

Welcome to this sample of *'The Echo of Bones.'* I hope you enjoy it...

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## Author's Note

*The Echo of Bones* 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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## **THE NORTH YORK MOORS: JANUARY 2016**

"How many times have we disturbed Lilla's slumber now?"

"Three for me. What's this, your fourth?"

"Yeah, four. First time in winter though."

"All downhill now. More or less."

“Apart from that last set of steps. I tell you, Andy, either those hills in the first ten miles are getting steeper or I’m getting older. Speaking of which, I’ll catch you up...”

“We’d have finished by now if you weren’t incontinent.”

“Wait ’til you turn fifty. You’ll be diving behind every second bush you pass. Give me two minutes.”

Paul Jarvis walked away from the main path. Not a bush in sight. But the middle of the North York Moors. Ten o’clock on a winter morning. Frost on the ground. A watery sun.

*Who needs a bush? We haven’t seen a living soul since we crossed the Pickering road.*

He unzipped his walking trousers.

*Not bad. The Lyke Wake Walk in mid-winter. Thirty-five miles gone, five to go. And another one crossed off the bucket list...*

“Paul!”

“What?” He didn’t bother looking round.

“Paul!”

Shouting. More insistent. This time he did look. And saw the group of ramblers coming up the path.

*Where the hell did they come from?*

He zipped his trousers up and stumbled clumsily over the heather.

*Ten more yards will have to do. Can’t wait any longer. Christ, it’s no fun getting older. Not that there’s anything to see on a freezing cold morning.*

*This little patch will have to do. Looks like the heather’s been burned away and not grown back. Odd...*

Paul Jarvis unzipped his trousers a second time. Picked out what looked like a tiny, white piece of wood.

Sighed with relief.

*How many years has it been out in the sun to be bleached that colour?*

Took aim.

The piece of wood bounced as the stream hit it. Bounced, turned over, caught the pale winter sun.

*What the –*

He bent down. Picked up what he’d thought was a piece of wood.

Ignored the urine dripping onto his fingers.

Felt the scene burn indelibly into his memory.

“Andy!”

“What’s wrong? However bloody cold your fingers are I’m not zipping your trousers up.”

He turned round, still holding what he’d picked up. His fingers still wet. “Andy,” he said. “Come over here.”

Andy Boulding walked reluctantly over the heather. “You’ve not put your foot in a bog have you? I had enough bogs yesterday to last me a lifetime.”

“No, I haven’t.” Paul Jarvis held out what he now desperately needed to be a sliver of wood. “This,” he said.

“What is it? Let me get my reading glasses out of the backpack.”

“No. Don’t bother. Blow your whistle. Get that group of rambles back here.”

Andy Boulding shook his head. “What the hell are you talking about, Paul? We’re no more than five miles from the finish. The girls will be waiting for us. What’s the matter?”

Paul Jarvis sighed. Shook his head. Saw a class of children in front of him.

Knew that he would never walk this path again. Sucked in a great lungful of air. Looked at his brother-in-law, the man he’d walked with for ten years.

*What was I thinking two minutes ago? The Lyke Wake Walk in mid-winter. Another one crossed off the bucket list...*

“This,” he said again. “It’s a bone, Andy. I’ve spent the thick end of thirty years teaching biology – and I’m telling you it’s a human bone. A finger bone. Ring the girls. Tell them we’ll be a long time. A bloody long time. It’s a finger bone. And it’s from a child.”

“Go through it again for me,” Detective Constable Dan Keillor said. “Let me make sure I’ve got it straight.”

Paul Jarvis took a deep breath. A man coming to terms with what he’d found. Who knew that teaching human biology to 12 year olds who only wanted to embarrass him with sex questions would be very different now.

“We were doing the Lyke Wake Walk. We’d just passed the Lilla Cross.” He gestured towards the top of the hill.

“That’s about forty miles isn’t it? Forty miles across the Moors in winter?”

Jarvis nodded. “Forty miles. And you have to do it in twenty-four hours. Mid-life crisis, I suppose. I was fifty on Christmas Day. Some men buy a motorbike, some start chasing young girls. I bought a new pair of walking boots.”

Dan Keillor smiled. “Physical challenge?”

“And then some. Prove to myself I’m still young.”

“Except he’s not,” Andy Boulding said. “Needed to find a bush every two miles.”

“That’s how you found the bone?”

Jarvis nodded. “Yeah. I had to walk an extra ten yards. A group of rambles turned up. Not that they’d have seen anything. So bloody cold.”

“So...”

“I saw something white – I thought it was a piece of wood. Took aim. Like you do. And – Christ, I’m embarrassed. I hit it. It moved. I realised what it was.”

“You picked it up?”

Jarvis nodded. “Yeah. I bent down. Picked it up. Couldn’t believe what I was looking at. Still can’t...”

“You were certain?”

He nodded again. “I’ve taught Biology for nearly thirty years. Yes, I was certain.”

“What did you do then?”

“Called Andy over. Showed him what I’d found. Told him to blow his whistle. Get the rambles back to help us look.”

“But you didn’t?”

Andy shook his head. “No. I told him not to. Said we had to phone the police. If it was a crime scene... Lots of people... All they could do was contaminate it.”

Dan Keillor raised his eyebrows. “Not many people would have done that. Thank you.”

“I watch a lot of detective programmes. You know, *Prime Suspect* and such like. People are always contaminating crime scenes.”

