

Welcome to the sample of 'The River Runs Deep' – roughly 10% of the book. I hope you enjoy it – and there's a link at the end if you'd like to buy it.

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Author's Note

The River Runs Deep is set in Whitby, on the North East coast of England. As I'm British and the book's set in the UK, I've used British English. The dialogue is realistic for the characters, which means they occasionally swear.

This is a novel. I've taken some slight liberties with the number of police officers there would be in Whitby. Other than that I have tried to stay faithful to the town and the surrounding countryside.

As it's a work of fiction names, characters, organisations, some places, events and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictionally. All the characters in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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September 2015: The River Esk

"Daddy."

Maisie Hopkins was four. Red hair, brown eyes, a mischievous face. A little girl that liked to ask questions. She tugged her father's sleeve.

"Give me a minute, sweetheart. I'm paying for our rowing boat."

"*Daddy!*" She tugged her father's sleeve harder. "Daddy, why is that lady swimming?"

“What? I don’t know. People do swim in rivers. Even in September. Wild swimming, they call it.”

“Yes, Daddy. But why is she swimming with all her clothes on?”

Nine minutes later PC Dan Keillor was standing at the side of the River Esk in Ruswarp.

It wasn’t just Maisie. No-one would be going on the rowing boats today.

The lady with all her clothes on was face down in the water. Her blonde hair streaming out behind her as if it was trying to float down the river and out to sea. Another hundred yards and she’d have been over the weir.

A dark blue bodywarmer, faded blue jeans, green wellingtons. Dressed for an early morning walk. Not the cold, dark water of a North Yorkshire river.

Dan Keillor thought he could reach her. Maybe. “You haven’t got a longer boathook in there have you?”

They hadn’t.

“Jake, give me a hand will you? Hold on to me. I don’t want to go in. ‘Dozy copper falls in the river.’ I can live without being on YouTube.”

And with PC Cartwright hanging onto him Dan Keillor managed to hook the dark blue bodywarmer. ‘Like that game at the fair when I was a kid,’ he thought – ashamed of himself for thinking it.

Six or seven ducks watched from the middle of the river. Slowly, carefully, he pulled her into the bank.

Keillor knelt down on the concrete. Turned round and spoke to the middle-aged man who’d opened for business ten minutes ago. Who definitely wouldn’t be taking £5 for an hour on the rowing boats any time today – but who was already thinking the *Mirror* might be interested in the pictures on his phone...

“Keep everyone back, will you? And make sure they don’t get in the way when the paramedics arrive.”

Keillor leaned forward. The second body he’d pulled out of the water in four months. A lot easier than the last one. No stripping down to his boxers. No wading into the North Sea.

But just as dead.

He started to pull her out. He’d need some help. She was heavy, her clothes saturated with water.

He turned and called Jake back. Saw that the paramedics had arrived. Louise? Was that her name? She’d been at his first RTA. Experienced, no nonsense, not fazed by anything. Good.

He hauled the woman up and saw her face for the first time. Her eyes were closed, her mouth half open. She looked resigned, Keillor thought. Resigned to her fate. But somehow... defiant at the same time.

“Come on then, Jake. Let’s get her out.”

It was hard work. Lifting the dead weight out of the water. But finally she was lying on the bank. Back on dry land. Exactly where Maisie should have been holding her daddy’s hand as she stepped nervously into the rowing boat. But where – if she ever came back to Whitby – she’d remember the lady who went swimming with all her clothes on.

“No,” Louise said to Dan Keillor. “No pulse. And looking at her I’d say there’s not been a pulse for two or three hours.”

“You don’t recognise her, I suppose?”

Louise shook her head. “No. Not at all.”

“Let’s hope someone reports her. There’s no ID in her pockets. No cards, nothing. Not even a phone. A dog lead. Some very soggy dog biscuits. Nothing else.”

Chapter 1

Detective Chief Inspector Michael Brady was cold. He was several degrees beyond cold.

And there was still a lap of the cross-country to go.

Here she came. “Come on, Ash!” he shouted. “*Come on*, you can catch her.”

Ash was fourth. The girl in third was 20, maybe 30 yards in front of her. The first two were away and gone. And if the leader –

Yellow and black. Is that York? I need to learn the local schools.

– didn’t run for England there was no justice in the world. The girl in second was well clear. But Ash could get third. “Come on, Ash!” he yelled.

His 13 year old daughter – pain and determination etched on her face – ran past him and chased a black and red vest up a hill and into the fog.

“She’ll catch her.” Fiona Gilroy was next to him, waiting for her daughter, Bean, to appear.

“Maybe,” Brady said. “I’m not sure Ash has run this far before. Look, here’s Bean. Jessica, sorry.”

Fiona laughed. “I’m going to wave the white flag. I’m the only one who still calls her Jess.”

Bean didn’t look like she was enjoying the cross-country. No wonder. Richmond Moor was cold, bleak and damp. They were so high up Brady wasn’t sure whether it was fog or low cloud. And it was only late September. Welcome to the school cross-country league. North Yorkshire promised to be very different to Manchester...

“There’s Ash!” Fiona said.

Brady strained his eyes. Was that Ash on the far side? Was that a blue and white vest? And where was the girl in front of her?

“Come on, Ash!” he yelled into the fog, deciding to take Fiona’s word for it. “You can catch her!”

His phone rang.

North Yorkshire. Eight hundred feet up, the top of a moor, in the fog and there’s still a signal? I’d been counting on a quiet afternoon...

Brady glanced down. Geoff Oldroyd. The pathologist. A bluff, no-nonsense Yorkshireman not given to political correctness or to holding back on his opinions.

Brady liked him. But a pathologist wasn’t as important as his daughter. He pressed the red button and stared hopefully into the fog.

He’d Googled it that morning. Richmond Moor had once been a racecourse.

They must be in the home straight by now.

The leader flowed effortlessly past him. Waved nonchalantly as she broke the finishing tape. The girl in second looked resigned to a winter chasing the yellow and black vest.

