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Written by Graham Hurley

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BEYOND REACH

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Prologue

6 JUNE 1984. PORTSMOUTH

More than twenty years later they were still with her, shards of memory, broken by terror and by time.

She'd been partying that night, an end-of-year celebration. She'd had a lot to drink earlier in the evening, toasting her mates and the sunset with bottles of cheap red on the beach beside the pier. She remembered lying on her back, her eyes closed, enjoying the warmth of the pebbles through the thinness of her T-shirt. A first in Social Studies was more than she'd really deserved. As ever, she'd been lucky.

After the beach came a disjointed series of parties, moving from address to address, following the trail of pissheads and celebrants. On a balcony overlooking the harbour mouth, she'd fended off a drunken lecturer from the Art College. Later, in a basement bedsit on the seafront, she'd buried herself in a corner with a guy she'd been fond of in the first year. The relationship had come to nothing but they were still friends and that was nice. Later still, with a girlfriend called Beth, she'd ended up at the Student Union dancing to Bob Marley and Wham. Beth had pulled a 2:1 in French and German, and was already looking at a couple of job offers. 'Wake Me Up Before You Go Go' seemed a pretty good way of kissing goodbye to three mad years at the Poly.

Getting back to her own place was a mystery. By now, she was drunk enough to insist on walking home alone. It was less than a mile, for Christ's sake. Her balance might be dodgy but her feet knew the way. She was a homing pigeon. She was a strong girl. She'd scored a First. She'd be just fine.

Key in the door. Don't bother with the hall light. Try and follow the worn strip of carpet. Bounce softly from wall to wall. Finally make it to the last door on the right, the door before the

steps down into the shared kitchen, the door to the room with the big window. The window opened onto the tiny square of garden. On hot nights she always lowered the sash, pulled back the curtain, let the air in. Habit, like innocence, dies hard.

Chapter one

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS LATER: SUNDAY, 18 MAY 2008. 09.26

The post-mortem started later than planned. Steph Callan was a uniformed sergeant on the Road Death Investigation Team. After the delights of last night, using a torch to help retrieve lumps of flesh scattered across the B2177, she now found herself looking at the tiled emptiness of the post-mortem room at Winchester's Royal Hampshire County Hospital.

One of the technicians emerged from the cubbyhole they used as a kitchen. Instead of his usual scrubs he was wearing jeans and a blue Pompey top. Steph could smell toast. The post-mortem was clearly hours away.

'Where's Jenny?' Jenny Cutler was the on-call pathologist.

'Sick. We're expecting a bloke called Dodman. He's just rung. Shit traffic getting out of Bristol.' The technician stifled a yawn. 'You want coffee or tea?'

Steph had never heard of Dodman. She settled for coffee, producing her mobile, glad of the chance to make a call or two of her own. P/C Walters was still in bed.

'Skipper?' he grunted.

'Hit-and-run in Portsmouth, Sean. Southwick Hill Road. Happened last night. Bloke called Munday. No witnesses at this stage. That's all we know.'

'And this bloke's dead?'

'Very.'

The first officer on the scene had described the injuries as 'horrible'. Steph had arrived after the body had been taken away but six years on the Roads Policing Unit told her that traffic cops were no friends of overstatement. Another guy, the driver of the Crash Incident Tender, had been blunter. 'Roadkill,' he'd muttered.

Now, on the phone, Steph told Walters to organise a couple

of P/Cs for door-to-door enquiries. A web of residential streets lay to the south of the B2177 and there was a chance that someone might have heard or seen something. Examination of the road surface had revealed nothing as helpful as tyre marks but vehicle debris had been recovered and bagged. Munday's clothing would be submitted for forensic examination and the post-mortem, once it got under way, might also tease out the beginnings of some kind of narrative. Walters grunted and said he was on the case. Steph brought the conversation to an end.

From the kitchen came the roar of a football crowd. One of the technicians had installed a portable TV. Steph pocketed her mobile and stepped across. There was interference on the picture but she recognised the brimming terraces of the new Wembley Stadium. These were news pictures. Less than twenty-four hours ago, a single goal had won the FA Cup for Pompey.

The technician in the blue top turned to find Steph at the door. He'd been up at the final and hadn't slept since.

'Magic, eh? Who'd have thought?'

Steph was still gazing at the screen.

'So where's Dodman?' she said.

The pathologist arrived an hour and a half later, a tall lanky figure in his mid-thirties. Steph talked him through last night's sequence of events.

'The body was called in by a passing motorist,' she said. 'His wife's still in shock.'

Dodman was tucking the bottom of his scrubs into the tops of his wellies.