“So the rambles carried on rambling. At least until they saw the patrol car. What did you do? Apart from call 999.”

“We had a look round. And phoned our wives. Said we’d be delayed.”

“That’s when you found the other bones?”

Andy Boulding was an unhealthy shade of grey. Paul Jarvis looked like he was going to throw up. “The ulna and the radius,” he said. “Year nine. That’s when they learn it. They can remember ‘radius.’ ‘Ulna’ is the one they forget. The bones in your arm.”

Dan Keillor looked out across the North York Moors. It was going to be dark soon. They’d need to secure the scene. Leave someone on duty overnight? That wasn’t his decision.

“What were you planning to do?” he said.

“What do you think? We’d have walked forty miles. Eat sandwiches, drink tea. Fall asleep in the car. Get home. Long, hot soak in the bath. Sleep for two days.”

“I’m sorry. You’ll have to stay over. My boss will need to speak to you.”

“We know that. But we’ve been walking since first light. We’re freezing. And starving. We’re not going to have to wait around for him are we? Where is your boss?”

“Where is he?” Dan Keillor smiled, tight-lipped. “Where else would a Detective Chief Inspector be on a freezing cold afternoon in January? He’s in church.”

## Chapter 1

Michael Brady reached across his niece and took his sister’s hand. Felt the tissue clasped between her fingers. Squeezed. Smiled at her as she turned towards him. Saw her blink away the tears.

Then he stood up, adjusted his black tie and walked to the front of St Mary’s Church.

“Full of life,” he said.

*It’s packed. Absolutely packed. Just like the church was for Grace...*

“Nine times out of ten it’s a cliché. ‘He was full of life’ we say, meaning someone told an occasional joke. But with Bill it was true. You only had to spend a minute in his company – whether he was talking about his police work, golf, football or the family he loved so very much – to know he truly was, ‘full of life.’

I remember the first time I met him. Kate – a bag of nerves I now realise – brought him round to the house. ‘Well,’ Dad said when he’d gone. ‘He’s a bundle of energy. And he’ll get on. You can tell that.’”

*I remember what Mum said as well. ‘Too bloody full of himself is that one. He won’t make her happy. Not for one minute...’*

Brady carried on with the eulogy. Looked up at the congregation.

Kate in the front row, wiping away the tears, trying to smile at one of his jokes. Maddie and Lucy next to her, their poems haltingly read out, more tears flowing. His daughter Ash next to Lucy. Bill’s brother and sister and their families on the opposite side of the church.

And then the great and good. The pecking order of the pews neatly defined. The Chief Constable behind Bill’s brother, with Detective Superintendent Alan Kershaw, Brady’s boss, sitting next to him.

*For now. Maybe not my boss for much longer...*

And Frankie Thomson.

Black jacket, black trousers, hair tied back. But not wiping away a tear.

She was sitting directly behind Kershaw.

*A fine view of the back of his neck. That must be hard for her. At least she’s got her sister for moral support.*

*Less than a year since we came to Whitby. Less than a year since I was facing her in Kara’s kitchen after Patrick’s murder.*

*'Your boss has arrested the wrong person.'*

*'He's still my boss.'*

*And she let me walk out with Patrick's backpack...*

And then the extended family. Friends. Old police officers who'd known Bill, suddenly vowing not to waste a day of their retirement. The three golfers who'd needed to find a fourth at eight o'clock on Sunday mornings.

"Let me finish where I started," Michael Brady said, "Bill was full of life. Full of energy. Full of love. For the police force he served for nearly thirty years. For his friends, his passions. For Whitby. 'The best place in the world to live.' But above all, for Kate. For Maddie and for Lucy. There is nothing I can say to them –"

*Don't cry, Kate. I'm nearly finished...*

"– That will ever make up for their loss. But look around you. Take comfort from everyone you see here today. Take comfort from knowing that we will always remember him. Bill Calvert. Full of energy. Full of life. Above all, full of love."

The vicar took over. The funeral service ended.

Inevitably, it was *My Way...*

Brady watched his sister touch her fingers to her lips. Hold them there. And then touch them to the coffin. Whisper something. Turn and take her daughters' hands. He put his arm round Ash, followed them slowly out of the church.

*Just the crematorium to go. A lot less people, thank God.*

"A good speech, Michael." Brady turned and saw Kershaw. Silver haired, silver tongued, and – if the rumours were right – about to leave Whitby and climb another rung on the ladder. "I admire you," he said. "A fine exercise in hypocrisy."

"Ash, sweetheart, just go and see if Lucy's alright, will you? Thanks... Maybe not, sir," Brady said. "I had a lot of time for Bill at the end."

"You're saying William Henry Calvert was improved by the prospect of meeting his Maker?"

*I'm saying Bill bore his final days with bravery and humour. That there was no self-pity. No 'why me?' That he was determined to say 'Happy New Year' to his wife and daughters. And that he made it. Only just, but he made it...*

"Will you excuse me, sir?" Brady said instead. "Bill's sister is over there. I haven't spoken to her yet. Family duty..."

Brady walked a few paces through the church graveyard. Smiled to himself as he looked at the headstones.

*Half of them illegible. Worn away by the wind and the salt. The other half as clear as the day they were erected. There must have been an 18<sup>th</sup> Century stonemason*

*selling cheap headstones. Knowing that he and his customers would be long gone before anyone found out...*

He smiled at Bill's sister. Made a determined effort to remember what her children were called. Completely failed. Opened his mouth to speak. Was interrupted by his phone.