Brady stared into the fog. The seconds passed. There. The girl in the red and black vest came out of the gloom. And Ash. Four, five yards behind her. A hundred yards to go.

“Go, Ash! Come on, Ash!”

She was gaining. Two yards behind. One. Barely any distance to go. Ash was level. Brady saw his daughter glance across at the other girl. Dig deep inside herself. One last effort. She surged across the line. Snatched third place.

Fiona put her hand gently on his arm. “I’m not sure parents are supposed to get that excited, Mike...”

“Geoff, I’m sorry.” The congratulations were done, the Lucozade Sport had been handed out. He’d even had a hug from a very wet daughter. “I’m on top of Richmond Moor, I lost the signal. What can I do for you?”

“Nothing. But I’ve a young woman on the table in front of me. And... I don’t know, Mike. She drowned. Yesterday morning. But I was away all day. Something doesn’t look right. And it doesn’t feel right. Are you busy?”

“I’m freezing to death watching my daughter in a cross-country. But she’s just finished. With you in an hour and a half?”

“That’ll do. Di’s out tonight. So there’s no rush. Not like there’s anything on TV on a Wednesday night.”

“Can I bring a plus one?” Brady said.

“Bring as many as you like, Mike. Last orders is at ten, though.”

Brady walked across to Ash. She was standing with Bean and Fiona. “Brilliant, Bean,” he said. “Rather you than me in that fog.”

“I hate it,” Bean said. “Cross-country is definitely child abuse. We should sue.”

Brady and Fiona laughed. “What’s happened to photography?” her mother said. “I thought I’d put you off law?”

“Are you both going back on the school bus?” Brady asked.

Ash and Bean rolled their eyes. “Yes. We’ve been lucky,” Ash said. “We’ve come in the school bus that smells of stale vomit.”

“Not the one that smells of stale pee,” Bean finished for her.

Brady turned to Fiona. “Could I...”

“Could I collect Ash from school for you?” she said. “Of course I can. And I’ll give her something to eat.”

“Thank you. I seem to be forever in your debt.”

“So what is it now?”

He smiled at her. “You know me. I was talking to the pathologist. He’s made me an offer I can’t refuse. I’ve been invited to look at a dead body.”

He parked outside her mother’s house. Detective Sergeant Frankie Thomson – grey eyes, dark brown hair tied back, jeans, favourite leather jacket and still reminding Brady of a warrior princess from *Lord of the Rings* – was waiting for him.

But a warrior princess who looks vulnerable today. Who knows she’s fighting a battle she can’t win.

“How’s she doing?” Brady asked as Frankie climbed into the Tiguan.

“The same,” she sighed. “Just the bloody same.” Frankie leaned forward. Put her head in her hands. Breathed in deeply. Shook her head as though she was trying to shake the futility away.

“Just the bloody same,” she said again. “I was Louise today. But at least she still knows she has a daughter. She called me Katie yesterday. ‘How’s my little girl?’ she said. That’s when it breaks my heart.”

“You don’t...”

“Tell her that Katie’s dead? No. Supposing she grasps it? What’s the point of causing her pain?”

Brady didn't know what to say. But felt he had to say something. "Yeah, I can see that."

"She's in this bloody awful place," Frankie said. "She has moments of clarity – some insight – and you can see she knows what's happening. It's beyond cruel."

Brady started the car. "I'm really sorry," he said. "It must take a toll."

"What can you do?" Frankie shrugged. "It hacks away at you. Day after day. Anyway, you're clearly here to cheer me up, boss. Give me some good news. Who have we fished out of the harbour?"

"No-one. Well, not this afternoon. Geoff Oldroyd's been on the phone. He's doing an autopsy. Correction, done an autopsy. But thinks we might be interested."

"Sounds good to me. Alex is at some staff meeting at school until late. Looking at a dead body and fish and chips on the way home. The best night out a girl can get in Whitby. I'm all yours..."

A ten minute car journey. He'd left Frankie alone with her thoughts. Her mother, memories of her sister. He'd stayed silent.

"You ready for this?" Brady said. "However many of these I see I still can't get used to them."

"Dead bodies or autopsies?"

"Both. Everything. The body on the table. The smell. The complete absence of life. All of it."

"I'm guessing it's Gina Foster?" Frankie said as she got out of the car.

"Geoff didn't say. But yeah, you'd think so."

"I thought she drowned?"

"She did. Dan Keillor fished her out. Seems to be his role in life. But there's clearly something Geoff doesn't like."

The body was laid on the table. A young woman, mid-30s, blonde hair fanned out behind her. Her skin pale, but Brady knew that was the effect of the water.

He shook hands with Geoff Oldroyd. "Geoff, how are you doing? You know Frankie, obviously."

"I do. I do. In both of her incarnations. Miss Thomson used to teach my youngest. When she had a proper job. Before she ran away to join the circus."

"How's he doing?" Frankie asked. "Robbie wasn't it? He was a bright boy."

"Second year at Imperial. Not that paying his rent in London is doing his dad's bank balance any good."

"What have you got for us, Geoff?" Brady asked.

“Gina Foster, as you no doubt guessed.”

“I thought it was straightforward?”

“She drowned, Mike. Pure and simple. Her lungs were full of the Esk and that’s what killed her.”

Brady didn’t reply. He walked round the table and looked down at the body.

“So what set the alarm bells ringing, Geoff?”

“Look.”

Geoff walked over to the body. “There are marks on her face. The Esk has done its best to wash them away. But there are abrasions. For want of a better word, scuff marks.”

“Like when you’re a kid?” Frankie said. “When you fall over and scuff your knees?”

“Exactly.” Geoff took a pencil out of his top pocket. Used it to point without touching the body. “Here, on her left cheek.”

Brady bent over and looked. Squinted. Had to admit it to himself. He couldn’t quite see what Geoff was pointing at.

I’m 43 next month. None of the detectives on TV have reading glasses...

“Frankie, what do you think?” he said.

He moved out of the way so Frankie could look. “If she was in the river she could have bumped along the side of a bridge, couldn’t she? The stone could have done that. The old bridges over the Esk must have some rough edges. Or branches hanging over the water?”

