

Chapter 1 *A moorland death*

The first killing went well. Perfectly, in fact. Though I always knew it would. I had planned it well. Arrangements, organisation – these are things I'm good at. Now I've discovered I'm good at killing too.

At six o'clock in the morning I turned the car left off the road towards Tan Hill. The highest pub in England is at Tan Hill. But there's just the pub there, nothing else – no houses, no other buildings. The nearest village is eight kilometres away, the nearest shop twelve kilometres. This is wild, treeless country. There would be amazing views later, when the sun got up, but I wasn't interested in them.

I continued along a dirt road across moorland, stopping only when the car could no longer be seen from the road. Not that there was ever much traffic here.

I got out and stretched, enjoying the sharp cold of the early autumn air. To make myself less noticeable against the dull green grasses of the countryside around me, I was wearing hiking clothes and boots of a similar greeny colour. I took an old brown backpack off the back seat of the car and checked inside. There was a map, a bottle of water, gloves, binoculars and some sandwiches. I took out the gloves and put them on. I also had a hand-held GPS – there were no paths where I was going. In more ways than one I was making my way into the unknown. It was a journey of discovery, one that I had promised myself for some time.

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It took me two hours to walk across the wild moorland to where I wanted to be – two hours that seemed like no time at all. Excitement and nervousness were building up inside me in equal measure. In my mind I was going through the different possibilities of what might happen – yet I knew I would be successful.

Finally I arrived at the place I had chosen. There was an old, long-empty house beside a dirty-brown stream, which laughed its way down the side of the hill. The house was roofless and one wall was falling down. There were piles of old stones lying around. I found a stone that felt comfortable in my right hand, heavy and with sharp edges. Later I would use it.

A path turned this way and that up the hillside, past the house and over a wooden bridge across the stream. The path is well known to walkers, though not especially popular. The chances of a single walker taking advantage of this bright autumn morning were good, but there was unlikely to be a whole crowd of them. Then later, when the body was found, the police would think the killer had come along the same path as the walker, rather than over the pathless moorland. They would start searching in the wrong places. I had chosen well.

I took off my gloves, got my binoculars and a sandwich out of my backpack, and sat down on a large stone to wait. From where I was, I would be able see anyone coming from a long way away, but they would have difficulty seeing me.

I had hardly finished my sandwich when a man appeared in the distance, walking in my direction. Quickly I put on my gloves, picked up my chosen stone and hid behind the back wall of the house. I waited. My heart went faster. I took deep breaths to slow it down. I had a picture in my mind of the man coming nearer. My excitement rose; my nervousness

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disappeared. I heard the sound of footsteps on the dirt path. Coming near. Nearer. I raised my stone. This was the moment of truth.

And then it was done.

The man lay on his side on the ground by my feet. His longish grey hair had fallen over his face. His eyes were closed, but there was movement under the eyelids. I took off my left glove and felt the side of his neck. He wasn't dead, just unconscious. I looked at him. This was the moment – the moment I wanted to experience, the moment I had promised myself. I hit him again, hard, driving the edge of the stone deep into the side of his head through the bone. And then he was completely still.

I looked down at the man. A thousand different feelings fought for my attention. I had done it! I felt high, drunk, untouchable. I felt brilliant, strong, undefeatable. I was alive.

I threw the stone far away. Let the police find it, I thought. They would learn nothing from it.

Then I took a playing card out of my jacket pocket, found the dead man's wallet in his jacket and put the card inside. I put the wallet back where I had found it.

A moment later I picked up my backpack and started back to my car.

This is just the beginning. I can show them. I can show them they are wrong. I can show them what I'm really made of.

* * *

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Detective Inspector Charles Neville got out of a dark blue police Land Rover in the middle of the cold North Yorkshire moorland near Surrender Bridge. The emergency call reporting a dead body had come in an hour or so earlier. The first

police officers had arrived at the scene twenty minutes later and established that the death wasn't natural. Neville had immediately been called out. It was his day off and he had been out with his wife. Shopping for a new kitchen for his home suddenly seemed far less important.

As Neville got out of the vehicle, a young woman with short dark hair came over to him. It was his sergeant, Helen Scott.

'I got here a few minutes ago,' said Scott. 'The body's over there behind that building.' She waved a hand in the direction of an old roofless building that had half fallen down.

Neville could see that black and yellow scene-of-crime tape had already been put around the building, and also round a largish area of moorland. Three other Land Rovers and a couple of other off-road vehicles were parked near the building.

As Neville walked with Scott towards the building, he looked up at the sky. Thick dark cloud was beginning to blow in from the west.

'Yorkshire weather,' he said bad-temperedly, pointing at the sky. 'Let's hope the rain keeps away until we're finished here.'

Neville was from the South-East. Although he'd lived in Yorkshire for the last ten years, he still hadn't got used to the weather. When the sun was out, it was indeed a special place, but it wasn't uncommon to experience all four seasons in one day.