*Do you answer your phone at a funeral? I'm a copper. Bill was a copper. He looked down at his phone. And it's Dan Keillor. So that's that...*

"What's up, Dan?"

"I'm sorry to trouble you, boss. I know it's the funeral and all that. It's just that..."

"What's happened?"

"There's been some remains found on the Moors. Human remains. I'm up there now."

"Give me a minute, Dan. I'm surrounded by people."

Michael Brady walked to the edge of the churchyard. Made sure he couldn't be overheard. Looked out over Whitby. At the town where he'd been born. At the hill where he'd scattered his wife's ashes. At the twin arms of the piers stretching out into the North Sea.

Looked up, across the harbour. The fishing boats. Looked past them. Found the house he'd bought.

Wondered for the thousandth time why he'd bought a house where he could see the end of the pier. Where he'd be reminded of Jimmy Gorse every day...

*Because it's the right house. Especially for Ash. Because – good or bad – you can't run away from your memories.*

"Sorry, Dan. We were just coming out of the church. Tell me the story."

"Two walkers, boss. Doing the Lyke Wake Walk –"

"In January?"

"They look like they know what they're doing, boss. Said they wanted a challenge. One of them stops. Call of nature. Sees what he thinks is a small piece of wood. Realises it isn't."

"And what is it?"

"It's a finger bone, boss. A finger bone from a child."

"How did he know?"

"He's a teacher. Biology."

Brady was 26. Back in Greater Manchester Police. His boss, his mentor, Jim Fitzpatrick, telling him about his first murder.

*'Just outside Bolton. One of those clear, crisp autumn mornings. A hint of the first frost. A clearing in a wood. A shallow grave. She was sixteen years old.'*

He'd gone home and told Grace.

*'What am I going to do? When people are calling me 'boss?' Supposing she's the same age as one of our children? The same colour hair? In the same class?'*

He could still hear her reply.

*'You'll deal with it. And I'll be here with you. I'll always be here.'*

*Daisy Stoner, Grace. You remember. And I didn't deal with it very well...*

"Have you taken statements?"

"I'm still up on the Moors with them. Thought it was better to ask questions up here. So they could show me everything."

"Have you got the photographer?"

"Yeah. He's complaining about the cold and the fading light."

"Photographers are always complaining about the light, Dan. Is he there? I need him to do something for me."

"Do you want him, boss?"

"No, you're fine. Ask him to photograph the bones will you? On his mobile. Then send me the photos. I know this guy teaches Biology but I need to get it confirmed."

Brady looked at his watch.

*Not much more than an hour until sunset.*

"Then secure the area, Dan. And make it big. Up to the path. And then fifty or sixty yards in each direction. And a tent over the grave. Let's try and minimise any more weather damage. And that'll do for tonight. It'll be dark soon. I'll send the cavalry first thing in the morning. And I'll come up with Geoff Oldroyd. What are you doing with the two guys?"

He heard Dan Keillor laugh. "They're both cold and hungry. I've told them you'll need to talk to them. They live over near Leeds. I think one of the wives has found a B&B."

"Good work. Have you looked around yourself?"

"Briefly, boss. I thought I should leave it to the experts. But it looks like a shallow grave."

"Have you looked at the piece of bone?"

"Yeah. It's definitely bone. I'm not sure how he could have thought it was anything else. Then again, I've never walked forty miles across the Moors."

"Have you got them there?"

“One of them. Do you want a word?”

“Very briefly. And thanks, Dan. Do what you need to do and get yourself home. It’s bloody freezing here on the cliff so God knows what it’s like on the Moors.”

Brady heard Dan Keillor say, ‘my boss wants a word.’ Then a nervous “Hello?”

“This is Detective Chief Inspector Michael Brady.”

*‘Ask the question they’re not expecting.’* The most valuable lesson he’d learned from Jim Fitzpatrick. *‘Ask the obvious question and they have the lie ready and waiting.’*

*And it wouldn’t be the first time a killer had ‘found’ his victim...*

“How cold are you?”

“Sorry? What?”

“How cold are you?” Brady said again.

The man on the other end of the phone laughed. “Very. And thanks for asking, Mr Brady. This is Andy Boulding. What can I do for you?”

“Nothing,” Brady said. “I wanted to say ‘thank you.’ I’ll need to speak to you in the morning and I just wanted to say thanks for staying in Whitby.”

“No problem. I think the wife’s looking forward to it now she’s got used to the idea.”

“Was it you that found the remains, Mr Boulding?”

“No. My brother-in-law, Paul Jarvis. He’s just walked up the hill to try and warm up a bit.”

“OK, thank you again. I’ll see you in the morning. Enjoy your night out in Whitby.”

*On a Monday night in January? After they’ve walked forty miles? They’ll fall asleep halfway through their fish and chips...*

The pictures took less than five minutes to arrive. Brady excused himself from a conversation with Kate’s next door neighbour. Walked to the edge of the churchyard a second time. Dialed her number.

*Two years since I last saw her? Maybe more.*

“Good morning. Or afternoon. Or evening if you’re lucky enough to live in Melbourne. This is Julia Grey. I can’t take your call right now but leave a message and I’ll get back to you.”

“It’s Michael Brady. Long time, no speak. Hope you’re well, Julia. I’m just going to send you some pictures. We’ve found some bones on the Moors. I don’t think there’s much doubt, but I’d be grateful if you could confirm it. And we need to recover them. Hopefully you’re not busy. And feel like a morning in Whitby...”