Geoff shook his head. “Not if she’s floating face down. And the angle’s all wrong. Try it yourself. Walk over to that wall and scrape your cheek along it. Bloody difficult, even for someone young and fit. There’s something else,” Geoff added.

“What’s that?”

“There are some bruises on her left arm. Just below her shoulder. They look relatively new. This week. But not the last two days.”

“So what are you saying, Geoff? Domestic violence?”

“Maybe. But she lived on a farm. Must have helped her husband. Bruises would have been an occupational hazard. But they’re consistent with someone doing this.”

He reached out to Frankie. Took hold of her left arm with his right hand.

“So there might have been a struggle?” Brady said.

“Might. That’s the best I can say.”

“Rough sex?” Frankie offered. “Could the marks on her face be carpet burns?”

Brady raised his eyebrows. "Careful, Frankie. Geoff will be needing one of his blood pressure tablets..."

"She definitely drowned?" Brady said again.

"No question. That's what killed her. Like I said, lungs full of water. Particles of mud – but you'd expect that in a river."

"Nothing that would make our life easier? Brain haemorrhage? Heart attack?"

Geoff shook his head. "No. Not a natural blonde, but not many people are. But she was in good health. Five-three, nine stone. A touch over 57 kilos if you want it in new money. Good muscle tone. Working on the farm, walking the dog." Geoff pointed at faintly visible tan lines. "Wore shorts and a t-shirt most of the summer. Exactly what you'd expect."

"Alcohol?"

"A trace. Maybe a glass of wine the night before. A slice of toast before she went out in the morning."

"So the simple explanation is that she went out for a walk, slipped and fell in the river?"

"Yes, that's the *very* simple explanation. But it doesn't feel right. That's why I'm talking to you, Mike. Public sector paperwork doesn't have a box marked 'hunch' – but right now I think it needs one."

"Something in your water?"

Geoff laughed. "Bloody incontinence at my age, Mike."

"It doesn't happen though, does it?" Frankie said. "Statistically, it doesn't happen. Where do we walk? Where we walk every day. Where we know the path. If there's a bit where we might fall in the river we walk round it."

"There you are, Mike. Miss Thomson the maths teacher strikes again."

"What do we know about the husband?" Brady said.

"Ian Foster," Frankie answered. "I checked yesterday. When the report came in. He's got a farm out at Grosmont. Nine years older than her. No record. Ploughs the fields and scatters and keeps himself to himself."

"He's the one that reported her missing?"

"Yes. Said he came in at lunchtime. The dog was there, but no wife. Thought she'd gone shopping. Said Tuesday was her day for going to Sainsbury's. Then he saw the car was still there. Thought she might have gone to see a friend."

Brady walked over to the table again, looked down at Gina's face. Scuff marks on her face, indeterminate bruises on her arm, her lungs full of the River Esk.

Is this a murder? Do I think it's murder? Or do I want it to be murder?

Chapter 2

“What do you think?” Brady said. They’d left Geoff to go home to his empty house and ‘nothing much on TV.’ Now he was giving Frankie the promised lift home.

“We’re just talking? Speculating?”

“Yes, obviously. You know me well enough by now. Nothing’s off limits. No idea is too stupid.”

“OK,” Frankie said. “She drowned, clearly. If Geoff says she drowned, she drowned.”

“You want something to eat?” Brady said.

Frankie looked at her watch. “Seven-thirty. The best time to eat fish n’ chips. Sure.”

“Alex won’t mind you being late back?”

“Alex is acting head of department. You think the police is bad. You should try teaching. He’s drowning in paperwork. I can’t remember the last time we had a night out.”

Brady parked behind the Co-Op. Sent Ash a text.

Just finished with the pathologist. Back for 9. Hope you’re not aching too much.

No later, Dad. Remember it’s a school night.

“Trenchers?” he said. “Magpie?”

“No, not for a takeaway. The little shop through the alley. Turn left at the end.”

Brady came back with the fish and chips. They walked down the steps by the swing bridge and sat on one of the benches.

“Not sure I’ve seen the water this high,” he said.

“Spring tide,” Frankie replied.

Brady looked at the lights from the pubs and shops on Church Street, sparkling and reflecting off the water.

“I need Carl to do it justice,” he said.

“How’s he doing?” Frankie asked.

“Yeah, good. He’s part of an exhibition next week. Work by new students.”

Will I ever forget? Watching Jimmy Gorse throw Carl off the end of the pier? No, I won’t.

“It’s one of the fundamental questions of life, isn’t it?” Brady said five minutes later.

“What is?”

“Why fish and chips tastes better with your fingers. It’s just an inescapable fact. Outside. By the sea. With your fingers. Whoever invented those wooden chip forks needs to be on a spit, revolving in hell.”

“Next to the bloke that came up with ‘paperless office,’” Frankie said.

“Right. He wasn’t in the police, that’s for sure.”

Brady looked across Whitby harbour again. The tall ship in front of him. The swing bridge to his left. And behind the swing bridge, the alley. New Way Ghaut. Where his best friend had been murdered. Five months ago...

“It can’t be long now,” Frankie said.

“What are you, some sort of mind reader?”

“It’s not hard to see where you’re looking. When did you last hear from her?”

“Kara? A couple of weeks ago. Says she’s fine. But they’ve pushed her date back a few days. Some time around the 20th, she said.”

“And the baby’s definitely...”

“Definitely Patrick’s? Yeah. She had the blood test. Anyway, that’s for next month. What did you make of the late Mrs Foster?”

Frankie finished off the last of her haddock. Rummaged in her pocket and fished out a well-used tissue. “Drowned, obviously,” she said. “And judging by what was in her pockets very clearly drowned while she was walking the dog.”

“I’d like to think Archie would jump in and pull me out. Clearly not. The dog must have gone back to the farm. Sat by the back door barking until her husband came in.”

“By which time she’d floated down the river into the arms of PC Keillor.”

“What time did he phone?”

“Without checking I’m not sure, boss. Mid-afternoon, I think. I’ll check the log in the morning.”