'You've seen the body?'

'Not yet.'

He glanced at his watch. 'Better get on, then.'

The technicians retrieved the corpse from one of the big fridges. Munday's body was still bagged from the scene of the accident. Steph followed the trolley into the chill of the post-mortem room.

The body was transferred onto the slab and one of the technicians scissored through the attached ID tag before unzipping the bag. Two years on the Road Death team had armoured Steph against moments like these but what lay inside amongst

the puddle of bodily fluids belonged in an abattoir. The guy on the crash tender had been right. Roadkill.

The technicians tugged the bag free. Munday's body was still clothed but the paramedics at the scene must have removed one leg of the soiled jeans. Steph could see the roughness of the cut, way up near the crotch, and the whiteness of the flesh below the knee, peeled neatly back from the bone beneath. The exposed calf muscles glistened under the lights, a plump shiny redness veined with purple that reminded Steph of prime beef. Tenderloin, maybe. Or rump.

The Scenes of Crime photographer was circling the body, taking shot after shot as Dodman dictated notes into the overhead microphone. Flaying injuries to the lower right leg. Oblique fracture of the tibia. Lacerations to the upper right thigh. Abrasions and bruises on both arms.

Steph was staring at what remained of Munday. One or more wheels must have run this man over. Not just his right leg, stripping the flesh from the bone, but his chest and his head as well. His face was no more than a smear – a suggestion of a nose, a glimpse of yellowing teeth where his mouth should have been – and the head itself had been flattened.

Dodman's murmured commentary faltered, then picked up again. Crushed cranial vault. Visible extrusions of brain tissue through multiple scalp lacerations. Steph tried to keep up, tried to focus on the fat grey threads of jelly that laced what remained of this man's head. Memories, she told herself. Intelligence. The very stuff of what we are, of what we do. Billions of nerve cells that should have warned him to take care when crossing the road. She closed her eyes and took a tiny step backwards, secretly glad that something like this could still shock her.

Three hours later, the post-mortem complete, she looked up from her notes. The technician had discovered that the photographer was also a Pompey fan. Better still, he lived in Portsmouth and was happy to offer a lift back to the city. The technician, who'd been planning on taking the train, peeled off his bloodied gloves and washed his hands. A mate had told him the team would be parading the Cup for the benefit of the fans. Open-top bus. Civic reception. Then a monster crowd on Southsea Common. Harry Redknapp, he said, was a fucking genius.

Steph got to her feet. The Investigator from Scenes of Crime was deep in conversation with the pathologist. Dodman was confirming the exact configuration of the wedge-shaped fracture in the tibia. The base of the wedge was at the front of the bone, which meant that Munday had been facing the vehicle when it knocked him over. A near-identical fracture in the other leg – same configuration, same height – offered another clue. In all probability, he'd simply stood there, not moving.

'Do we think he was pissed?' Steph asked.

She didn't know Dodman. A blood sample would be sent for laboratory analysis. In the absence of lawyer-proof results, some pathologists refused to speculate.

'Of course he was pissed.' Dodman gestured vaguely back towards the post-mortem room. 'You could smell it from here.'

Whenever he ate out on Sundays Winter always went for the roast. Normally it would be one of a handful of Pompey pubs. Today it was Sur-la-Mer, a Southsea bistro with a reputation for good food and an interesting clientele. Marie's choice.

She sat across from him at the table near the window. Blonde, leggy, beautifully dressed, she'd survived nearly twenty years of marriage to Bazza Mackenzie and still turned heads wherever she went. Winter had always been fascinated by the relationship, but since he'd become part of Mackenzie's entourage, he'd found himself getting closer and closer to this wife of his. He liked her strength of mind, her cultured little ways, and he was flattered by the confidences she occasionally shared. He also knew that she valued his advice. Bazza, all too often, was a firework, bursting with brilliant ideas but easily bored. Up like a rocket, thought Winter. Down like a stick.

'Where is he?' Winter wanted to know.

'Out there somewhere.' Marie nodded at the army of Pompey fans swamping the street outside, making their way to the nearby Common. 'He tried to get the team to the hotel for a big reception but the club said no. He'd never admit it but that definitely pissed Baz off. Sometimes it's like he invented the bloody club.'

Winter laughed. The Royal Trafalgar was the jewel in Bazza's crown, a handsome meticulously refurbished seafront

hotel with views across the Solent towards the Isle of Wight. In the absence of a team reception, Baz would doubtless be renaming one of the function rooms in honour of Pompey's sainted manager. The Harry Redknapp Suite. By Invitation Only.

'Did you see the game?'

