

DARK WATER

MURDER LIES BENEATH
THE SURFACE



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Dark Water
by
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Prologue

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Emily Corbett flicked the headlights of the Punto on to full beam, highlighting the puffballs of soft drifting grey fog. To either side lay the braes, and high flat bleak moorland, but all she could see was dapples of mist and darkness.

She slowed down. Fifty was too fast for this road, in this weather, at this time of night. She looked at the dashboard clock: 23.20. She would make it home in time to hear the midnight bells herald in the new millennium. She yawned, fighting tiredness, and turned up Robbie Williams on the CD player. She wasn't sorry she'd walked out of the Hogmanay party, only seething with anger that she'd had to after seeing her boyfriend – her ex-boyfriend, she corrected herself – disappearing into an upstairs bedroom with a bucketful of punch and some peroxidized art student with unhygienic piercings. Well, screw him.

So now she was driving back home on this dark moorland road to a houseful of drunken first-footers and a bowl of hot lentil soup, wary of bad bends, potholes and the surface water that pooled dangerously in unseen dips.

Emily concentrated on the tarmac ribbon that seemed to waver in the drifting mist. She heard her dad's words. *It's too easy to build up speed on a straight road like that, not notice until it's too late and the car's aquaplaned into a drystane dyke, and*

I'll be getting a call to fetch you from Casualty on the busiest night of the year, and me in my good suit. She'd smiled at him but she hadn't really been listening. She was eighteen now. She could look after herself.

The road in front of her side-shifted as the Punto was nudged by a gust of wind, and the full beam caught the ghostly shadows of some trees before settling back to the solidity of the tarmac and the drystone dyke. Emily looked at the speedo, watching it drop . . . thirty-five . . . thirty . . . She indicated left, breaking for the dog-leg junction that would lead her to the braes road and home to Glasgow. Ahead of her she saw lights, dull yellow squares in the gloom. The letters on the Paraffin Lamp pub sign had been rearranged and graffitied to read 'The Puffing Lump'. Emily smiled, and steered carefully through the small flood at the bottom of the hill, feeling the car slow with the drag of the water. When clear, she squeezed her brakes dry and indicated right. She glanced in the rear-view mirror, her eyes drawn by the lights of another vehicle. Somebody had left the pub car park and pulled in behind her, somebody possibly as nervous as she was about crossing the braes on their own, wanting the guiding security of another driver's tail lights.

The digital clock on the dashboard clicked to 23.25. The headlights of the following vehicle flashed in her mirror again and disappeared as Emily turned on to the straight road that ran across the top of the moor. It was the quickest way home to Glasgow, though maybe not the safest. She checked the mirror again; no lights. The other car must have gone straight on to Dalry.

As the road gained height, the fog grew denser, blinding. She shivered and turned up the heating. As the needle started to nudge fifty again, she thought she could hear something. A drone from somewhere. *A problem with the car?*

High up on the braes, close on midnight, was not the time or place to have a puncture. She turned off Robbie Williams and listened intently. The noise was still there.

Coming from somewhere behind her. From outside.

She calmed herself, took a deep breath and pushed her foot down. The needle edged towards sixty.

She jumped violently at the sound of a horn blaring right behind her, blinded as the car filled with light from headlights on full beam inches from her rear bumper. Then back to darkness.

Back to silence.

She closed her eyes briefly to readjust her vision. She could see nothing behind her. Nothing but the fog.

Everything was quiet now, but for the pernicious return of the drone, and the pounding of her heart. She put her foot down.

Sixty-five.

She took another deep breath and glanced at the milometer, trying to figure out how far she still had to go before she saw the lights of Glasgow. She dared to ease her foot off the accelerator a little, watching the needle fall. Then she felt a jarring thud, and the car juddered and ricocheted forward. Emily cried out as a searing pain ripped through her skull. Then lights blinded her again, and a horn sounded deafeningly. Trembling, she changed down.

Ahead the road was clear, the ghosts drifting away. She risked another glance in the mirror. Her eyes seeing the bull bars of the four-by-four closing in on her, the silhouettes of two heads, the teeth of the grille pulling up to her bumper. Tailgating . . .

And now she could hear clearly, over the panicked whine of her own engine, the deep constant growl of a predator.

Hunting.

Waiting.

Her mind raced. Whoever was in that car could be off their heads on something; they might run her off the road at any moment. She forced herself to stay calm, to concentrate. There was a scout lodge up here, she knew, just beyond the electricity substation, some sort of activity centre where they'd be having fireworks, a ceilidh, with people dancing, celebrating the new millennium . . .