“You can see a gap, can’t you?” Brady said. “She says, ‘I’m going to walk the dog.’ He says, ‘OK, I’m going to plough a field.’ I don’t know, what *do* farmers do at this time of the year?”

“That. Plough fields. Worry about money.”

“So he goes off to plough a field. They might not have seen each other until lunchtime.”

“So he doesn’t have an alibi...”

“We’re getting ahead of ourselves, Frankie. You don’t need an alibi for accidental death. And right now that’s what Geoff will say it was.”

“With a caveat.”

“Right. He said he had a ‘hunch.’ I thought you were the maths teacher, the analytical one?”

“I was,” Frankie said. “I am. But my mother used to do that. Give us breakfast. Make sure we were ready for school. Give my dad a flask and a sandwich if he was going to be out all morning. Then she took Bess for a walk.”

“So what are you saying?”

“I’m saying what I said yesterday. Mum went on the same walk every day. Across the fields, down to the river. Along the river bank. Back up the hill to our farm. And she never once piped up at teatime and said, ‘Whoops, nearly fell in the river this morning.’”

“So you’re ruling out an accident?”

“I’m saying it’s unlikely. And I’m saying you don’t get bruises like that on your arm by falling over in the barn.”

“So we’re left with suicide. Or murder.”

“And we both know why it wasn’t suicide.”

“Exactly,” Brady said. “No-one commits suicide in front of their dog. If I was going to do it, I wouldn’t do it in front of Archie.”

“So we’re only left with one option, boss.”

“No ‘boss,’ OK? We’re off duty.”

“Sorry. I’m trying to train myself to say it. For all he was a prick it came naturally with Bill – ”

“But I haven’t earned it yet?”

“No. It’s not that. It’s knowing you before. When you were a civilian.”

“Not quite a civilian...”

“Yeah. But it’s still different.”

“What do you make of the marks on her face?” Brady said.

“Definitely not a bridge,” Frankie said.

“You sound very certain all of a sudden?”

“I tried it while you were buying the fish and chips. I stood in the alley next to the shop and tried to scrape my face on the wall.”

“That must have attracted a few odd glances.”

Frankie shrugged. “It’s Whitby. Once you’ve lived through a Goth weekend you’re not going to be fazed by a policewoman trying to scrape her face down a wall.”

“OK. So I’m in the shop wondering if you want mushy peas and you’re in the alley trying to scrape your face on a wall...”

“Yeah. And thank you for the peas. You can do it – scrape your face – but it didn’t happen by accident.”

“So you think carpet burns are more likely?”

“*More* likely, yes. Likely? After they’d been together ten years? No. Besides, they have a teenage daughter. You don’t have sex in the lounge if your daughter’s upstairs doing her homework.”

Frankie stood up and reached her hand out. “Thank you,” Brady said, passing her his empty fish and chip box. She walked across to the bin, put the boxes in it. Turned and faced him. “Suppose you wanted to drown me,” she said from six feet away. “How would you do it?”

Brady stood up and walked over to the railings. Stood next to her at the side of the harbour. Still couldn’t believe how high the water was. Like someone had left the tap on. Filled the harbour too full.

“I’d hold you under,” he said. “The middle of the sea and I can throw you off the boat. But a river’s different. You’re young, you’re fit. I’d have to hold you under.”

“Right,” Frankie said. “That’s what I thought.”

“So there’s doubt. A lot of doubt. Maybe we should go and talk to Ian Foster. And first thing tomorrow I’ll have a word with Dan Keillor. I like him. He’s bright. Let’s see what he’s got to tell us.”

Chapter 3

Brady closed Dan Keillor’s file.

The son of a Scottish deep-sea fisherman and an English mother. His father’s boat had gone down when Dan was 16. Last reported position 50 nautical miles south east of Iceland. His mother had come back to Yorkshire.

Lose someone you love. Come back home. Sounds familiar...

Dan had joined the police at 18, excelled at police college, translated the theory into practice. And waded into the North Sea to retrieve Jimmy Gorse...

He knocked on Brady’s door. “You wanted to see me, boss?”

Just over six foot. Dark haired. Better looking than any copper in North Yorkshire Police had a right to look.

“Morning, Dan. Sit down. Gina Foster. You pulled her out of the Esk. Tell me all about it.”

“There’s not really that much to tell, boss. We got the call, drove down there. Nine, maybe ten minutes tops. Jake was on crowd control, I fished her out.”

“Describe her.”

“She’s floating. Face down. Body warmer, jeans, wellingtons.”

“Dog lead in her pocket?”

Keillor nodded. “Nothing else though, boss. No wallet, no cards.”

“No phone?”

Keillor shook his head.

“Why not?” Brady asked.

“Maybe she forgot it?”

“Come on, Dan. I read your file this morning – some of the reports from police college. You can do better than make a guess. When was the last time you went out and forgot your phone?”

Dan nodded. “OK, boss. Never.”

“Right. Money, cards, car keys, phone. Just the same if I’m walking my dog. Lead, biscuits, ball if we’re going on the beach. Black bags for the inevitable.”

“You’re saying she left it behind on purpose?”

Brady nodded. “Why would she do that?”

“No signal?” Keillor said. “No point taking it?”

“Supposing she sees a kingfisher? Supposing the mist’s rising off the river, the sunlight reflecting through it? We all take our phones.”

“You’re saying she made a conscious decision to leave it behind?”

Brady nodded again. “That would be my guess. Another question: when do you turn your phone off, Dan?”

“When... When I’m with my girlfriend. You know, when...”

Wait until you’re a DCI, Dan. You won’t even turn your phone off when you’re... You know...

“Right. And that’s the only time. So we assume that Gina Foster didn’t want disturbing on her walk. And that she wasn’t into photography. But if that’s the reason, why not just turn it off? Why take a conscious decision to leave your phone behind? Especially a woman. A lonely walk by the river. No telling who she might meet.”

“I don’t know then,” Dan said.

“No, right now neither do I. But it’s a question we need to answer. Let’s backtrack. You pull the body out. No marks, nothing you can see?”