'Yes,' agreed Scott.

Around the corner of the building they found Kay Harding, the police doctor, bending over the body of a

middle-aged man dressed in hiking clothes and boots. He still had a backpack on. Harding stood up as she heard the detectives arrive and started talking immediately.

‘Charles, Helen,’ she said, looking from one to the other and then down at the body. ‘What we have here is the body of a fifty- to fifty-five-year-old man. He was presumably out walking. Someone has hit him hard on the side of the head twice. Probably with a stone.’

‘Time of death?’ asked Neville.

‘Somewhere between eight and ten this morning, I’d say,’ replied Harding.

‘Anything else?’ asked Neville.

‘Not at the moment,’ replied Harding. ‘Once the photographer’s done his business, I’ll take the body away. I’ll leave you the backpack and anything I find in his pockets.’

‘OK. Thanks,’ said Neville. Neville’s mood improved. Harding was one of the best – clear, professional, and she didn’t waste words. He liked that. He looked at the sky again and then at his watch. They would have to hurry. He turned to Scott.

‘We’ll have enough daylight,’ he said, ‘but God knows how long the rain will hold off. Get this area searched – as much as you can and as carefully as you can. We’re obviously looking for anything that might be useful, but we’re especially looking for the stone that killed him.’

‘Right,’ answered Scott.

‘Who found the body?’ asked Neville.

‘A local couple,’ answered Scott. ‘They’re in the green Land Rover over there.’ She pointed to it.

‘I’ll go and talk to them,’ said Neville. ‘Then we’ll need to think about an operations room. Reeth is the nearest village. Maybe there’s somewhere there.’

Scott nodded. She and Neville had offices at the police station in Richmond, the nearest town, but that was almost twenty kilometres away. Neville would want to be closer to the scene than that. There was a mobile office they could bring over and use, or they could find a large room nearby that they could borrow.

‘Right,’ she said. ‘I’ll get the search started here.’

* * *

At eight o’clock the following morning Neville and Scott and a team of fifteen officers met in Reeth Memorial Hall, their new operations room. This large empty room was normally used for anything from children’s playgroups, to concerts, to band practice. Now it was filled with desks, chairs, computers, phones and police officers.

Neville stood facing his team, his age showing in the grey of his hair and the lines on his face. Scott was next to him. Neither of them had had much sleep. Behind them was a whiteboard with the photograph of a man’s face on it.

‘OK,’ began Neville. ‘First, what we know. This is Matthew Kenworthy.’

He pointed at the photograph.

‘He was found at three o’clock yesterday afternoon by a local couple who were out walking their dog. He died some time yesterday morning between eight and ten. Someone hit him on the side of the head twice with a stone. We’ve got the stone, but it’s anyone’s guess if we’ll find out anything from it.’

He stepped back and looked across at Scott.

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‘Over to you,’ he said.

‘Kenworthy was here on his own, on a walking holiday,’ she began. ‘He was staying at the Shoulder of Mutton pub here in Reeth. He arrived a couple of days ago. He hadn’t been to the area before. He was friendly, but kept himself to himself.’

She cleared her throat before continuing.

‘Yesterday morning he went off in his car, intending to walk an eight-kilometre path that goes in a circle from Surrender Bridge. We found his car near the bridge.’

Scott then pointed to a number of plastic bags on the table beside her.

‘We’ve been through the things in his room. There’s nothing of interest there. We’ve been through what he had with him on the walk. He just had the usual stuff that walkers take – map, GPS, hat, gloves, sandwiches, water – but there was one unusual thing.’

Scott picked up a plastic bag and held it up so that everyone could see. Inside the bag was a playing card.

‘The ace of spades,’ she said. ‘It was in his wallet. And there were no other cards in his room. Any ideas?’

Heads shook all round the room.

Neville stepped forward again.

‘OK,’ he said. ‘Kenworthy was single and lived in Bristol. The police there are making inquiries. Up here we’ve got work to do too. I want four of you to walk the eight kilometres that Kenworthy intended to walk. The murderer may have followed him or may have come from the opposite direction. Go in two pairs – one pair in the same direction as Kenworthy, the other pair in the opposite direction. Check along the path for anything that might be useful.’

Neville picked up a pile of photographs from the table and gave them to Scott.

‘I want the rest of you making door-to-door inquiries in Reeth,’ he said. ‘It’s a small place. Everyone knows everyone. Take Kenworthy’s picture with you. See if anyone knows him, or spoke to him, or saw anyone speaking to him. DS Scott will tell you who’s doing what.’

Neville turned and was about to leave the room when a voice came from the back.

‘Sir.’

Neville turned round.

‘Yes?’ he said.

One of the officers had a hand in the air to show that he had spoken.

‘What is it?’ asked Neville.

‘The ace of spades, sir,’ said the officer. ‘I’ve just remembered – it’s the card of death.’