton grinned. 'It's not very pretty in there.'

Banks stared at him. In the ranks of pointless comments he had heard in his time it didn't rate particularly high, but it had its place. Templeton shrugged, didn't even have the awareness to be embarrassed. Banks wondered if that was a psychopath's trait, along the lines of lack of conscience, no sense of humour and zero human empathy.

Kitted out in protective overalls and gloves, he pushed the green wooden door. It creaked on rusty hinges as it opened to reveal Dr Burns kneeling over a body in the light of a naked bulb. For a split second Banks was reminded of an image from a film he had

seen, something to do with Jack the Ripper bending over one of his victims. Well, the Maze certainly had its similarities to the Ripper's Whitechapel, but Banks hoped that was where the comparison ended.

He turned back to Templeton. 'Do you know whether the door was locked before the girl was put in there?'

'Hard to say, Guv. The wood's so old and rotten, a quick, hard shove would have done for it. It could have been broken for ages.'

Banks turned back to the storeroom. The first thing he noticed, other than the dust, whitewashed walls and spider-webs, was the mingled smell of leather, vomit and blood, the latter faint, a distant sweet metallic undertone, but nevertheless discernible. The victim was lying on a pile of leather scraps and remnants. From what Banks could see in the dim light, they were of various colours – green, blue, red, brown – and mostly triangular or rectangular. Banks picked one up. It was very soft, pliable leather that might be useful as an elbow-patch, say, or a change purse.

Dr Burns glanced over his shoulder and moved back to stand beside Banks. The room was just high enough for them both to stand upright. 'Ah, Alan. I've disturbed things as little as possible. I know what the SOCOs are like.'

Banks knew, too. The scenes-of-crime officers were very territorial about their work, and woe betide anyone who got in their way, DCI or not. 'Have you had a chance to determine cause of death?' he asked.

'Looks like manual strangulation to me, unless there

are any hidden causes.’ Burns stooped and carefully lifted a strand of blonde hair, gesturing towards the dark bruising under the girl’s chin and ear.

From what Banks could see, she was young, no older than his daughter Tracy. She was wearing a green top and a white miniskirt with a broad pink plastic belt covered with silver glitter. The skirt had been hitched up even higher than it was already to expose her upper thighs. The body looked posed. She lay on her left side, legs scissored, as if she were running in her sleep. Something glistened on the pale flesh lower down, just above the knee, and Banks thought it might be semen. If so, there was a good chance of DNA. Her red knickers, skimpy as string, had snagged on her left ankle. She was wearing black patent-leather high-heels and a silver chain round her right ankle. Just above it, he saw a tattoo of a tiny butterfly. Her top had been pushed up to expose the profile of her small pale breasts and puffy nipples, and her eyes were open, staring at the far wall. Two or three of the leather remnants protruded from her mouth.

‘Pretty young thing,’ said Burns. ‘Damn shame.’

‘Is that all she was wearing? It’s bloody freezing.’

‘Kids today. You must have seen them.’

Banks had. Groups of girls, running around town from pub to pub in the middle of winter wearing thin sleeveless tops and short skirts. No tights. He had always assumed it was because they wanted to show off their bodies, but perhaps it was a practical matter. It made things easier when you were on the move: no clutter, nothing to remember or forget, except your

handbag. It made coming and going from places easy, and perhaps it was a mark of youth too, indifference to the cold, thumbing one's nose at the elements. 'She wouldn't have ended up in that position naturally, would she?' he asked.

'Not if she was raped and strangled,' said Burns. 'She would have been on her back with her legs open, but there's no sign of lividity there.'

'So he moved her when he'd finished, put her on her side, turned her face away, made her appear a bit more decent, as if she was sleeping. Perhaps he cleaned her up, too.'

'Well, if he did, he missed something, didn't he?' said Burns, pointing to the glistening spot.

The doctor moved closer to her again, bumping his head against the lightbulb, which swung back and forth. In the corner, beside the door, Banks glimpsed something catching the light. There, on the dusty stone floor, lay a gold lamé bag with a thin shoulder-strap. Carefully, with gloved hands, he picked it up and opened it. Lipstick, compact with mirror, three condoms, four Benson & Hedges, purple Bic cigarette-lighter and a book of matches from the Duck and Drake, facial tissues, paracetamol, nail file and clipper, a tampon, cheap turquoise gel pen, iPod Shuffle in a pink skin, driving licence, an unmarked phial with four white pills in it – Ecstasy, each stamped with a crown – a small purse with twenty pounds in notes and sixty-five pence in coins. Finally, a small address book with a William Morris cover and, in the front, a name, Hayley Daniels, the same name that

appeared with the photograph on the driving licence, and an address in Swainshead, a village about thirty miles west of Eastvale.