All she had to do was turn sharp left through the gates, and get up the driveway. And she would be safe.

She imagined she could even see the lights from here.

She slowed again as the road curved, her forearms aching, bracing herself for another shunt from the car behind. Nothing. Curiously, it seemed to have gone.

She breathed out, a long slow breath, dropping her full beam at the flash of a single oncoming vehicle, and slowed to forty. A volley of water broadsided her as the car swept past.

Emily drove on, muttering, *Come on, come on*, peering into the fog for the electricity pylons. Now she could see, way over to her left, the lights of Lapwing Lodge. Sanctuary.

Thirty-five . . . thirty . . . The dyke at the side of the road fell away, and she pulled sharply left, putting her foot down once she was off the road.

Crash.

Silence.

Emily realized her mistake as the strong, chained gates of the electricity substation appeared through the haze that climbed over the crumpled bonnet. She sat very still as the engine coughed and died. She closed her eyes, wishing away the scorching pain in her right shoulder where the seat belt had snapped her collarbone, the stabbing pains in her neck. She tried to unlock her fingers from the steering wheel but couldn't. Through the crazed wind-screen she saw the ghosts were back, unfurling from the engine, coiling into the night air.

She had crashed her new car. Her dad would kill her.

But, at least *she* was all right. *She* was safe . . . sore, but safe.

She sighed and tried to take a deep breath.

Then suddenly the car door was opened, and cold air swarmed round her feet. Strong fingers prised hers from the wheel, the seat belt was unfastened, and then something was covering her face. She tried to move, tried to say something, but couldn't. She could taste blood. Hands were pulling her, gently, firmly, then roughly . . . too roughly . . . by the shoulders, then by the hair. She felt the roots rip from her scalp. She screamed but heard no sound, then she was on the ground, on her knees, her head forced down. A boot in her ribs pushed her over on to her back, she felt cold wet pebbles stabbing into her

skin as fingers clawed at her belt, the night air icy on her exposed stomach. Then a knee on her chest, a hand over her mouth. Within the black eternity of the blindfold, she sensed rain pricking at her cheek, heard the scrabble of her heels on the stones. A voice: *Stay still, bitch.*

As the weight on top of her lifted slightly, she let herself go limp, trying to remember her self-defence classes: *Go limp, don't struggle, gain advantage.* As the weight shifted to one side, she raised one shoulder and bucked with all her strength, trying to get out from underneath him, and the blindfold slid from her face. For an instant, her eyes looked into his. A snapshot fixed in her memory. Then the blindfold was back in place, pressing on her eyes so hard she thought her eyeballs would burst.

In the distance she could hear faint music, people cheering, the shrieks and bangs of fireworks. She felt her mouth being forced open, and cold metal pressed to her temple.
Click.

I

4 p.m., Tuesday 9 February 2010

‘Nice wallpaper.’

Stuart Bannon of West End Properties turned to make sure Jim Innes was being sarcastic, and raised an unprofessional eyebrow at him in agreement.

Catriona Innes wrinkled her nose. ‘It reminds me of . . .’

‘That crap you had in the Indian last night. Saggy Paneer?’

She smiled at the estate agent. ‘My husband’s sense of humour is an acquired taste,’ she said sweetly.

‘As is the decoration of this flat,’ Bannon agreed, with a rare touch of honesty. ‘On this level, the previous owner never changed a thing, so you do have all the original features. This was the top-floor flat originally, hence the fantastic view. The attic space has been converted to give another two bedrooms up there.’

‘Was the previous owner on drugs?’ Innes asked wryly. ‘Or were they blind?’

Stuart Bannon laughed. ‘Blind, maybe; she was in her nineties.’ He dunted the carpet with the heel of his Doc Martens. ‘But the floorboards under here are solid. A nice wee sand, and then a good wax . . .’ This seemed a good time to back off and let them think. Number 95 Clarence Avenue was proving unexpectedly difficult to sell, but at

least this couple hadn't walked out after five minutes of cursory politeness like the last three had. And they were still eyeing the place up, considering.

Catriona Innes folded her arms and spun round slowly. 'I do like this room, even with that bloody wallpaper. So much light. You don't get windows that size in a new build. And we should know; we've seen plenty.'

'Well, that's the advantage of these tenements; the room size is amazing. Both this room and the sitting room have feature fireplaces, the back rooms have the original cornices and, as you can see from the schedule, the recent attic conversion is architect-designed in a Scandinavian style. They built into the roof space and used the original beams. It's even been photographed for an architects' trade magazine.'