Keillor shook his head. “Nothing. Just the clothes she was wearing. Nothing in her pockets except the dog lead. Tissues, some very soggy dog biscuits.”

“No bumps, bruises, scratches?”

“Nothing I could see, boss.”

“Which more or less tallies with what Geoff Oldroyd said.” Brady paused. Looked out of the window. The hospital entrance: the car park. Maybe he should have joined

counter-terrorism instead. The Thames and the London Eye out of his office window...

“You said Jake Cartwright was on crowd control. Nothing unusual in the people watching?”

Keillor shook his head again. “No. A father and his daughter. They were the ones that spotted the body. I’ve got their details if you want them. Two other people waiting for the boats. Husband and wife walking past who stopped to look. Exactly what you’d expect at that time in the morning.”

“No-one on their own? No-one with ‘suspicious’ tattooed on their forehead?”

“No, boss. Definitely not.”

“One more question, Dan. How did she look?”

Dan looked confused. “Gina Foster? Dead, boss.”

“No, think past that, Dan. Some people die looking surprised. Some – if you believe the stories – die looking terrified. What about Gina? What was the expression on her face?”

Dan Keillor looked past his boss. Saw the face again as he pulled her out of the river. “She looked resigned, boss. Like she accepted it. But – this sounds stupid – ”

“No, Dan. One thing you’ll learn working with me. Nothing ever ‘sounds stupid.’”

Dan nodded. “In that case, boss, she looked defiant as well. I don’t know, the two sound contradictory. But that’s how she looked. ‘I’m not going down without a fight.’”

Brady smiled. Tapped his finger on the desk. Looked out of the window again. Made a decision. “This case might develop, Dan. If that happens DS Thomson and I will need some help. I’d like you to do that. Probably just for a few days. Sorry, it’s all ‘might’ and ‘maybe’ right now. But if it happens I’ll square it with whoever I need to square it with.”

Dan smiled. “I’d love to, boss. Sorry, I mean ‘yes, sir.’”

Brady laughed out loud. “Don’t apologise to me, Dan. Nothing wrong with ambition. It’s a long time ago, but we were all young once.”

Brady walked through into the main office. “You busy today, Frankie?” he said. “Fancy a ride out into the country?”

Frankie put her pen down and looked up. “I assume we’re not taking a picnic, boss?”

Brady shook his head. “Ian Foster. I thought we’d pay him a visit. I’ve just talked to Dan Keillor. Five minutes alright for you?”

“Five minutes is fine, boss.”

“Good. I’ll see you at the car.”

“Mike?” Brady turned. His superior officer. Detective Superintendent Alan Kershaw. Silver haired, silver-tongued, and sliding steadily up the promotion ladder. “Spare me a minute will you?”

Brady followed Kershaw into his office. The office without the view of the hospital car park. The harbour instead. Whitby Abbey on the hill above it.

...And the office with the ego wall.

What is it some people call it? The ‘Me Wall.’

The Vanity Wall.

Certificates, commendations. And photographs.

There wasn’t one of Kershaw with Barack Obama or Nelson Mandela but he’d managed to be photographed with just about everyone else.

David Cameron. Alan Shearer. Ant and Dec.

Even Nicola Sturgeon.

Just in case Scotland invades. Whitby’s only 130 miles from the border. Best be on the safe side...

“You got anything important on today?” Kershaw said.

“I was going out to interview Ian Foster.”

“The one whose wife was floating down the Esk?”

Brady nodded. “It looks accidental. But Geoff Oldroyd has some doubts. There’s a few inconsistencies.”

Kershaw shook his head. “You’ll be wasting your time. Accidental death. All the rain we’ve had lately. The path would be slippery. I’ve got something more important for you. But if you insist on someone going out there send DS Thomson. Tell her to make sure she takes Sally Brown. Got to tick the Family Liaison box, remember.”

“Is she around?”

“She should be. But Thomson can sort that out.”

Kershaw looked up at him. “There’s something I need your help with.”

Brady stifled his surprise. Kershaw wasn’t a man given to admitting he needed help.

“What’s the problem?”

“No problem,” Kershaw said. “Opportunity.” He held a sheaf of A4 paper out to Brady. “I’m giving a speech tomorrow. ‘Initiatives in Modern Policing.’ I remembered that presentation you gave in Birmingham. You made a couple of decent points. So I thought you might like to look through this for me.”

This time Brady made no attempt to hide his surprise. “Yes... I’d be happy to. I’m just not sure it’s the best use of my time, sir.”

“Let me be the judge of that. Policing is changing. It’s not all about crime now. Burglars don’t have a bag of swag over their shoulder. We’re part of society, Mike. A building block. An integral part of the foundations.”

He pushed the papers even further forward. Brady had no choice other than to take them.

“Steve Jobs, Mike. ‘People don’t know what they want until you show it to them.’ A modern police service can do so much more than simply catch criminals.”

Looking at Kershaw’s speech seemed an easier option than listening to any more management clichés. “Early afternoon alright for you, sir? I expect you’d like some time to rehearse?”

“Perfect. I’m on the train at three. It’s in Edinburgh. And there’ll be some big hitters in the audience. Politicians. Media people. Important I make a good impression.”

Brady walked across to Frankie’s desk. “I’m sorry,” he said. “You’ll need to do Foster on your own. I’ve got something far more important to do.”

She turned her head. Gave him a quizzical glance. “Sounds exciting, boss.”

“I’m Kershaw’s new speechwriter. ‘Initiatives in Modern Policing.’ Forget nicking villains and all that old-fashioned crap. We’re a building block in society.”

“I knew that was my role. A building block with a shitload of paperwork. I’ll give Foster a ring,” she added. “Try and get out there this afternoon. You alright with that? If I finish this paperwork?”

“Sure. We need to get our priorities right. And you need to take Sally Brown with you. We’re not just a building block. We’re part of the foundations as well. Kershaw says we need to ‘tick the Family Liaison box.’”

“No need,” Frankie said. “I’m FLO trained.”

Brady shook his head. “Just humour him will you?”