Banks scribbled the details in his notebook and put everything back in the handbag for the SOCOs. He called Kevin Templeton into the doorway and told him to phone the local police station in Swainshead and have the constable there break the news to the girl's parents. Arrangements would be made for them to come to Eastvale to identify the body. No more than the necessary details to be given.

Then he glanced back at the girl's twisted body. 'Anything on the sexual element?' he asked Burns. 'Apart from the obvious.'

'Nothing certain yet, but it looks as if she's been brutally raped. Vaginal and anal. Dr Wallace will be able to tell you more when she gets her on the table. One odd thing.'

'Yes.'

'She's been shaved. Down there.'

'The killer?'

'It's possible, I suppose. But some girls do it . . . I mean, so I've heard. And there's a tattoo, where the hair would have been. You can't see it well from this position, and I don't want to disturb the body any more than necessary until the SOCOs have had their turn. But it would seem that maybe she had it done some time ago. You can see the tattoo on her ankle, too.'

'Yes.'

Dr Burns was the local police surgeon and, as such,

his job usually stopped with attending the scene, declaring death and releasing the body for the coroner. After that Dr Wallace, the new Home Office pathologist, usually performed the post-mortem. Banks had found Burns useful in the past, though. Like all doctors, he didn't like to commit himself, but he could be led into a speculation or two on cause and time of death, which usually proved accurate enough to save Banks some time. That was what he asked about next.

Burns checked his watch. 'It's half past nine now,' he said. 'The cold would slow down rigor, and she seems young and healthy. I mean . . . you know.'

Banks knew. Over the years he had got used to dead people being described as 'in good health'.

'I'm only guessing, of course,' Burns went on, 'but I'd say after midnight, maybe as late as two in the morning, but not likely later than that.'

'Was she killed here?'

'It seems that way,' said Burns.

Banks scanned the room. 'It's a pretty isolated spot,' he said. 'Insulated, too. Thick walls. I doubt anybody would hear anything, if there were anything to hear.' He looked at the swatches of leather in the girl's mouth. 'Even if she got off one good scream to start with, that would soon have silenced her.'

Burns said nothing. He took out his notebook and made a number of jottings, which Banks assumed to be time, temperature, position of body and suchlike. They needed the photographer here soon. The SOCOs would have to wait until he had finished, of course, but they wouldn't like it. They'd be straining at

their chains like a pack of Dobermanns who hadn't had a lump of meat in a month.

The hinges creaked and Peter Darby, the police photographer, arrived with his old Pentax and new digital videocam. The room was small so Banks and Burns edged out and left him to it. Banks felt an urge for a cigarette. He didn't know why, as nobody around him was smoking. Perhaps it was the Benson & Hedges he had seen in the victim's handbag. Or the rain that had now replaced the sleet. He had a memory of a cigarette tasting so good in the rain once, when he had been a very young smoker, and it had stuck with him. He let go of the thought, and the urge faded. From the church in the market square he thought he could hear the congregation singing 'There Is A Green Hill Far Away', which reminded him that Easter was coming up in a few weeks.

'She'd also been sick,' Dr Burns added. 'I don't know if it's significant, but I noticed traces of vomit both inside and on the wall outside.'

'Yes,' said Banks. 'I smelled it, too. There's also a chance it could have been the killer's. Not everyone has the stomach for this sort of thing, thank God. I'll make sure the SOCOs pay close attention. Thanks, Doc.'

Burns nodded and walked away.

Templeton came over and shifted from foot to foot, rubbing his hands. 'Juicy one, isn't it, Guv?' he said. 'Just like I told you.'

Banks closed his eyes, turned his head up to the strip of grey sky, felt a few drops of rain on his eyelids,

and sighed. 'It's a dead girl, Kev,' he said. 'Raped and strangled. Now, I appreciate a bit of crime-scene humour as much as the next copper, but can you just hold back your glee for a while longer, do you think?'

'Sorry, Guv,' said Templeton, his tone indicating that he had absolutely no idea what he had to apologise for.

'And we'll want to interview all local sex offenders, everyone on the books, and those we think should be.'

'Yes, Guv.'

'And ring the super,' Banks said. 'She'll have to know.'

Templeton reached for his mobile.