'Yet it's been on the market for a while,' said Innes, his face quizzical.

'The beneficiaries of the will had a difference of opinion, so the renovation on this level ground to a halt. To be honest, it's on the market as a half-baked project.' Bannon gave his most candid smile.

'I think what you're supposed to say is "so you get the best of both worlds",' Jim answered.

'Do you work in advertising?' laughed Bannon.

'How did you guess?' smiled Catriona. 'He could sell Guinness to the Irish.' Then she pursed her lips slightly. 'The old dear in her nineties – she didn't actually *die* in here, did she?'

'No, she died in hospital, but she had a long and happy life. This was the family home. The executor now wants a quick sale, so it's a fixed price – £275, 000.'

‘Could they be talked down?’

‘They might, what with the state of the market at the moment.’ Bannon’s mobile rang, the trill echoing round the empty space. ‘Oh, I do apologize; I’ve been waiting for this call. Please, go ahead and look upstairs. Take your time.’

He disappeared out on to the landing, leaving a vapour trail of Paco Rabanne.

Catriona waited until the door closed, then whispered, ‘What do you think?’

‘So far so good,’ her husband answered. ‘It’s the best we’ve seen. Handy for the school, fixed price, slap bang in the middle of the West End, fabulous view, and Clarence Avenue is a good address. If we play our cards right, we might get a few grand off. I’d say it’ll suit us fine.’

‘You sound like we’ve moved in already.’ Catriona walked into the hall, stroking the carved pineapple finial on the newel post. ‘But I do like it, Jim. Look how the new stairs match what’s already here.’

‘Craftsmanship, that’s what that is.’ Her husband caressed the finial too. ‘Pure craftsmanship.’ Suddenly he looked up. ‘What’s that? I heard a creak.’

‘A mouse?’

‘Don’t be daft! I said creak, not squeak.’

‘Big mouse?’

‘A rat?’

‘The only rat around here is out on the landing, on the phone,’ giggled Catriona.

‘Bloody estate agents! He could tell us how much the executor is actually looking for and then we can stop all

this faffing around.’ He proceeded up the stairs, tapping the stair rail with his knuckle as he went. ‘This is a sound conversion; look at the way everything’s finished off. And there’s no damp, no subsidence.’

Catriona paused behind him on the stairs. ‘Are you sure? That creaking, it’s the sound of old wood moving, isn’t it?’

Jim Innes sighed. ‘Might be next door’s joists. We’d have to look into that. What do you think – should we have this upstairs bit as our own private floor? We could ban the kids from coming up here altogether.’ He was now on the top landing, planning his pool table, a mini-bar . . . ‘Look at that, they’ve reclaimed an old pitch-pine door from somewhere and just replaced the lock. That’s attention to detail. That should be the new bedroom, with the beams. Twenty-six feet by sixteen. We’re five floors up, so there should be some view over Partickhill, right over the tops of the trees.’

Catriona walked briskly across to the door and turned the key, which slid round easily. The door swung open under the light pressure of her palm. She again heard the slow gentle creak, the noise of a ship yawing on a gentle swell. Then her eyes adjusted to the dim light.

A swollen, purple body hung from the exposed beam, the blackened head almost decapitated by the noose. Caught in a slight draught from the window, it turned infinitesimally slowly round towards her. Protruding, deadened eyes stared at her, the face inclined, the ragged, blood-encrusted lips pursed to a kiss.

*

DCI Rebecca Quinn was scrolling the screen, her broken fingernail tapping impatiently on the mouse as her tired eyes looked over the most recent crime stats for the third time. The powers that be had changed the coding again, and she had to keep referring back to a photocopied chart.

She was too old for this. She had been at it since 3 p.m. and now, an hour and a half later, she was no further forward. She moved the cursor left to the referral rate and sighed. The last time she had felt this bad she was deciding definitely, definitely to get her cat put out of its misery. She was starting to feel that way about her career.

The writing was on the wall for Partickhill Station, she could feel it in her bones. The station had risen like the phoenix from the ashes after the Luftwaffe had dropped an early bomb on the way to Clydebank one moonlit night in 1941. But there was no way it could stand up to the combined uniformed might of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the new designer suits at the Strathclyde Police Service.