“If you say so. How do you want me to play it?”

“As low-key as you can. Whatever happened to his wife Foster’s going to be in a mess. Just get some background. How he met her. What she did before they married. But most of all your general impressions. That goes without saying.”

“Report back on Monday?”

“Any chance I could buy you breakfast? I’m impatient. I trust Geoff’s instincts. And I haven’t seen Dave for a while.”

“Sunday morning?”

“If you can square it with Alex.”

“Don’t worry. That won’t be a problem.”

“Thank you,” Brady said. And went back to his office to look at a speech.

Chapter 4

7:30 Saturday morning.

A pale, early-autumn sun was shining as Brady drove through Grosmont, went under the railway bridge and parked the car by the trees. He needed to be back for ten. Ash was playing hockey and wanted a lift to school. But 2½ hours must be enough...

He reached for his coat and the directions. He'd printed them off: the Esk Valley walk from Grosmont to Sleights. Three-and-a-half miles. And somewhere in that 3½ miles was the place where Gina Foster went into the River Esk.

He followed the instructions. Crossed the bridge, the trees at the side of it turning golden, and turned left.

What am I looking for? I don't even know if I am looking for anything. I just want to feel the walk. Take it in. Walk where Gina walked. See what she saw. And let the fresh air wash away Kershaw's bullshit.

'People don't know what they want until you show it to them. A modern police force can do so much more than simply catch criminals.'

Brady walked past a row of houses. He was certain that if he went and knocked on the doors everyone who answered would be perfectly happy if the police did nothing but catch criminals.

And so would 90% of the coppers, sir...

Brady said 'good morning' to a man in his 30s who looked a lot fitter than his Labrador. Glanced at his directions again. *Continue along the bridleway to the first farm.*

This was a road, not a bridleway. But then the road bent to the left. The leaping salmon sign of the Esk Valley Walk pointed straight on. And Brady was very firmly on a bridleway.

Two male pheasants strolled across the track in front of him. Two more. The field to his right was full of them.

If I was younger and fitter I could catch Christmas dinner...

The river was to his right. He could see the row of trees that clearly marked it. Was there a walk down there? There was only one way to find out. A track to his right led down the side of a field to a five-barred gate. A hundred yards, maybe.

Brady looked around. He was alone except for the pheasants. He set off down the track.

The sign on the gate was uncompromising. *Stop, Look. Listen. Close and secure gates after use. Maximum penalty for not doing so £1,000.*

He slid the bolt back on the gate. Closed it behind him. And found himself standing on a railway line.

The North York Moors Railway? Or the Whitby – Middlesbrough line? Or is Grosmont on both?

There was another gate between him and the river. This time the bolt refused to move. Brady sighed and started to climb over it. In his experience nothing good came from climbing over gates that wouldn't open. But he needed to see if there was a path by the river.

There was. Of sorts. But it was overgrown. Looked like it ended in 50 yards. And you didn't walk your dog on a path that could only be reached by climbing over a gate.

The river was to his right. But it was at the bottom of a steep bank, heavily planted with fir trees. And protected by a fence. Wooden stakes every four yards. Half a dozen strands of barbed wire very firmly between him and the Esk.

Wherever Gina had walked, it wasn't here. Brady climbed over the gate, walked back up to the bridleway and looked at the directions again.

Go through the farmyard and follow the bridleway to the next farm.

There were no signs. Was this Ian Foster's farm? There was no way of telling. But right now it didn't matter. He was just someone out for an early morning walk. Getting to know the area. Seeing where Gina might have walked.

Brady glanced at his watch. Thirty-five minutes gone: 25 more and he probably needed to turn round.

There was an open barn on the left, what looked like a woodshed to his right. A pile of logs, an axe waiting expectantly on top of them. A washing line with a pair of jeans and two towels on it ran from the end of the shed. A white pickup truck was parked at the far side of the yard.

And Brady was through the farmyard, starting to walk uphill now. He could see the second farm in front of him. But the path led away to the left, only wide enough now for one person. He went through a small gate. The path became old, worn stone steps, wet and slippery with the autumn leaves. Brady carried on up the hill, finally came to another field. Even more pheasants than the previous one, a stunning view across the valley.

But very clearly, *not* where Gina Foster had walked her dog.

He was going further and further away from the river.

Brady ate one of the bananas he'd brought and started to retrace his steps, slipping more than once as he went back down the steps.

He walked through the farmyard and back towards the bridleway. A wasted trip. He'd learned that his new walking boots were waterproof, but that was it.

There was another track off to his left, a field to one side of it, a row of trees on the other. Just wide enough for a tractor, bending slightly to the left and disappearing out of sight. Brady couldn't see a gate.

Does that mean the railway line has crossed the river? Can I walk down and have a look?

No, he couldn't. There was someone – a farm labourer maybe – in front of the farmhouse.

I could go back and ask. Pretend to be a walker who doesn't know the area...

He'd no sooner thought it than he dismissed it.

Supposing it's someone I have to question? 'We've already met haven't we? Except I thought you were someone who didn't know the area?'

And he needed to get back for Ash. Three years and she could learn to drive. It couldn't come soon enough.

He walked back past the row of houses. Back over the bridge. The river was running quickly, swollen by the rain.

I need to come back. I need to see where that track leads. But first things first. Let's see what Frankie has to say...

Chapter 5

Brady was there early. But not before Dave.

"Blimey, Dave, even on a Sunday morning at the end of September?"

"Aye, it's not just tourists. You've been here long enough now. Lads going out for a day's fishing. They need a bacon sandwich or two."

Brady looked past the kiosk and out to sea. "Looking a bit choppy," he said. "Rough out there today."

Dave looked at him sceptically. "Is that your way of trying to get out of our fishing trip?"

Brady laughed. "The North Sea. Barely light. Freezing cold. Seasick. Would I do that to you, Dave?"

"Aye, I'm beginning to think you might. End of October remember. An' a bit of swell is part of the fun."

Brady bought a bacon sandwich and a coffee. "And take the money for Frankie as well, will you? She should be here in five minutes."