Banks enjoyed the quiet for a moment, the music of the wind, water dripping from a gutter somewhere, and the distant choir singing. It was so long since he had been to church. Then he heard new sounds and spotted DC Winsome Jackman and DS Stefan Nowak, crime scene co-ordinator, bustling down Taylor's Yard with a gaggle of SOCOs kitted out like spacemen. Soon they would have the area as brightly lit as a film studio, and their various tools and gadgets would be sucking up or illuminating tiny traces of the most unusual and practically invisible substances. Everything would be carefully bagged, labelled and stored to be used in the event of a court case down the line, and some might even be of use in tracking down the girl's killer. If they got lucky, they would find DNA, and it would match a sample they already had in the DNA National Database. *If.*

Banks welcomed Nowak and explained what he

knew of the situation. Nowak had a few words with his team, and when Darby came out, they went in. They'd be a while setting up and getting started, Nowak explained, and they wanted everyone out of their way. Banks checked the time. Pity, he thought, that with the liberal new opening hours, none of the local pubs extended them to ten o'clock on a Sunday morning.

Banks sent Winsome off to Swainshead to interview the girl's parents, then bring them to Eastvale General Infirmary to identify the body. He needed to know as much as he could find out about where the girl had been last night, and with whom. There was a lot to set in motion, and the sooner the better. Leads had a habit of vanishing very quickly.

After about three-quarters of an hour, Banks had another brief period of peace in which to assess the situation. By the look of her, the girl had been out on the town, most likely with a boyfriend or with a group of friends. They had to be tracked down and interviewed. Someone would have to get hold of all the closed-circuit television footage – most of the market square was covered, though there were blind spots. How had she ended up alone? Had she gone off with someone, or had the killer been lurking in the Maze, waiting for a victim? Why had she wandered in there alone? Unfortunately, there was no CCTV in the Maze itself.

A voice cut through his reverie. 'This had better be bloody important, DCI Banks. I've had to cut short my morning gallop and my son and his wife are expecting me for lunch.' And down the alley strutted the

diminutive but svelte and powerful figure of Detective Superintendent Catherine Gervaise, resplendent in jodhpurs, cap and boots, slapping her riding-crop lightly against her thigh as she approached.

Banks smiled. 'I must say, ma'am, you cut quite a dashing figure. Fancy a coffee? We can have a chat and leave DS Nowak to watch over things here.'

Had Banks imagined it or did Superintendent Gervaise actually blush at the compliment?

Somewhere in the distance, beyond the pain screaming in her head and the sound of the seagulls and church bells, DI Annie Cabbot could hear her mobile ringing. They don't really ring these days, she thought, as she strained towards consciousness. They have ringtones; they tinkle; they play tunes. Hers was playing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and it was driving her crazy. The phone salesman's little joke. She would have to learn how to change it. Just when she managed to half open an eye and reach for the bedside table, the sound stopped. Damn, she thought, as her hand reached into empty space. There *was* no bedside table. Where had the bloody thing gone? She had a moment of absolute panic, not knowing where, or even who, she was. She certainly wasn't at Mrs Barnaby's B and B where she should have been. Then she became aware of a warm heavy object resting on her hip.

When she'd got both her eyes open and looked around, she became immediately aware of three things: she was not in her own bed, hence no bedside table; she had a splitting headache; and the warm

heavy thing lying across her hip was a man's arm. Fortunately – or not, as the case might be – it was still attached to a man.

Piece by piece, like flipping through cards to make a moving picture, but with some missing, fragments of the previous evening came back to her. It was vague and fuzzy, and there were big gaps, but she did remember beer, loud music, dancing, fizzy blue drinks with umbrellas, flashing lights, a live band, people laughing, stumbling through winding, dimly lit streets up a long hill, a steep staircase . . . Then things got more blurred. Another drink or two, perhaps, drunken fumbblings and a tumble on to a bed. This bed. Gently Annie disengaged the arm. Its owner stirred and grumbled in his sleep but, thankfully, didn't awaken. Annie sat up and took stock.

She was naked. Her clothes lay strewn across the hardwood floor with the kind of carelessness that suggested desperate and wanton abandon, her black silk knickers hanging on the bed knob like some obscene sort of trophy. She snatched them off, swung to the side of the bed and slipped them on, then ran her hands through her tousled hair. She felt like shit. *Idiot*, she said to herself. *Idiot*.

She glanced at his body, where the sheet had slipped off. Short black hair sticking up here and there where he had slept on it, one lock over his right eye, a strong jaw, broad shoulders, a nice chest, not too hairy but masculine enough. Thank God he wasn't a colleague, someone from the station. She couldn't see what colour his eyes were because they were closed,

and it shamed her that she couldn't remember. He needed a shave, but not too many years ago he wouldn't have. How old was he? Twenty-two, twenty-three at the most, she guessed. And how old was she? Just turned forty. At least he wasn't married, not as far as she could tell from the appearance of the flat. It was usually the older ones, the married ones, she fell for.