Partickhill's operational capacity was slowly being eroded. It hadn't gone unnoticed that the canteen had been closed for two months now and there was no sign of it reopening. Her requests for a start date for the long-promised refurbishment had not received a precise answer, or even a vague one. The place was being stripped of resources as though a decision had already been made. DCI Quinn lost her place on the list yet again and gave up. She leaned back and yawned. The ever-growing damp patch on the corner of the ceiling seemed to be heading

for the window in a bid for freedom, and who could blame it? Everyone seemed to achieve huge enhancement in their lives the minute they left this little station. Gail Irvine was now happily married with a rosy-cheeked two-year-old. Burns, the old constable who had been at Partickhill longer even than the rot, had inherited a croft in Stornoway where he was living the good life with no phone and no TV. And no computer.

Quinn envied him.

And those that stayed here at Partickhill? Their careers withered and died. Partickhill was little more than a lost property office these days, an elephant's graveyard of hopes and careers.

Of course, nobody was surprised that DC Vik Mulholland had passed his sergeant's exams with ease and immediately been transferred from Glasgow A Division to K Division in Renfrewshire – to assist in the Drug Unit at Paisley. Quinn was glad he had not been under her command for the last two years. Dedication she could cope with, but ruthless ambition ate at you like cancer. The rumour was that Mulholland would make inspector before the end of the year, and that he was gunning to get back to Glasgow and on to a murder squad. Just in time for Quinn to retire and avoid him. And DI Colin Anderson, tipped to move up to DCI soon, would be transferred too. Anderson was already spending most of his operational time at neighbouring Partick Central, a big modern station with a car park, canteen, and no damp patches, not half a mile from Partickhill. But DI Colin Anderson was a loyal kind of a sod, not one to step on her toes while she was

still here and still, technically, his boss. Vik Mulholland was so ambitious he would have tipped her corpse off her seat before the cushion had got cold. Quinn missed Anderson when he wasn't here. He was the type of DI every chief dreamed of: solid, dependable, respectful and respected. A man of quiet power. She had no doubt his qualities had not gone unnoticed by those higher up the tree, and she knew she couldn't hold him back for ever.

On the other hand, the more Anderson was promoted, the less understanding his wife seemed to become. He wouldn't be the first cop to refuse a promotion to 'put family first'. Colin Anderson had still to make that decision, and nobody could make it for him.

Through the glass of her office Quinn could see Anderson in the incident room. Still looking younger than his thirty-nine years, a tiny hint of grey lightening his fair hair slightly, he was one of those lucky men who become better looking as they grow older. He was on the phone, taking some statement of great importance to the safety and well-being of the denizens of Glasgow's West End, giving it his full attention, despite the certain knowledge that it was all a waste of his time.

Quinn looked around the others in the incident room, a hotchpotch of misfits who weren't going anywhere. Littlewood, who should be the one taking that call, was nowhere to be seen. He was most likely out in the fog, sneaking an illicit fag. But like herself, he was working out the last few months of a long career, eking every penny he could out of his pension. He had recently been diagnosed with angina, which was preventing him from doing the

job properly but wasn't severe enough for a medical retirement. He was bitter about it and carried his bitterness like a torch.

As she watched, PC Gordon Wyngate took careful aim and tossed a ball of waste paper towards the bin. It missed. Wyngate, known as Wingnut because of his large protuberant ears, was . . . just Wyngate. Not the brightest, but endlessly willing and occasionally capable of a stroke of genius.

Quinn pulled herself upright again, unclipping her red hair and curling it around her hand before fixing it again. Maybe she was being paranoid: after all, just this week, Partickhill's detective squad had been boosted by two. The new girl was what Quinn's mother would have called 'well built', and Littlewood called 'buxom' when being polite. She was straight out of uniform and yet to prove herself as a detective. Slightly overweight, unfit, two kids, late thirties, the worst type of rookie in a murder squad. What was her name? Black? Brown? Whatever her name was, she'd been bloody useless so far.

And then there was DS Costello. She had returned from her two-year lecturing stint at Tulliallan police training college. Her syllabus seemed to be a roving brief on CID serious crime procedures, and though Quinn was amazed she knew anything about them, her old DS seemed able to teach them most effectively, no doubt enlivened by her habit of talking before she engaged her brain, while still having the uncanny knack of saying the right thing. But usually at the wrong time.

To give her credit, Costello had some big cases under

her belt. In fact, she was what every student on that course was aspiring to be. Only Costello herself was too dense to notice. Quinn reconsidered – dense wasn't the right word. She let her eyes settle on her sergeant, watching her multi-tasking on her phone, trawling the computer screen, scribbling and eating a bag of Liquorice Allsorts simultaneously. As usual Costello was dressed like a scruff, her blonde hair shorter and spikier than it had been.