Brady looked up. Saw Ash waving frantically at him from across the churchyard. She pointed at the funeral car. Time for the crematorium.

*I can't sit in the funeral car with Kate and send pictures of bones...*

He mouthed 'one minute' at his daughter and hurriedly opened *Photos* on his phone. Copied the first one. Remembered Ash rolling her eyes when she'd shown him how to do it. Copied the other two. Sent them to Professor Julia Grey at Sheffield University. Knew what one of the country's leading forensic anthropologists would say.

Hoped she didn't ring him while he was in the crematorium.

Julia didn't. She waited for the reception.

"Julia, thank you for getting back to me. Give me a minute to find somewhere quiet."

He walked out of the hotel lounge and stood in the corridor. Looked out of the window over the manicured gardens.

"It sounds like you're at a party, Mike."

*My favourite accent. Bolton. Julia and that presenter on Gardeners' World...*

"Sadly not, Julia. I'm at a funeral. Well, the reception."

"Nobody close? Ah, sorry Mike. This is the first time I've spoken to you since... Since we heard about Grace. I was... well, 'devastated' isn't an adequate word. Neil too. All our love."

"Thank you, Julia."

"And you're back in Whitby?"

"Yeah, I..."

*I don't want to explain it on the phone.*

"You and Neil should come over to Whitby. I've bought a house overlooking the harbour. Come for the weekend when it's finished. How is Neil?"

"He's good. He's cut down to three days a week. But that wasn't what you were asking..."

Brady laughed. "No, I wasn't."

"Yes is the answer. He's reached the age where he's being stalked by ads for incontinence pants but twice a week he exchanges his stethoscope for a lead guitar. And as he constantly tells me, he's ten years younger than Eric Clapton. And I have to tell you, Mike, I'm all in favour of it. My hair's grey, I need about four different pairs of glasses but I'm married to a man who can still use the word 'gig' with a straight face. And as I tell him, I'm five years younger than Suzi Quatro."

"You should *definitely* come over. I've missed your humour."

"But in the short term you need an answer on those photos."

"Please, Julia. The guy that found them teaches Biology. He says a finger bone and the two arm bones."

“Sadly, he’s right. Looking at your photos, Mike, I’d say a teenager. Well, ‘teenager’ covers a multitude of sins. Still a child to six inches taller than his father. A young teenager. And looking at the colour I’d say the bones have been there for some time. You’re not looking for someone who disappeared last week.”

“When can you get over?”

“Immediately? I can’t. I’m needed on the other side of the Pennines. Like I need to drive over Snake Pass in January. But it’s every homeowner’s worst nightmare. Your dream house – or it will be your dream house when you’ve done the alterations – ”

“And the builders find a body?”

“Two bodies. Mother and child. I’m going to be there for two days at least.”

“Understood. I don’t really want to leave the bones out there that long, Julia. It’s the North York Moors, it’s a bloody big open space and it’s the middle of winter.”

“And you can keep people out but you can’t keep predators out?”

“Right. And I can keep the snow off but I can’t control the temperature.”

“Geoff Oldroyd moved to Whitby didn’t he?”

“Yes. Ten years ago. Or thereabouts. Same time as our SOCO. Guy called Henry Squire. He’s good. Very thorough.”

“I’ve worked with Geoff. And I’ll happily trust your judgement on Henry. You recover the bones, Mike. Just make sure there’s a big search area. And I’ll be over as soon as I can. I’ll call you.”

## Chapter 2

“I could have been a solicitor,” Brady said. “Did I ever tell you that? Nice warm office, someone bringing me a coffee. Or I could be out here freezing to death. Tough decision.”

“You’re going soft in your old age,” Geoff Oldroyd replied. “Crisp, sunny, winter morning on the Moors? As good as North Yorkshire has to offer. But you’re missing the most important point, Mike.”

“What’s that?”

“Solicitors don’t have to wear fancy dress. I reckon me and Henry have reached the age where a pale blue plastic romper suit doesn’t do a lot for us.”

Nine o’clock on Tuesday morning. Brady had been due to have a one-to-one with Dan Keillor. His six monthly performance review. It would have to wait. Looking at a patch of bare earth on the Moors, knowing what they were going to find, Dan Keillor’s performance review might have to wait a long time.

“Point taken, Geoff,” he said. “I’m going to leave you to it.”

“Squeamish?”

“A child’s skeleton on the Moors? I talked to Julia yesterday – ”

“Julia Grey?”

“Yeah. I know our guy’s a Biology teacher but procedure’s procedure. So she says yes, they’re human bones. And they’ve been here for some time. ‘You’re not looking for someone who disappeared last week’ were her exact words.”

“She’s not coming over?”

“She is, but she’s not sure when. So it’s up to us – well, you and Henry – to remove everything as carefully as we can. So yes, I’ll leave you to it. And I need to think.”

Brady watched Geoff Oldroyd step carefully over the heather into the small clearing.

*Not even a clearing. Just a gap in the heather. Barely bigger than my desk. Nothing growing...*

Brady could only just make out the edges of the grave. And only because he knew what he was looking for.

*How long has she been out here? And why am I saying ‘she?’ Because a body on the Moors is going to be a girl. Because I have a daughter. Because of Daisy Stoner...*

“Jake!” Brady called to PC Jake Cartwright.