With a sigh, she began to gather up the rest of her clothes and get dressed. The room was pleasant enough, with pale blue walls, a poster of a Modigliani nude, and a Venetian blind that didn't keep out much light. There was also a poster of some rock band she didn't recognise on the opposite wall. Worse, there was an electric guitar propped up beside a small amplifier. She remembered him telling her that he played in a band. Christ, had she really gone home with a musician? Look on the bright side, she told herself. At least it was the guitarist, not the drummer or the bass-player, as her old friend Jackie would have said, and especially not the saxophone-player. 'Never go with a sax-player, sweetie,' Jackie had advised her. 'The only thing he's thinking of is his next solo.' Still, what a cliché.

In the cold light of day, was he even younger than she'd thought? She checked him out again. No. At least twenty-two. Younger than Banks's rock-star son Brian, though. Perhaps it should make her feel good that someone so young and attractive had fancied her, that she still had such pulling power, but somehow it didn't; it made her feel like an old whore. Perfectly all right for older men and younger women – a man

would feel proud of himself – but not for her. She zipped up her jeans. Christ, they felt tight. She'd been putting on weight like nobody's business lately, and it didn't make her feel any better to see that little bulge of fat where her flat belly used to be. Time for more exercise and less ale.

Annie found her mobile in her shoulder-bag and checked the call. It was from the station. She didn't know if she could face work feeling the way she did. She took her bag with her into the bathroom and closed the door. She used the toilet first, then found some paracetamol in the cabinet above the sink, washed herself as best she could – was that what they called a 'whore's bath'? – and applied some make-up. He didn't have a shower, and she hadn't felt like undressing again and getting into the bath. Best just to leave. Find her car, answer the message, then go home, or what passed as home now, for a good long soak and self-flagellation. Write out a thousand times: 'I must not go home with strange young guitarists I meet in nightclubs.' At least she knew she had left her car somewhere near the club. She hadn't been stupid enough to drive. She'd had *some* sense, then. And she thought she could even remember which club they had ended up in.

The air in the bedroom smelled of stale smoke and worse, and Annie saw on a small table by the door an ashtray with cigarette butts and a couple of roaches. Beside it lay a small plastic bag of marijuana and her hoop earrings. God, had she had the presence of mind to take her earrings off, and yet she had smoked a

couple of joints and . . . Well, what else had she done? It didn't bear thinking about. She fumbled with the earrings and got them on.

He stirred as she opened the door, but only to pull the sheet up, wrap it around him and curl up like a child. Annie shut the door behind her and walked down the stairs to a strange new day in a strange place. She could smell the fresh sea air as soon as she got outside, feel the cold wind and hear the seagulls squealing. At least she had a warm jacket.

While she headed down the hill in the direction of the club to her car, she fumbled with her mobile and accessed her voicemail. She was finally rewarded by the stern voice of Detective Superintendent Brough from Eastern Area Headquarters telling her to get down to Larborough Head immediately. There'd been a murder and the locals needed her. Being on loan, she thought, ending the call, sometimes felt like being a whore. Then she realised she had had the same thought twice in the space of about half an hour, under different circumstances, and decided it was time to change metaphors. Not a whore at all, but an angel of mercy. That was what she was: Annie Cabbot, Angel of Mercy, at your service.

She found the purple Astra in the public car park beside the club, thinking for the hundredth time that it was about time she got a new car, consulted her AA roadmap and, with a crunch of gears, set off for Larborough Head, at the far northern edge of Eastern's territory.

At least the cafés in the market square were open. Banks chose one only three doors down from Taylor's Yard, on the upper level above the Age Concern shop, where he knew the coffee was good and strong, and sat down with Detective Superintendent Gervaise. She was quite attractive, he noticed, with the pert nose, blue eyes, Cupid's-bow lips and the slight glow the morning's exercise had given to her pale complexion. The faint scar beside her left eye was almost a mirror image of his own. She was probably a good ten years younger than him, which put her in her early forties. Once they had placed their orders, his for coffee, hers for a pot of Earl Grey, toasted teacakes for both, they got down to business.

'It looks like we've got a particularly nasty murder on our hands,' Banks said.

'And things have been so quiet lately,' said Gervaise. She laid her riding-crop on the table, took off her helmet, gave her head a shake and ran her hand over her short fair hair, which was flattened against her skull. 'Ever since that business with the rock group.' She gave Banks a look.