"How's she doing?" Dave asked.

"You're talking about her mum now?"

Dave nodded. "Yeah. When the wife's mother was going downhill she was round there every day. Awake half the night worrying..."

"I suspect Frankie is much the same. It's –"

He broke off. Frankie had arrived. "What's this?" Brady said. "The official start of winter?"

The leather jacket was gone. She was wearing a charcoal grey winter coat, a grey beanie hat pulled over her ears. A black scarf. “As you’re undoubtedly going to suggest we sit by the bandstand, yes. Loyalty to Dave is all very well,” she said, giving Dave an exaggerated wink. “But making a member of your team – sorry, a building block – freeze to death is entirely another.”

“The sun’s trying to come out,” Brady protested.

“And the wind’s howling off the North Sea...”

Frankie collected her sandwich and coffee from Dave and they walked the 50 yards to the seats by the bandstand.

“He’s unbelievable isn’t he?”

“Dave?” Brady replied. “That and indestructible.” He paused. Looked out towards the end of the pier. “I tell you, Frankie, there are very few people in this world I admire, but Dave is one of them. I went to see him. Did I tell you? He’s sitting in his lounge. Three, maybe four days after he’s come out of hospital. I ask him when he’s going to put the business up for sale. He tells me to – well, you know Dave. You can imagine what he said.”

“I’m guessing he was fairly blunt.”

Brady laughed. “You could say.”

“Put it up for sale? What the fuck do I want to put it up for sale for?”

“I just thought – ”

“Yeah, so did the wife. So did every other bugger I talked to. But if I put it up for sale he’s beaten me, hasn’t he? Jimmy Gorse has frightened me off.”

Dave reached forward. Defiantly ate half a slice of his wife’s carrot cake in one mouthful. “It’s not what happens to you in life, Mike. It’s how you react to what happens. And if I sell the business because I’m going to see those steps every day then what’s it mean? It means I can’t walk down by the harbour any more. And if I can’t do that then I can’t go fishing. And if I can’t go fishing then we might as well leave Whitby. Move to Spain and drink gin for my breakfast.” Dave shook his head. “I’m not having that. I’ve talked to the doctor. Three weeks he says.”

“What does Maureen say?”

“Three months. Three months somewhere warm in the winter instead of two. I can live with that. We’ve made a deal.”

“The guy’s a hero,” Brady said. “In every sense of the word.”

“From one hero to another,” Frankie said. “How did you get on with Kershaw’s speech?”

“Do you want the truth or do you want me to pay due deference to a senior officer?”

“As it’s Sunday you probably ought to tell the truth...”

“In that case it was 3,600 words of management buzzwords and bullshit. I just hope no poor sod paid for a ticket.”

Brady finished his bacon sandwich. Screwed the paper bag into a ball. “Sorry,” he said. “I have to do this. I know it’s childish. But Patrick did it the first time – the only time – we sat here.” The rubbish bin was five yards away. He took aim. The bag arced gracefully towards the bin. And fell a yard short.

“You didn’t allow for the wind off the sea, boss.”

“You’re right. The trick’s obviously to wait for a day with no wind.”

“Some time next April, then...”

“So tell me how you got on with Foster,” Brady said. “Was Sally any use?”

“She didn’t come,” Frankie said.

“What? Kershaw specifically told me to take her.”

“I’m sorry, boss. I did my best. I was ready to go. I went to tell her. She wasn’t there.”

“So where the hell was she?”

“On the train to Edinburgh, apparently.”

“With Kershaw?”

Frankie nodded. “Phil Sharpe said Kershaw had changed his mind at the last minute. Decided he needed a female officer with him. Wanted to ‘tick the diversity box.’”

Brady shook his head. “So who did you take?”

“I grabbed Jake Cartwright. My first thought was to take Dan Keillor, But then – with him pulling her out of the river – I thought it might be too much for Foster.”

“Tell me the story then. We’ve ticked the ‘writing speeches’ box and the ‘diversity’ box. Just on the off-chance we need to tick the ‘solving crimes’ box.”

“Can I get a refill, boss?” Frankie held her empty cup up. “Dave’s coffee has moved up a notch. He said he had a new supplier. You want some more?”

“No, I’m fine thanks.”

Frankie went for a refill. Brady looked across the harbour.

Five months since I sat here with Patrick. Five months since he told me about his new wife. A few weeks later I’m telling Frankie how I’m planning to catch his murderer...

Brady looked to his left. Couldn’t see the hill where he’d scattered his wife’s ashes because of the buildings.

I’m sorry. I’ve not been up to see you for a while. This week. I’ll find time, I promise.

“Where do you want me to start?” Frankie said.

“Take it from when you arrive. But tell me which farm it is first. I walked through one yesterday morning.”

“Barn on the left? White pickup truck?”

“Thanks,” Brady said. “That’s the one. So any detail, Frankie. However small.”

“OK. So I got a nice, warm welcome,” Frankie said. “I climb out of the car and his Border Collie – he’s called Max – starts barking. I like to think I’m good with dogs, but this one decides to growl at me. Then Ian Foster turns up – ”

“What’s he like?”

“Black and white. Broad white stripe between his eyes...”

Brady forced himself not to laugh. “I understand there’s a vacancy for a filing clerk in Arbroath, Detective Sergeant Thomson...”

“Sorry, boss. Open goal. I couldn’t resist. Physically, Foster’s tall. Broad. Dark hair that’s receding. Hands the size of coal shovels. But right now he looks like a little boy lost. Rudderless. If that’s not mixing my metaphors.”

“Has he got anyone with him?”

“Says he’s got a cousin. Says she’s coming over in a few days.”

“What about the daughter?”

“Maria?” Frankie shook her head. “She’s away at school. Boarding school. Scarborough College.”

“That’s odd,” Brady said. “What’s she doing at a boarding school 20 miles down the road?”

“I asked him that. Said it was Gina’s decision. He said Gina had decided there was ‘too much interference’ in the state sector. And she’d said they could afford it. He said that two or three times – how much he disliked paperwork. How he left all that side of things – all the books – to Gina.”