“Yes, boss?”

“How long have you been on sentry duty?”

“First light, boss. As soon as it was light enough to walk across the Moors.”

“You had anything to eat?”

Cartwright shook his head. “We’re in the wrong business,” Brady said. “If we were out here filming *Harry Potter* there’d be a fully equipped catering truck. As we’re coppers – ” Brady pulled a £20 note out of his pocket. “Is the car handy?”

“Five hundred yards, boss. On the perimeter road. By Fylingdales.”

“There’s a garage just back towards Whitby. Let’s hope it has a coffee machine. Buy us all one. Any change you’ve got spend it on Mars Bars and biscuits. And bring me some sugar. It’s too bloody cold to give up this morning.”

“Suppose they haven’t got a coffee machine, boss?”

“Arrest them, Jake. Endangering the life of a police officer. Half a dozen police officers. Then keep driving ’til you find one.”

Brady walked towards the Lilla Cross. Went five yards past it and read the plaque.

*The Lilla Cross. Erected about 620AD over the reputed grave of Lilla, an officer of the court of Edwin, King of Northumbria, who died saving the life of the King. Believed to be the oldest Christian memorial in the North of England.*

Walked up onto the burial mound. Stood by the cross. Stared out across the Moors.

*You've got a cracking view, Lilla. The Moors, the path sloping gently downhill. The heather when it's in bloom. The sea in the distance. Richard III got a car park in Leicester...*

Brady looked down the path towards the Pickering road.

*That was the way they came. Gently uphill. They reach here. Do they see the cross as the start of the home straight? All downhill to Ravenscar? One of them needs a final pee? Stumbles to the exact spot?*

He saw someone digging. A shadowy figure.

*Night. It had to be at night. So it has to be murder. There's nothing else it can be. No-one commits suicide by climbing into a shallow grave. And it's a child.*

*How did she get here? Was she alive? 'Let's go for a walk on the Moors, sweetheart.' Or did he carry her body up here?*

The protective screens round the grave were fluttering in the breeze. Geoff Oldroyd and Henry Squire still on their hands and knees.

*When did this happen? It had to be in the winter. If he was digging he'd have needed wetter, softer ground. And no people. But why here? Why bring the body all the way out here?*

Brady couldn't help it. Impatience got the better of him. He walked down. As close to the grave as he dared. Spoke to the two middle-aged men in blue romper suits.

"How are you doing, Geoff? And it's sorted, Henry," he added. "I've sent Jake for some coffee."

Henry Squire, scene-of-crimes officer, twisted round and looked up at him. "Bacon and egg sandwich too much to hope for then, Mike?"

"North Yorkshire Police, Henry. You cocked-up. You should have joined the Met. Worked in London. Michelin star restaurant on every street corner."

"He's right, Henry," Geoff said. "'Where's the body, guv?' 'Just round the corner from Gordon Ramsay's place...'"

It was a coping mechanism. Brady had seen it – done it himself – any number of times. The more the crime affected them, the blacker the humour.

*And if this is a child in a shallow grave it's going to be very black...*

Geoff Oldroyd finally, painfully, straightened up. Put his hands on his hips. Stretched, tried to ease his lower back. Walked over to Brady.

"Christ, I'll pay for that in the morning."

"What have we got?" Brady said.

Geoff sighed. "Not much. The predators have done their work." He gave Brady an anguished look. "But a child, Mike." he said. "And if you want my best guess –"

"You know I do."

“Then twelve. Thirteen. Somewhere in that area.”

Brady nodded. “That’s what Julia said. ‘A young teenager.’ Girl or boy, Geoff?”

“Girl. Definitely. The pelvis is still there. So I’m sure.”

Brady nodded.

*A girl. It had been inevitable.*

“What did you find? No, hang on. Tell me in a minute.”

Jake Cartwright was back. He passed Brady and Geoff a coffee. Handed Brady a sachet of sugar.

“Thanks, Jake. Good work. Drink your coffee and then get yourself off. Go and find some breakfast. Get warmed up.”

“Thanks, boss.”

“Sorry, Geoff,” Brady said. “I didn’t want to discuss it in front of Jake. I want to keep this quiet for now. Whoever we’ve found was reported missing at some point.”

“There was a story wasn’t there? Twenty years ago? Twenty-five? A girl went missing in Whitby?”

Brady shook his head. “Not twenty-five years ago. I was still here. I’d have remembered something like that. Twenty? I don’t know. I was travelling. Or falling in love. Whitby didn’t register. When did Henry come here?”

“Ten years ago. About a month after me.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Brady said. “It’ll be in the records. I’ll find it. But whoever she is she’ll have parents. We need to find out who she is before we’ve got a queue of grieving relatives banging on the door. That sounds harsh. Sorry. Murdered children... It gets to me.”

Geoff Oldroyd pulled his coat round him.

*Protecting himself from the cold? Or from what he’s found?*

“You’re not alone, Mike. I’ve got someone on the table in front of me. Sixty-five, seventy maybe. I’m thinking, ‘fair enough, mate. Not quite your full whack, but close enough.’ When it’s a child...” He shook his head. “Stays with me for days. The wife doesn’t even have to ask.”

“So what’ve we got, Geoff?”

“Bones. Bones that have been out here for ten years. Maybe longer. Very definitely not someone who disappeared last week. And not all the bones either.”

“Why not?”