Even though she had given him the freedom he needed to solve his previous murder case, Banks knew that she had been unhappy with its conclusion. Banks had, too. But that couldn't be helped. Sometimes things just don't work out the way you hope they will. Banks moved on quickly, telling her what he had found out from DS Templeton and Dr Burns. 'The body was discovered at eight fifteen this morning by a Mr Joseph Randall, age fifty-five, of Hyacinth Walk.'

‘And what was he doing in the Maze at that time on a Sunday morning?’

‘He’s the owner of the leather-goods shop on the corner,’ Banks explained. ‘It’s his storeroom. He said he went in to search for some samples, found the lock broken and saw her lying there. Swore he didn’t touch anything. Said he backed out and ran straight across the square to the station.’

‘Do we believe him?’

‘He says he opened the storeroom door at eight fifteen, but one of the people in the market square told DS Templeton she saw Randall go into the Maze at ten past eight by the church clock, which is pretty accurate. She remembers because she was late for the service and glanced up to see the time. The desk sergeant logged the report from Randall at eight twenty-one.’

‘That’s eleven minutes.’ Gervaise pursed her lips. ‘Sounds rather thin,’ she said. ‘Where is he now?’

‘DS Templeton sent him home with a constable. Apparently Mr Randall was very upset.’

‘Hmm. Interview him yourself. Go in hard next time.’

‘Yes, ma’am,’ said Banks, making a doodle in his notebook. Ever one for stating the obvious was Gervaise. Still, it was best to let her think she was in control. Their order arrived. The coffee was as good as he remembered, and the teacakes had plenty of butter on them.

‘What was she doing in the Maze by herself?’ Gervaise asked.

‘That’s one thing we have to find out,’ said Banks. ‘But, for a start, we don’t know that she was by herself. She could have gone in with someone.’

‘To take drugs, perhaps?’

‘Perhaps. We found some pills in her handbag. Ecstasy. Or maybe she just got separated from her friends and someone lured her there with the promise of drugs? Still, you hardly need to hide away in the Maze to pop E. You can do it in any pub in town. She could have been taking a short-cut to the car park or the river.’

‘Did she have a car?’

‘We don’t know yet. She did have a driving licence.’

‘Follow it up.’

‘We will. She was probably drunk,’ Banks said. ‘Or tipsy anyway. There was a whiff of vomit in the store-room so she may have been sick, if it wasn’t our killer’s. Forensics should solve that one, anyway. She most likely wouldn’t have been thinking about safety, and I doubt there’s any great mystery as to how or why she came to be in the Maze alone. There are any number of possibilities. She could have had an argument with her boyfriend, for example, and run off.’

‘And someone was lying there in wait for her?’

‘Or the chance of someone like her. Which indicates it might be a killer who knows the habits of the locals on a Saturday night in Eastvale after closing time.’

‘Better round up the usual suspects, then. Local sex offenders, known clients of sex workers.’

‘It’s being done.’

‘Any idea where she’d been?’

‘Judging by the way she was dressed,’ Banks said, ‘it seems as if she’d been doing the rounds of the market-square pubs. Typical Saturday-night get-up. We’ll be canvassing all the pubs as soon as they open.’ He glanced at his watch. ‘Which won’t be long now.’

Gervaise squinted at him. ‘Not personally, I hope?’

‘Too much of a job for me, I’m afraid. Thought I’d put Detective Sergeant Hatchley in charge of it. He’s been housebound lately. Do him good to get out and about.’

‘Keep him on a tight leash, then,’ said Gervaise. ‘I don’t want him offending every bloody minority group we’ve got in town.’

‘He’s mellowed a lot.’

Gervaise gave him a disbelieving look. ‘Anything else?’ She dotted her mouth with a paper serviette after a couple of dainty nibbles of teacake.

‘I’ll get a couple of officers to work on reviewing all the CCTV footage we can find of the market square last night. A lot of the pubs have CCTV now, and I know the Bar None does, too. There should be plenty, and you know what the quality’s like, so it’ll take time, but we might find something. We’ll also conduct a thorough search of the Maze, adjacent buildings, the lot, and we’ll do a house-to-house of the immediate area. Trouble is, there are ways in and out that don’t show up on any CCTV cameras – the exit into the car park above the river gardens, for example.’

‘Surely there must be cameras in the car park?’

‘Yes, but not covering it from that angle. They’re

pointing the other way, *into* the car park *from* the alley. Easy to slip under them. It's only a snicket, and hardly anyone uses it. Most people use the Castle Road exit, which *is* covered. We'll try our luck, anyway.'