'I was out riding with Ezzie. Did you?'

'Yeah. Crap.' Ezzie was Marie's daughter.

'So why did you bother?'

'I've no idea.' Winter picked at his bread roll. 'Maybe it comes with the territory.'

'Bazza or the city?'

'Both. Tell you the truth, I've never seen the difference.'

It was true. Bazza Mackenzie had always been indivisible from the city of his birth, and as a working detective Winter had quickly recognised just how tight the tribal bonds of loyalty could be. The guys Mackenzie used to fight alongside during the glory days of the 6.57, exporting football violence to terraces across the country, were – a generation later – exactly the same faces he relied on to turn fat bundles of cocaine money into a prospering business empire. Now part of that empire, Winter could only admire the strength of the glue that stuck these guys together. The police, he knew, could never match it. Not then. Not now.

'You think he's on the Common? With his rattle and his scarf?' Winter said.

'Of course he is. He had a ring round this morning. They took a chopper to Wembley yesterday. God knows how much it cost.'

Winter had seen the quote on Bazza's desk only last week. Skywise Helicopter Charters. £2,875, plus endless sundries. At the time he'd dismissed it as some kind of fantasy. Now he knew different.

'It's a game, my love. Pompey got lucky. Most pub sides would beat Cardiff.'

Winter reached for the menu, keen to change the subject. The lunch, like the venue, had been Marie's idea. Before they got down to business, he had something of his own to get off his chest.

'That email of mine ...' he began.

'Which one?'

‘About the Trust. I’ve made contact with the bloke now, scoped him out. Everyone I’ve talked to says he’s the business. Lateral thinker, big reputation where it matters, plus he can’t wait to get away from London. The way I read it, he wouldn’t be after a fortune either. Just in case you were wondering.’

Marie had the grace to smile. As Chair of the Tide Turn Trust, she’d worried constantly about money, yet another reason why Winter was desperate to surrender what little authority he really had. Back last summer, when the Trust was a gleam in Bazza’s eye, the title of Chief Executive had sounded promising. Months later, a great deal wiser about the realities of coping with problem youth, Winter wanted out.

‘To be fair, Marie, it was never my bag. You know that. There are some things I do well and some things I don’t. Playing Mr Nice to a bunch of twat kids isn’t one of them.’

‘Mr Nice isn’t what we had in mind.’

‘Mr Nasty, then. Whatever. The fact is you need special gifts. You need experience. You need patience. And you need to be on top of all the bullshit that goes with it. You know how many forms you have to fill in to stand any kind of chance of raising grant money? Hundreds. Thousands. These guys want every last piece of you. You know anything about CRB checks? Prolific offender protocols? Youth Offending Teams? List 99? The Independent Safeguarding Authority? The Richard Vetting Scheme? Public liability insurance? I thought I’d left all this bollocks in the CID office. Turns out I was wrong.’

The smile on Marie’s face was fading but Winter wasn’t about to stop.

‘Something else ...’ he said. ‘Tell Baz I’ve sussed him. I know what he’s up to. And to be frank, my love, it’s not my job to help.’

‘Help how?’

‘Help him get his knighthood ... or whatever else he fucking wants. The guy’s creaming it. The business is making you a fortune. And this is *legit* money. So why on earth do you need the Tide Turn Trust?’

‘Because Baz wants people to take him seriously.’

‘Exactly. The knighthood. The gong. But not me, eh? Not through my bloody efforts.’ Winter folded the menu and sat back, turning his body away from the table, staring out at the

street. He seldom lost his temper, but he knew Marie would carry every word of this conversation back to Bazza, and Bazza had to know that Winter meant it.

‘He wants to go into politics, Paul.’ She said it softly, as if it was a family secret. ‘The Trust’s all part of that.’

Winter didn’t move. The street outside was a river of blue shirts.

‘He wants to do *what?*’

‘Go into politics. Get himself elected. Sort this city out. He told me the other night.’

‘He was pissed.’

‘That’s what I thought.’

‘He meant it?’

‘I’m afraid so.’

‘Really?’ Winter finally abandoned the street. Marie’s smile had gone.

‘It gets worse.’ She leaned forward. ‘I think Ezzie’s having an affair.’

D/I Joe Faraday stepped into the chilly gloom of the Barge-master’s House. After the overnight flight from Montreal, he’d paid a surprise visit to his son, still living in Chiswick. J-J, it turned out, had acquired company in the shape of a Russian actress called Sonya, and the three of them shared an awkward breakfast before Faraday cut his losses and hit the road again. The flight, the breakfast, and then the drive back down to Pompey had wiped him out.