“Like I said, predators. Scavengers. You’ve seen it, I’ve seen it. A sheep dies out on the Moors, they strip it to the bones in a few weeks. And they carry the bones off. So down there – ” He nodded towards the grave. “We’ve got all the big bones. Skull,

pelvis, thigh bones. The ones that are too heavy to carry away. Some of the others... We're never going to find them."

"So we'll have to make do with what we've got?"

Geoff nodded. "Get them back as soon as we can. But I'm going to need some help, Mike. This is a job for a real expert. So the sooner Julia can come over the better."

"I don't suppose there's anything..."

"To say what she died of?" Geoff shook his head. "Nothing at all. The skull's intact. That's about all I can say right now. It's a jigsaw, Mike. It's a jigsaw where we need to find the pieces. And accept that two-thirds of them will be missing."

"Nothing else?"

"No. No fragments of clothing. No jewellery. No ligatures, ropes, cable-ties. Nothing."

"Nothing at all?"

"Not that I can see."

"So you're done?"

Geoff nodded. "More or less. I'll stay here with Henry. See what else we can find. Bag it. Label it. Bring back everything we can. Are you going to organise the search?"

"Organise the search, tell the lads to make sure the site is secure and try and keep a lid on it. Which is going to be bloody difficult. If not impossible."

"And talk to the two guys that found her?"

"Next job. They've stayed one night. I can't ask them to stay another. Whitby in January..."

Geoff looked at him. "It's a hell of a longshot you know, Mike."

Brady nodded. Looked back at the grave. "Finding the body? I thought that." He swept his arm out. "What are we looking at? From here to the sea? Three miles, four miles? How big are the Moors? Five hundred square miles?"

"About that. And our guy stops to relieve himself in exactly the right place?"

"It's a bloody strange way to confess."

"So what are you saying? He suddenly feels the need to confess after ten or fifteen years? A lot easier to walk into the nearest nick."

Brady laughed. "Especially in January. But never say never. I'll see what he has to say for himself. And thanks – you and Henry. I appreciate what you've done."

Brady turned and walked up the moorland path. Back past the Lilla Cross, leaving the man who died saving the life of King Edwin to gaze across the Moors for eternity.

*You could have had company, Lilla. Someone to share eternity with.*

*But now she's been found. So my job is simple. Find out who she was. And who put her here...*

Brady sat in his car. Turned the engine on. Mentally added heated seats to the checklist for his next car. Dialed the number.

*She's been in Whitby almost all her life. If a girl had gone missing she'll know about it.*

"Frankie Thomson."

*She sounds stressed. Under pressure...*

"Morning. It's Brady."

"I know. My phone told me. What can I do for you, boss?"

"I thought you were calling me Mike while you were on sabbatical?"

"Sorry. I'm not thinking straight. I've got to go round to Mum's. There's a problem with her medication. More than a problem."

*So she hasn't got five minutes...*

"OK, you go and sort that out."

"What did you want, Mike?"

"No, it doesn't matter. Go and look after your mum. I'll deal with it. Find it in the files at the station. It's not a problem..."

### Chapter 3

Brady knocked on the door of the B&B. Showed his ID to the middle-aged woman who opened it.

"You'll be the new copper, then?"

Brady nodded. Was shown into a tired, out-of-season residents' lounge. Waited five minutes. The door opened: two men with weather beaten faces walked stiffly into the room.

"That looks painful," Brady said.

One of them smiled. "Rigor mortis. Nothing terminal."

...And then realised what he'd said. "Ah, not very tactful. Sorry. Andy Boulding." He stuck his hand out. "And, by a process of elimination, Paul Jarvis."

The door opened again. The landlady with a pot of tea.

"Shall I bring you some biscuits to go with your tea?"

"That'd be lovely," Paul Jarvis said. "We've still got a few calories to catch up from yesterday..."

“I appreciate this,” Brady said. “Thank you for staying over. I accept that Whitby in January – especially when it starts raining – might not be to everyone’s taste.”

“You’re fine. It’s either stay over or come back isn’t it? And our wives walked up to St Mary’s before breakfast. Saw the Dracula graveyard.”

*Where I was standing when Dan Keillor phoned me...*

“I know you’ve told this story once,” Brady said. “But... what you found up there. I can’t say too much for obvious reasons. But you look like intelligent guys. Apart from walking across the Moors in winter, obviously...”

They laughed. Brady warmed to them. Felt some sympathy.

*You’ve found a body, gentlemen. Welcome to three o’clock in the morning. And the chances are, you’ll have to cope with the demons on your own...*

“You can guess what I’m going to ask,” Brady said.

“You’d like to hear the story again?”

“Yes, I would. Rather than play Chinese whispers with Dan Keillor.”

Paul Jarvis poured himself some tea. Looked questioningly at Brady and Andy Boulding. Both of them nodded.

“So I turned fifty,” Jarvis said. “Fifty on Christmas Day. Crap day to have a birthday but what can you do? No-one asked me. And I wanted to do something to celebrate. And something to challenge myself. So the Lyke Wake Walk in winter seemed a decent option.”

“It’s forty miles isn’t it?” Brady said.

“Forty miles across the highest, widest part of the Moors. Osmotherly to Ravenscar. Supposedly the route they took with the monks’ bodies. And you’ve twenty-four hours to do it.”

“I can’t believe you camped?”

Paul Jarvis shook his head. “Stayed at the Lion at Blakey Ridge. The last bit up to it is easy. You can do it with a head torch.”