'Check them all out as best you can.'

Banks told her what Dr Burns had said about cause and approximate time of death.

'When will Dr Wallace be available to do the post-mortem?' she asked.

'Tomorrow morning, I should hope,' said Banks. Dr Glendenning had retired, 'to play golf', about a month ago, and Banks hadn't yet seen his successor at work since there hadn't been any suspicious deaths in that period. From what he had gathered in his brief meetings with her, she seemed to be a dedicated professional and efficient pathologist. 'The picture on the driving licence I found in the handbag matches the victim,' he added, 'and we've got an address from the flyleaf of her address book. Hayley Daniels. From Swainshead.'

'Reported missing?'

'Not yet.'

'So perhaps she wasn't expected home,' said Gervaise. 'Any idea how old she was?'

'Nineteen, according to the licence.'

'Who's following up?'

'DC Jackman's gone to Swainshead to talk to the parents. She ought to be arriving there about now.'

'Rather her than me,' said Gervaise.

Banks wondered if she had ever been given the job of breaking bad news to a victim's parents.

'I know what you're thinking,' Gervaise said, with a smile. 'You're thinking me, with all my nice upper-middle-class upbringing, university degrees, accelerated promotion and the rest, what would I know about it, aren't you?'

'Not at all,' said Banks, with a straight face.

'Liar.' Gervaise sipped some tea and stared at a spot just over his head. 'My first week as a probationary PC,' she said, 'I was working at Poole in Dorset, mostly making tea and coffee. Friday morning they found the body of an eleven-year-old schoolboy on a tract of wasteland at the edge of town. He'd been raped and beaten to death. Working-class family. Guess who they sent?'

Banks said nothing.

'Christ, I was sick to my stomach,' Gervaise said. 'Before I went out there. Really, physically sick. I was convinced I couldn't do it.'

'But you did?'

She looked Banks in the eye. 'Of course I did. And do you know what happened? The mother went berserk. Threw a plate of eggs, beans and chips at me. Cut my head open. I had to put the bloody handcuffs on to restrain her in the end. Temporarily, of course. She calmed down eventually. And I got ten stitches.' Gervaise shook her head. 'What a day.' She looked at her watch. 'I suppose I'd better ring my son and tell him lunch is off.'

Banks glanced out of the window. The wind was blowing harder, and the people coming out of church were having a difficult time keeping their hats on. He

thought of the body on the pile of leather. 'I suppose so,' he said. 'Today isn't looking too good so far, either.' Then he went to the counter to pay.

Swainshead, or 'the Head', as the locals called it, started with a triangular village green that split the main road at the T-junction with the Swainsdale road. Around the triangle were the church, the village hall and a few shops. This, Winsome knew, was called Lower Head, and was the part most frequently visited by tourists. The Daniels family lived in Upper Head, where the two branches of the road joined into one and separated two rows of stone cottages facing one another. Behind the cottages, on both sides, the pastures rose slowly, criss-crossed by dry-stone walls, and finally gave way to steep fells ending in moorland.

The area was so named because the source of the river Swain was to be found in the surrounding hills. It began as a mere puddle bubbling forth from the earth, overflowing into a thin trickle and gaining strength as it went, finally plunging over the edge of a hanging valley at Rawley Force to cut its main course along the dale. Banks had once told Winsome about a case he'd worked on there, long before her time in Eastvale. It had taken him as far as Toronto in search of a missing expatriate. As far as Winsome knew, none of the people involved were still in Swainshead, but those who did live there remembered the incident; it had become part of village folklore. Years ago, people would have written songs about it, the kind of old broadsheet folk ballads that Banks liked so much.

Nowadays, when the newspapers and telly had picked the bones clean, there was nothing left for anyone to sing about.

The sound of Winsome's car door closing shattered the silence and sent three fat crows soaring into the sky from a gnarled tree. They wheeled against the grey clouds like black umbrellas blowing inside-out.

Winsome checked the address as she walked past a pub and a couple of houses with 'Bed and Breakfast' signs swinging in the wind and 'VACANCIES' cards displayed in their bay windows. Three grizzled old men leaning on their walking-sticks and chatting on the old stone bridge, despite the weather, fell silent and followed her with their eyes as she walked by. Winsome supposed they didn't often see a six-foot black woman in Swainshead.

The wind seemed to be blowing from all directions, and with it came sleet, stinging her eyes, seeping through her black denim jeans, tight round the thighs, where her jacket ended. It wouldn't do the suede jacket much good, either, she realised. She ought to have worn something more practical. But she'd been in a hurry, and it was the first thing she'd touched in the hall cupboard. How was she to know it was going to be like this?