He bent to the doormat and quickly sorted through the pile of post. Apart from a Mahler CD from Amazon and the May edition of *Bird Watching*, he was looking at nothing but bills, free newspapers, credit card offers and pleas for cash from sundry charities. Ten days away, he thought, and I come back to this.

He dumped his bag in the lounge and gazed at the stairs. Gabrielle had left the week before Christmas, flying to Montreal to take up the offer of a visiting fellowship at McGill University. The offer had come out of the blue, the kind of bombshell that he’d always dreaded. At first she’d dismissed it. She loved the Bargemaster’s House. She adored living with her grumpy *flic*.

She was looking forward to throwing herself into the research for a new book. It was all, in a word, *parfait*.

Too perfect. Watching her face at the breakfast table that morning, the way her eyes kept returning to the letter, Faraday knew that this new life of theirs, the relationship they'd so carefully built, was doomed. As an anthropologist, her publications were beginning to attract serious attention. It was only a matter of time before someone came knocking at the door, seeding that curiosity, that hunger for the unknown, which was the essence of this woman who'd come to occupy the very middle of his life.

And so it had proved. As autumn slipped slowly into winter, Gabrielle spent longer and longer on the Internet, exploring the implications of saying yes. The fellowship was only for a year. Montreal was an interesting city. Canada was a mere six hours away. They could take it in turns to make the trip over. The twelve months would be gone in a flash. All of these things were true, but deep down Faraday knew that their affair, their life together, was probably over.

Confirmation came on the day she left. Gabrielle always travelled light. Years of fieldwork in remote corners of the world had taught her how to survive on the contents of a sizeable rucksack yet it gutted Faraday to realise just how little of herself she'd deposited in the Bargemaster's House. Carrying her two bags out to the car for the trip to the airport, he'd somehow assumed he'd return that evening to find lots of her stuff, her books, a handful of clothes, her *smell*, still strewn round the bedroom. Yet there'd been nothing, not a single item to remember her by. Standing in the darkness, listening to the carol singers up the road, it was as if their time together had never happened.

He remembered that moment now, a feeling of despair, of abandonment, even of betrayal. It had taken him weeks to come to terms with it and if he was honest with himself he knew it had never really gone. There were ways of burying it – work, for instance – but even a series of challenging homicides, one still unsolved, was no substitute for the anticipation of another evening together, of meals round the kitchen table, of conversation spiked with laughter and bottles of Côtes-du-Rhône, of the countless ways she untangled the knots inside him and left his

soul at peace. Without her, without what she'd brought to this solitary life of his, he was nothing.

Now, he stooped for his bags and climbed the stairs. The PC was on the table by the window. He fired it up, gazing out at the brightness of the afternoon. Breaths of wind feathered the blue spaces of the harbour and he reached automatically for his binos at a distant flicker of movement. A raft of brent geese. A pair of cormorants. Closer, only yards from the foreshore, a lone turnstone.

He turned back to the PC, pulling the curtain against the glare of the sunshine, scrolling quickly through ten days of emails. For once he didn't pause for birding news from an e-chum on Portland Bill. Neither had he any interest in a message flagged 'Urgent' from his bank. All he wanted, needed, was word from Gabrielle. He'd left her barely twelve hours ago, a goodbye hug in the departure hall at Montreal-Trudeau. It was less than an hour back to her third-floor apartment in St Michel. She'd have had the rest of the evening to compose the email of his dreams: how much these last ten days had mattered, how nothing had changed between them, how much – already – she missed him.

Nothing. *Rien*.

He sat back, staring at the screen, knowing in his heart that it had to be this way. The essence of Gabrielle, that quickness of spirit that had captured him, was what had taken her to Montreal in the first place. She was a bird of passage. Her life was a series of roosts. Lucky the man who got to share even one of them.

He reached for the keyboard and began to compose a message of his own but the phrases felt leaden. *Easy flight. J-J shacked up with some Russian actress. All well at home.* Was this the way he really felt? He deleted everything and started again, the truth this time. *I miss you. You should be here. We had a brilliant life, didn't we? What did I ever do to drive you away?* He stopped, knowing he'd never send it, knowing he was talking to himself.

The fact was he'd never driven her away. She'd gone because another door had suddenly opened and she couldn't resist finding out what lay on the other side. That was her nature. That was what had turned her into one of life's nomads. Already, the head of her faculty had hinted at a permanent academic

post, most likely a lectureship. Soon, there'd be someone else in her bed. Both men, inevitably, would be disappointed. Because Gabrielle, a slave to her own curiosity, would inevitably move on.

Dommage, thought Faraday.