“So you’re walking in the dark?”

“We’re experienced walkers,” Andy said. “We’ve done it before. And... This may sound silly. Have you ever been in the middle of the Moors at night, Mr Brady? Pitch black? No light pollution? Bloody hell, it’s beautiful. I’m not a religious man, but I defy you to stand in the middle of the Moors and look at the stars and tell me there isn’t a God.”

*No I haven’t. But I’d like to...*

“And then you set off at first light the next morning?”

*Which will be easy enough to check...*

They both nodded. “They left us something out for breakfast. And yeah, we’re off again. About an hour before sunrise.”

“So eventually you cross the Pickering road – and then you walk up past Fylingdales?”

Jarvis nodded. “Up there – blimey it was cold – and we get to the Lilla Cross. If you’re doing the Walk it’s a big moment. Well, it is for me. You know you’re nearly finished.”

“And you can see the winning post,” Andy added. “The mast at Ravenscar.”

“So you’re what – an hour away?” Brady said.

“No, longer than that. Closer to two.”

“Were you going to do it in your twenty-four hours?”

“Yeah,” Andy Boulding said. “With an hour or so to spare. I was starting to worry about it not being tough enough. Thinking what he’d dream up for his next birthday...”

“And then you found the bones.” Brady made it a statement.

Paul Jarvis nodded to himself. “I did. Yes. I had to answer a call.”

“Why there?” Brady said. “Why did you choose that particular spot?”

Jarvis laughed. “I didn’t. You know that poem, Mr Brady? *Desiderata*? ‘Gracefully surrendering the things of youth?’ Well I seem to have surrendered my bladder. Especially on a cold morning. So I just stood in a clump of heather. Then Andy shouted. Said there were some rambles coming. So I went a bit further. Five, ten yards. And there was this patch without any heather. So I stood in that.”

“And...”

“It’s... Well, it’s embarrassing. Do you need it in graphic detail?”

“Yes,” Brady said. “I’m sorry, I do.”

*Because I want to ‘see’ what happened. Because if I can start to see what happened yesterday maybe I can see what happened ten years ago. Or however long it was...*

“I started peeing,” Paul Jarvis said. “I saw what I thought was a tiny piece of wood. Like I said to your Constable, I’m embarrassed. Ashamed. I aimed at it.”

“And now you’re feeling guilty?”

“Yes. I’m a teacher. I teach children. I don’t...”

He didn’t finish the sentence. He didn’t need to.

*Yep, three o’clock in the morning. And when you’re face to face with a new class in September you’ll think, ‘It could have been one of these kids...’ Welcome to my world, Mr Jarvis.*

The door opened. The landlady was back. "Would you like your tea freshening up?"

No-one did. She reluctantly retreated.

"So you realise what you've aimed at?" Brady said.

"Not immediately. I just know it isn't a piece of wood. Honestly, I don't know. You have this feeling when you're walking. Especially early mornings. 'I'm the only one out here. Supposing I find a body?' Same as dog-walkers I suppose. But once I bent down and picked it up..."

"You knew what you were holding?"

Paul Jarvis nodded. "Yes, I did."

"And then..."

"Then we looked around. I told your Constable. Dan was it? We found two other bones."

"Then we stopped," Andy said. "Because..."

"Because you're normal guys and you're starting to feel sick. Don't apologise," Brady said. "You did what anyone would do."

"Do you know anything yet?" Paul Jarvis asked. "Any idea who it was?"

Brady shook his head. "No, not as yet."

*And if I did I couldn't tell you.*

"I've got some basic details from DC Keillor," Brady said. "Let me fill in some background. You live in Wetherby, Mr Jarvis?"

He nodded. "Live in Wetherby, teach in Leeds. New term starts in a couple of days. I was supposed to be in today."

"You're married. And children?"

"One. One lad, fourteen."

"He doesn't walk with you?"

"Fourteen? You clearly don't have a teenage son, Mr Brady. His bedroom's a cave. Lit only by his computer..."

Brady laughed. "I've got a daughter. So make that 'lit only by her mobile phone...' What about you, Mr Boulding?"

"Spofforth. It's a village near Harrogate. About three miles from Paul's place. And yes, three of the expensive buggers to answer your next question. And I'm an engineer. And I married his sister. So I'm stuck with him."

*Again, all easy enough to check...*

Brady stood up. Held his hand out. “Thank you. You may think you haven’t told me any more than you told DC Keillor. But it’s been helpful. Thank you. We’ve got your phone numbers?”

The men nodded. “Your DC made a note of them.”

“Thank you. There may well be an inquest. You’ll need to come back for that. Not for a while though.”

Brady handed them both a business card. “If you think of anything else. However trivial – anything that comes back to you. Don’t hesitate. Call me. And I hope the rigor mortis wears off.”

Brady stood on the pavement outside the B&B. Felt the wind coming off the sea.

*Someone’s got to find the body. There’s always someone who finds a body. ‘It’s a hell of a longshot, Mike.’ Finding any body is a hell of a longshot, Geoff. But you’re right. As longshots go this is right up there...*

## Chapter 4

Ten minutes to walk back to the office. Brady turned the collar of his coat up and walked down Church Street.

Crossed the swing bridge. Changed his mind about going straight back to the office. Stood by the side of the harbour.