Winsome found the house and rang the doorbell. A dour constable answered, tried unsuccessfully to conceal his surprise at the sight of her, and led her into the front room. A woman who looked far too young to have a daughter of the victim's age sat staring into space.

‘Mrs Daniels?’ Winsome asked.

‘McCarthy. Donna McCarthy. But Geoff Daniels is my husband. I kept my maiden name for professional reasons. I was explaining to the constable here that Geoff’s away at the moment on business.’

Winsome introduced herself. She noticed with approval that Donna McCarthy showed neither surprise nor amusement at her appearance.

Mrs McCarthy’s eyes filled. ‘Is it true, what he told me? About our Hayley?’

‘We think so,’ Winsome said, reaching for the plastic bag that held the address book Banks had given her. ‘Can you tell me if this belonged to your daughter?’

Donna McCarthy examined the cover, with its William Morris pattern. The tears spilled over. ‘She’s not my real daughter, you understand,’ she said, voice muffled through her handkerchief. ‘I’m Geoff’s second wife. Hayley’s mother ran off twelve years ago. We’ve been married for eight.’

‘I see,’ said Winsome, making a note. ‘But you can definitely identify that address book as belonging to Hayley Daniels?’

Donna nodded. ‘Can I have a peek inside?’

‘I’m afraid you can’t touch it,’ said Winsome. ‘Here, let me.’ She took out the latex gloves she had brought for just such an eventuality, slipped the address book out of its bag and opened it to the flyleaf. ‘Is that Hayley’s handwriting?’

Donna McCarthy put the handkerchief to her face again and nodded. Winsome flipped a few pages, and she kept nodding. Winsome put away the book, took

off the gloves and crossed her wet legs. ‘Any chance of rustling up some tea?’ she asked the constable. He gave her a look that spoke volumes about a man like him being asked to do such a menial task by a black woman of equal rank, albeit a detective, and sloped off, presumably towards the kitchen. Miserable bugger. Winsome touched the woman’s hand. ‘I’m so sorry,’ she said, ‘but I do need to ask you a few questions.’

Donna McCarthy blew her nose. ‘Of course,’ she said. ‘I understand.’ She seemed a slight, desolate figure alone on the sofa, but Winsome could see that she was also fit, almost muscular in her shoulders and arms. She had pale green eyes and short light-brown hair. Her clothes were casual, jeans and a plain white T-shirt showing the outline of her bra over small, firm breasts. It stopped just short enough to show an inch or so of flat stomach.

‘Do you have a recent photograph of Hayley?’ Winsome asked.

Donna McCarthy got up and rummaged through a drawer, then came back with a snapshot of a young girl standing by the Eastvale market cross. ‘That was taken about a month ago,’ she said.

‘Can I borrow it?’

‘Yes. I’d like it back, though.’

‘Of course. When did you last see Hayley?’ Winsome asked.

‘Yesterday evening. It must have been about six o’clock. She was going to catch the bus to Eastvale to meet some friends.’

‘Was this something she did often?’

‘Most Saturdays. As you’ve probably noticed, there’s not a lot to do around here.’

Winsome remembered the village where she had grown up, high in Jamaica’s Cockpit Mountains above Montego Bay. ‘Nothing to do’ had been an understatement there. There was a one-room schoolhouse and a future in the banana-chip factory, like her mother and grandmother, unless you went down to the bay, as Winsome had done at first, and worked at one of the tourist resorts. ‘Can you give me the names of her friends?’ she asked.

‘Maybe a couple of them. First names. But she didn’t talk about them to me, and she didn’t bring them back here to meet us.’

‘Were they friends from work? School? College? What did Hayley do?’

‘She was a student at Eastvale College.’

‘She went by bus every day? It’s a long way.’

‘No. She drove. She’s got an old Fiat. Geoff bought it for her second-hand. It’s his business.’

Winsome remembered the driving licence Banks had found in the girl’s handbag. ‘But she didn’t drive last night?’

‘Well, no, she wouldn’t, would she? She was off drinking. She was always careful that way. Wouldn’t drink and drive.’

‘How did she plan on getting home?’

‘She didn’t. That’s why . . . I mean, if I’d expected her home, I’d have reported her missing, wouldn’t I? I might not be her birth mother, but I did my best to love her as if I was, to make her feel . . .’

‘Of course,’ said Winsome. ‘Any idea where she planned on staying?’

‘With one of her college friends, as usual.’

‘What was she studying?’