“OK. Backtrack a bit. He takes you into the house...”

“Yeah. Dining kitchen. In what’s very clearly a new extension. Lovely room – a big picture window looking out over the fields and across the valley.”

“Gina again?”

“Emphatically. I asked him that. He said it was still a stable when Gina moved in.”

“Did he make you a cup of tea?”

“No. Not because he was rude. I just don’t think it occurred to him. Almost like he was looking round for Gina to prompt him.”

“OK, so nice kitchen. Daughter’s at boarding school. And he’s lost without Gina. How did he meet her?”

“She was working at the solicitor’s. He went in to sort out his mother’s estate. There she was. Six months later they’re married and she’s moved in.”

“What is he? Nine, ten years older than her?”

“Nine.”

“So the daughter’s not his?”

“No. Definitely not. She was two when he met Gina.”

“Did you ask him about her background?”

Frankie nodded. “And this is where it starts to get interesting. Ian Foster says she’s from Birmingham. He said he used to tease her about her Birmingham accent. Said he called her his ‘little Peaky Blinder.’”

There was a fishing boat coming into the harbour. Brady saw the exact moment the harbour walls wrapped themselves around it. The moment the boat stopped fighting the swell and could relax...

“You think he loved her?” he said.

“I’d go further than that, boss. I’d say she’s the only woman he’s *ever* loved. Probably had a crush on someone at school. But she turned him down and he never plucked up the courage to ask anyone else out. He’s one of those men that are just... awkward around women.”

“So if she’s from Birmingham, what’s she doing in Whitby? People from Birmingham go to Rhyl. Weston-Super-Mare. Up the M6 to the Lakes.”

“He said she wanted a fresh start. Somewhere new for her and the baby. And she’d seen Whitby on *Countryfile*.”

Brady pulled his coat around him. “Presumably they weren’t filming when the wind was coming off the sea. Just go back to when they got married. Did she stay at the solicitor’s?”

“Sorry, boss. I didn’t ask him that. But my impression was ‘no.’ That she started doing the books straightaway. More or less took control of everything.”

Brady nodded. “It’s working out well for Ian Foster isn’t it? He gets a wife, a bookkeeper...”

“Someone to take over from his mother,” Frankie said. “Stew and dumplings on the table when he comes in...”

“What’s he say about Tuesday morning?”

“He says he feels guilty. Says he only kissed her once. He usually kisses her twice, he said. He was going to plough one of the fields, she was taking Max for a walk. She made him a flask of tea and a sandwich, said she’d see him at lunchtime.”

“So then he gets back and she’s not there?”

“He said at first he thought she’d gone to Sainsbury’s. But then he saw the car was still there. So he thought she’d gone for a walk.”

“Where’s Max in all this?”

Frankie shook her head. “Foster said he was there when he came back. And that Gina sometimes went for a walk without him. He said she suffered from headaches. Said she had tablets but walking helped her when she felt a bad one coming on. But she didn’t take Max because he always wanted to chase the pheasants. Fair point. There were hundreds of them in the fields.”

“I’ve seen. Must be a poacher’s paradise. So he finally phones at what? Four o’clock?”

“Just after. And we put two and two together and identify Gina Foster.”

Brady was silent.

Someone else who’s lost his wife. You’d better start liking paperwork, Mr Foster. Because doing the paperwork was the only thing that kept me sane at three in the morning...

“What’s your gut feeling?” Brady said. “Is he telling us the truth?”

“Yes,” Frankie said. “That is...”

“What?”

“He’s telling us the truth as he believes it, boss. I’m certain of that. But whether the truth and what Ian Foster *thinks* is the truth are one and the same might be a different matter.”

“So the obvious question. Was she murdered?”

Frankie stood up. Walked over and put her coffee cup in the bin. Came back and sat down. “We rule out suicide. Statistically she didn’t commit suicide.”

“Right. Farmers commit suicide, not their wives.”

“Yes. And like we said the other night, you don’t commit suicide in front of your dog.”

“So you think it was an accident?”

“No,” Frankie said. “I don’t. It’s like I said to you about Mum. I swear to God she never talked about ‘nearly falling in the river.’ So I’m struggling with the idea of an accident.”

The fishing boat was almost level with them now. A blue hull, orange cabin.

Has it been out overnight? Freezing cold and seasick is one thing. But freezing cold and seasick in the dark...

Judging by the number of seagulls it had been a successful trip. Whenever they’d gone out.

“We need to find where she went in the Esk,” Brady said.

“There’s a lot of river between Grosmont and Ruswarp,” Frankie said. “And it won’t all be Foster’s land. Not by a long chalk. That’s a lot of walking, boss. Or a lot of search warrants.”

“Good job I’ve got a plan then,” Brady said.

Frankie looked doubtful. “You had a plan for Jimmy Gorse. That didn’t quite work out...”

Brady smiled at her. “Don’t worry. There’s only me in this one,” he said.

“What are you going to do?”

“Check the train timetable,” Brady said. “And do what I should have done on Saturday morning.”

Chapter 6

‘What I should have done on Saturday morning.’

Michael Brady opened a battered Ordnance Survey map. *Landranger 94. Whitby & Esk Dale*. A picture of a sunny Robin Hood’s Bay on the front, the hill stretching out behind the village. A sheer drop from the cliffs into the North Sea.

The map was old. A sticker on the back said £3.25. Brady suspected OS maps cost a lot more now. But the river wouldn’t have moved. Neither would the railway line.

That dotted line was the track he’d been on yesterday. Through the farmyard and into the woods, taking him away from the river and the black line that was the railway.

Brady’s plan was simple. He was going to spend Sunday afternoon on the railway line. Technically, trespassing. And trespassing as far as Sleights if that was what it took.

The Whitby to Middlesbrough line criss-crossed the river between Grosmont and Sleights. Never straying far from it. One, two, three... six bridges between the villages. The first one was far too close to the village. Five that he needed to worry about...

Thank you for reading the sample of ‘The River Runs Deep.’ I really hope you enjoyed it. To buy the book simply [click this link](#).