No, dense wasn't the right word. Costello just couldn't be arsed what anybody else thought.

The door to the main office opened and the new DC – now she remembered, it was Browne with an 'e' – sashayed in, carrying a cardboard tray with takeaway coffee and sandwiches. Quinn left them to it and went back to her crime stats.

The phone rang. Quinn looked up, hearing the simultaneous scrape of chair feet against the tattered lino. She saw Anderson get up, and then Costello bang the phone down. Quinn was on her feet even before Anderson knocked and entered without waiting for an answer.

'Two bits of good news. Browne can't count and bought you an extra coffee . . .'

'Cheers,' said Quinn.

' . . . and we have a dead body hanging in a tenement in Clarence Avenue, right behind the station here.'

Quinn felt her heart sink. 'Suicide?'

'Suspicious,' replied Anderson.

DCI Quinn could not hold back her smile as she closed the file on her computer, watching the monitor return to its lazy, writhing screen saver.

A case. A big case. And this time, it would be taken from her over her own dead body.

I flick the windscreen wiper on to clear the rain from the glass. I sink a bit lower in my seat, easing my frozen bones while keeping an eye on the door of Partickhill Station. Anderson comes out. DI Colin David Anderson. He is easy to see, even in this dank, foggy mess that has everybody muffled up to the eyeballs against the cold. He's a tall bloke – six one? Six two? You can tell he's a man who knows himself and what he is about. Not like his boss, scuttling about in her ridiculous heels. Her legs are too short to move so fast. Her navy-blue coat has the collar folded up to her ears, her hat is pulled down to her neck, but the briefcase is absent. She speaks briefly to Anderson on the way past then climbs into her Lexus and forces the traffic to halt as she does a U-turn on Hyndland Road.

But Anderson is waiting for the little fish.

My little fish.

My little Prudenza.

I turn the radio up slightly. Louis Armstrong singing 'What A Wonderful World', a song that always makes me smile at the irony. I see Anderson turn round in response to somebody's call; his gloved hands are in his pockets, his anorak zipped up to his chin.

And there she is, coming through the fog. Prudenza.

She's in a hurry, jogging along the pavement. She is carrying a drink carton; not coffee for her, it will be tea. A plump female cop comes down the steps and meets her, a congress of raven hair and blonde. The plump cop

shivers, rubbing her hands roughly on the sleeves of her jumper. She hasn't even bothered putting a jacket on. Anderson is kicking his heels a few yards away, waiting. He's impatient.

To get a cop to move in this weather without an overcoat is one thing, but to get a DCI out a warm office and drive off into the freezing fog? Must be a matter of life and death. Something's rattled their cage.

It makes me uneasy.

A couple join them. The woman has her arm on her husband's shoulder. His face is ashen, and she's supporting him as if he's lost the ability to walk along the street under his own strength. The female cop with the short dark hair guides them up the steps and into the station, offering words of comfort to the man.

Prudenza and Anderson are now alone on the pavement. Anderson looks up to the sky, no doubt commenting on the weather. The forecast is freezing fog closing in. Prudenza gains his attention with a playful slap on the arm, and takes a step back. Two heads are thrown back in laughter at a private joke between old friends.

Her back is to me, but from this distance her hair looks blonder, shorter than the last time I saw her.

They move off on foot, pausing right in front of the van. They're going to go down the lane to Clarence Avenue. I turn the wipers off, to let the rain obscure the windscreen. Not that Anderson would recognize me – I was way before his time.

I flick the wiper to intermittent. Just to get a better view.

It has been such a long time.

Too long.

‘What are those two doing? Waiting for an invite?’ asked Professor O’Hare, rolling his white plastic suit from his shoulders. The dour grey-haired pathologist was standing on the upper landing of the tenement on Clarence Avenue. ‘Should Anderson and Costello not be in here, listening to my words of infinite wisdom, instead of talking to the cop on the door?’

‘Quite,’ said DCI Quinn tersely. She took a deep breath and shouted, ‘Are you lot quite finished chatting?’ down the deep stairwell. ‘Anderson! Costello! I want you up here now.’ Then she muttered to her old friend, ‘Those two are much easier to control when they’re forty miles apart.’

‘But you missed them, Rebecca; your life is too simple without them.’

‘Maybe. I’m glad they’re back together for this case. I think Partickhill’s going to need all the help it can get.’