*I love that. Love that I can see the house from half of Whitby. Let’s see what Chris has to say on Friday. And maybe Ash and I can finally eat together tonight. Spag Bol. I’ll need some mince...*

He walked out of the butcher’s and into the wind. Decided that Whitby in your forties was infinitely colder than Whitby in your teens. Remembered that he needed to see Kate.

*Tomorrow night. It’ll be the same. The same as it was with Grace. The arrangements. The funeral. And then everyone’s gone. Suddenly you’re on your own. Now what do I do? Get on with it, pal. You’re not the first person whose lost his wife. Learn to cope. Come to terms with it. Do the paperwork...*

He turned left and walked up the steps.

*I need to start Dan on missing persons. How far do we need to go back? Ten years? Twenty? Before Geoff Oldroyd arrived.*

There was something going on outside the police station. Jake Cartwright talking to a middle-aged woman. Judging by the body language not an amicable conversation.

*What is she? Forty-five? Fifty?*

Brady was close enough now. Close enough to hear the conversation.

“I need to see him.”

“There’s nothing he can tell you. Please, madam, for your own sake, go home. We’ll be in touch – ”

“Everything alright, PC Cartwright?” Brady said.

The woman turned to stare at him. Light brown hair pulled straight back. A face that said, ‘Life has not been kind to me.’ A denim shirt open at the neck. Coat unfastened. Red, puffy eyes.

*Like she’s been crying all night...*

“You’re him aren’t you?” she said. “You’re him. Brady. The one in charge.”

Jake Cartwright stepped across to restrain her. Brady held his hand up. “It’s alright, Jake. Yes,” he said. “I’m Michael Brady. What can I do for you, Mrs...”

“Ruby Simpson. I’m not married. And you can show me where those walkers found my Alice.”

*Alice? Is that her name?*

*How does she know?*

*Does the whole of Whitby know?*

*And how the hell do I deal with it if she’s right?*

Brady passed Ruby Simpson a cup of tea. Told her, no, she couldn’t smoke in the interview room. Suspected it might not be the first time she’d seen the inside of Whitby police station.

“I want to see it,” she said again. “The place. The place where they found her.”

He’d had to take her inside. Couldn’t have a discussion on the street. Just as clearly couldn’t send her home.

Brady had sat her in the interview room. Told her he’d make her a cup of tea. Left her with Jake Cartwright for five minutes. Desperately tried to find out what she was talking about. Found it after two minutes’ searching the records. Didn’t have time to read the full report. Read enough to hold a conversation.

And worked out who’d told her.

Brady took a deep breath. “I’ve looked in the records, Miss Simpson. I know – ”

“Ruby. I’m not a schoolteacher. Everyone calls me Ruby.”

“I’ve looked in the records, Ruby. I know what happened to your daughter. I simply cannot tell you how sorry I am. But right now that’s all I can tell you.”

Ruby Simpson stared at him. “She’s been found. On the Moors. Some walkers found her on the Moors. I want to see her. If you don’t let me see her I’ll go up there. My brother will take me.”

*The landlady at the B&B. She heard them talking. Paul or Andy. Or their wives. And she's broadcast the news round Whitby.*

Brady spread his hands. "Ruby, I can only repeat what I said. I've read – very briefly – about your daughter. Her disappearance. I am truly, truly sorry. But that's all I can say. The best thing you can do – the *only* sensible thing you can do – is to let us get on with our job."

She looked across the table at him. An equal mix of loathing and contempt. "You're all the same you coppers. Twenty years on and it's the same shit. 'Leave us to do our job.' 'We'll be in touch.' 'No, we're not looking for anyone else.' 'Your daughter's body? No idea where it is, love. He won't tell us.' 'But you're a pretty little thing, Ruby. Young enough to have another one.'"

Slowly, carefully, Ruby Simpson rolled the saliva round her mouth. Spat into her cup of tea. "Pigs is fucking right."

Brady held his hand up to stop Jake Cartwright for a second time. "I don't need this, Ruby. Clearly, I wasn't here when your daughter disappeared. I've been on the Moors all morning. And then speaking to –"

"Speaking to the two blokes that found her."

"Yes. But you know I can't comment on that. And I haven't had time to read all the reports. So I can't say any more. And spitting into your tea won't make me change my mind."

*How must she be feeling? If it is her daughter? How would I feel if... I can't even put it into words.*

"Jake, give me five minutes will you?"

Cartwright looked at him quizzically.

"Five minutes, Jake," Brady repeated.

"You want me to wait outside, boss?"

"No, you're fine."

Cartwright walked across to the door. Gave Brady another 'are you sure, boss?' glance. Brady nodded.

"Just the two of us then, Ruby. And like I said, spitting in your tea won't make me change my mind. But I... I'm sorry. I was going to say I understand how you feel. Obviously I don't have a clue."

She carried on staring at Brady. "No-one can. No-one. People say to me –" Ruby shook her head. "Fuck. What does it matter what people say? Just answer me this."

"If I can."

"Why did you give up? Why did you stop looking for her? You police – you can spend fucking millions looking for that McCann girl. Me? 'Cos I'm a single mother on a

council estate. 'Cos I don't look good in a press conference. *My* daughter. You don't give a tuppenny fuck."

*I've no idea what happened. Has she got a point? Probably...*

Brady sighed. "Do you want me to tell you the truth, Ruby? Or do you want me to lie to you?"

*Thank you for reading this sample of 'The Echo of Bones.' I hope you enjoyed it.*

*You can buy the book [by clicking this link](#).*