‘Travel and tourism. National diploma. It was all she wanted to do, travel the world.’ Donna McCarthy started crying again. ‘What happened to her? Was she . . .?’

‘We don’t know,’ Winsome lied. ‘The doctor will be examining her soon.’

‘She was such a pretty girl.’

‘Did she have a boyfriend?’

The constable returned bearing a tray that he plonked on the table in front of the two women. Winsome thanked him. ‘Anything else?’ he asked, voice dripping with sarcasm.

‘No,’ Winsome said. ‘You can go now, if you like. Thanks.’

The constable grunted, ignored her and bowed towards Donna McCarthy, then left.

Donna waited until she heard the front door shut, then said, ‘No one in particular. Not that I know of. A lot of kids today like to hang around with a group rather than hitch themselves up to just one lad, don’t they? I can’t say I blame them. Having too much fun to start going out with anyone seriously, aren’t they?’

‘I don’t mean to pry,’ said Winsome, ‘but had there been anyone? . . . I mean, was Hayley sexually active?’

Donna thought for a moment, then said, ‘I’d be surprised if she wasn’t, but I don’t think she was promiscuous or anything. I’m sure she’d tried it. A

woman can tell these things.’ The central heating was turned up, and it was too warm in the small room. A sheen of moisture glistened on Donna’s brow.

‘But you don’t know the name of the boy?’

‘No. I’m sorry.’

‘Never mind.’ Winsome thought she probably had enough to go on. She’d track Hayley’s friends through the college’s travel and tourism department and take it from there. ‘You said earlier,’ she went on, ‘that you kept your maiden name for professional reasons. Might I ask what they were?’

‘What?’ She wiped the back of her hand across her eyes, smearing some mascara. ‘Oh, I was a personal trainer. Fitness. Nothing special. But people knew me by that name – I’d had cards printed, the business logo, everything. It just seemed easier to keep it. And Geoff didn’t mind. That’s how I met Geoff in the first place, actually. He was a client.’

‘What happened to the business?’

‘I packed it in six months ago. Geoff makes more than enough for us all to live on, and I’ve got plenty of other things to occupy my time. Besides, I’m getting a bit old for all those hard workouts.’

Winsome doubted that. ‘What did you do last night, all on your own?’ she asked casually.

Donna shrugged. If she felt that Winsome was prodding her for an alibi, she didn’t show it. ‘Just stayed in. Caroline from over the road came over with a DVD. *Casino Royale*. The new one, with that dishy Daniel Craig. We drank a few glasses of wine, ordered a pizza, got a bit giggly . . . you know.’

‘Girls’ night in, then?’

‘I suppose so.’

‘Look, do you know how to get in touch with your husband?’ Winsome asked. ‘It’s important.’

‘Yes. He’s staying at the Faversham Hotel just outside Skipton. A convention. He should be back home some time tomorrow.’

‘Have you rung him?’

‘Not yet. I . . . The policeman was here and . . . I just don’t know what to say. Geoff dotes on Hayley. He’ll be devastated.’

‘He has to be told,’ Winsome said gently. ‘He *is* her father. Would you like me to do it?’

‘Would you?’

‘Have you got the number?’

‘I always ring his mobile,’ Donna said, and gave Winsome the number. ‘The phone’s in the kitchen, on the wall.’

Winsome thought it might be a good idea to leave her mobile free, so she walked through and Donna followed her. The kitchen looked out on to the sloping hillside at the back of the house. There was a large garden with a small wooden tool-shed leaning against the green fence. Hail pellets now pattered against the windowpanes behind the net curtains. Winsome picked up the handset and dialled the number Donna had given her. As she waited for an answer, she tried to work out what she was going to say. After a few rings, the call went through to Geoff’s answering-service.

‘Have you got the hotel’s number?’ Winsome asked. Donna shook her head.

‘It’s OK.’ Winsome rang Directory Enquiries and got connected to the Faversham. When someone from Reception answered, she asked to be put through to Geoffrey Daniels. The receptionist asked her to hold. There was a long silence at the other end, then the voice came back: ‘I’m sorry,’ the woman said, ‘but Mr Daniels isn’t answering his telephone.’

‘Perhaps he’s at a session,’ Winsome said. ‘He’s with the convention. The car salesmen. Can you check?’

‘What convention?’ the receptionist said. ‘There’s no convention here. We’re not a convention hotel.’

‘Thank you,’ said Winsome, and hung up. She looked at Donna McCarthy, the hopeful, expectant expression on her face. What the hell was she going to say now? Well, whatever it was, she would have a bit of time to think while she drove Donna to Eastvale General Infirmary to identify her stepdaughter’s body.