‘*You* are going to need all the help you can get.’ O’Hare stepped out of the legs of his protective suit, and checked his watch. ‘No trouble at t’ mill, is there? Within the ranks, I mean. If so, get rid of it now before the powers that be think you can no longer work as an effective team. It’ll only be another excuse to bang a nail in the coffin.’

‘Oh, there’s no trouble between those two,’ said Quinn.

‘And how is DS Costello?’

‘Just the same, unfortunately.’ Quinn folded her arms, her eyes still on the stairway. ‘But my days are numbered. I’m going to be retired. I can feel it. In fact, I think the

entire squad at Partickhill is about to be dismantled. And the building is managing to fall apart on its own with no help from us.'

'You don't look like you've done your thirty.'

'Well, I feel it in every bone.' She sighed. 'But it would be nice to go out with a big one.'

O'Hare said softly, 'Well, I don't think you're going to get any bigger than this.'

DCI Quinn frowned at the sound of two sets of foot-falls racing up the stairs. 'Anderson! Costello! So glad you could join us, eventually.'

'We got nabbed outside by the guy from the estate agents on his way to the station. He wanted to tell us all about it.'

'Why was he roaming around on his own?'

'Wyngate was first on the scene and lost the witnesses in the fog. Don't ask any more,' said Costello.

'But now you *are* here, pop your collective heads in there before we go any further. Try and keep the door closed so the smell doesn't get out.'

'Fair enough,' said a blue-lipped Costello, smiling cheerfully and handing her paper cup of tea to Quinn, who had no choice but to accept it.

DI Colin Anderson nodded an acknowledgement at the Prof and approached the closed door. He figured he had seen most things in his nineteen years of service, but he steeled himself just the same as he turned the knob. When he opened the door, a rhomboid of light illuminated his feet, and the room inside was slowly revealed as a hive of silent industry. Three white-suited scene of crime

officers crouched around the body, and the smell of rotting flesh wafted gently towards him.

Costello followed him in, pulling her hands up into her sleeves, and jammed her woolly fists to her mouth in an attempt to block out the smell. She narrowed her eyes and took one step further, joining him to stand on the aluminium slab that protected the crime scene – as far as they could go without shoe covers.

From the corner of the room they viewed the body, which was now slumped on the floor. It looked male, it looked young, but mostly it looked dead. The rope around his neck had cut so deep it nearly met his spine at the back, and the dark indigo serrated gouge lay open like a flowering lupin. His skin opened in a sinister crusted rupture above his chin, leaving his lips closed, pursing slightly. The other end of the rope was still looped over the exposed beam above. The SOCOs moved slowly in a tacit dance, each concentrating on their individual tasks. The only noise came from a couple of blowflies feasting at the dark wound in the throat, interrupted by the occasional whirr of the camera motor.

Costello tried to look at the face, seeking a point of recognition, but it was too swollen, too blackened. The eyes stared at the ceiling, and the flesh of the cheeks had swollen to absorb the nose. Absurdly, it reminded her of a turnip lantern, only the knife had slipped as someone tried to fashion the mouth, which looked – she searched for a word – wrong.

She tilted her head, her brain registering the brown tag hanging around his neck on a string, a simple brown label.

The SOCO lifted it with a gloved hand, tilting it for her to read. Five printed words: *My Name Is Stephen Whyte*. She nudged Anderson, who was regarding the supine figure as if it was a piece of sculpture.

‘Well, I’ve seen enough, smelled enough,’ said Costello from behind her woolly fist. She recognized Bob MacKellar, the crime scene photographer, under his plastic hood, and nodded a greeting. ‘You getting all this? Can we go?’

Bob the hood nodded. ‘Yip. I think the Prof wants a word.’

They both retreated, Anderson closing the door behind him.

On the landing, they found Quinn and O’Hare, still deep in conversation. The four of them shifted to let a crime scene officer pass, carrying a folded body bag, before they continued. Quinn realized she still had Costello’s tea and handed it back.

It was the pathologist who spoke, slowly, choosing his words with deliberation. ‘The deceased has been provisionally identified for us, by a helpful person with a packet of labels and a printer. The name is Mr Stephen Whyte. No other form of ID. Obviously, we can’t take the label at face value.’

‘Stephen Whyte as in . . . ?’ asked Anderson.

‘It’s not an uncommon name. So mouths shut until I get back to you. Not a can of worms we want to open unless we really have to.’

‘Could it be him, though?’

‘You’re the cops,’ O’Hare said, looking at Anderson.