

# PETER ROBINSON



An Inspector Banks Mystery

# GALLOW'S VIEW

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# **GALLOWS VIEW**

**An Inspector Banks Mystery**

**Peter Robinson**

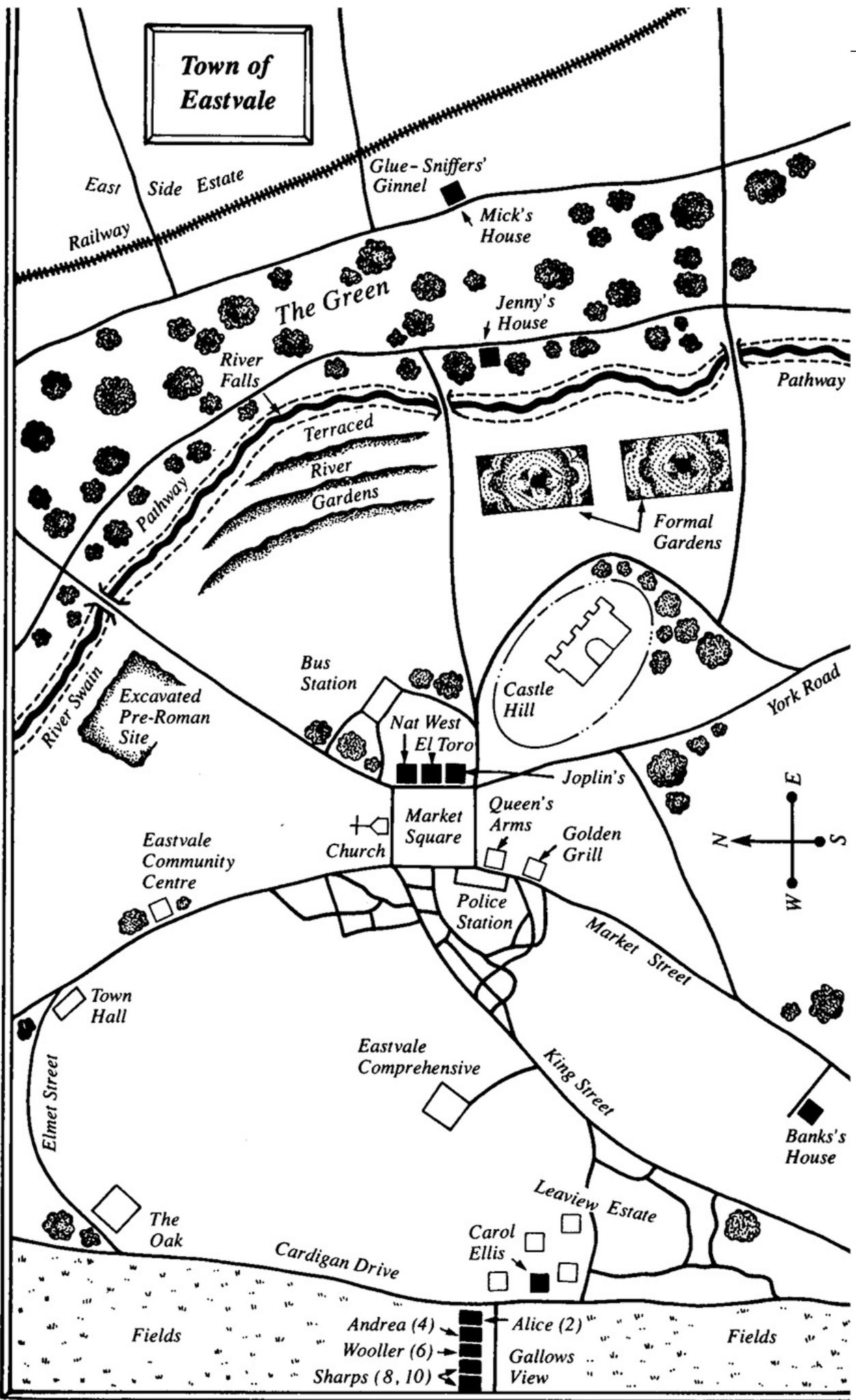
Charles Scribner's Sons  
New York

*For my father, Clifford Robinson, and to the memory of my mother,  
Miriam Robinson, 1922-1985.*

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“Now winter nights enlarge  
—The number of their houres,  
And clouds their stormes discharge  
    Upon the ayrie towres;  
Let now the chimneys blaze  
    And cups o’erflow with wine,  
Let well-tun’d words amaze  
    With harmonie divine.  
Now yellow waxen lights  
    Shall waite on hunny Love,  
While youthfull Revels, Masks, and Courtly sights,  
    Sleepes leaden spels remove.”

Thomas Campion  
*The Third Booke of Ayres*



**Town of Eastvale**

East Side Estate  
Railway

Glue-Sniffers' Ginnel

Mick's House

Jenny's House

The Green

River Falls

Terraced River Gardens

Pathway

Formal Gardens

Pathway

River Swain

Excavated Pre-Roman Site

Bus Station

Nat West  
El Toro

Castle Hill

York Road

Joplin's

Queen's Arms

Golden Grill

Market Square

Church

Police Station

Market Street

Eastvale Community Centre

Town Hall

Elmet Street

Eastvale Comprehensive

King Street

Banks's House

The Oak

Leaview Estate

Cardigan Drive

Carol Ellis

Fields

Andrea (4)

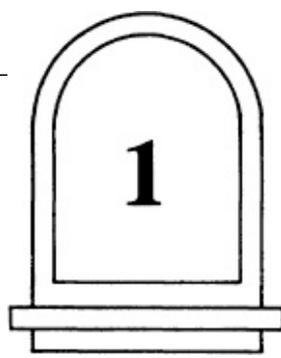
Wooller (6)

Sharps (8, 10)

Alice (2)

Gallows View

Fields



## I

The woman stepped into the circle of light and began to undress. Above her black, calf-length skirt she wore a silver blouse with dozens of little pearl buttons up the front. She tugged it free of the waistband and started undoing the buttons from the bottom very slowly, gazing into space as if she were recalling a distant memory. With a shrug, she slid the blouse off, pulling at the left sleeve, which stuck to her wrist with static, then lowered her head and stretched her arms behind her back like wings to unclasp her bra, raising one shoulder and then the other as she slipped off the thin straps. Her breasts were large and heavy, with dark upturned nipples.

She unzipped her skirt down the left side and let it slide to the floor. Stepping out of it and bending from the waist, she picked it up and laid it neatly over the back of a chair. Next she rolled her tights down over her hips, buttocks and thighs, then sat down on the edge of the bed to extricate herself from each leg, one at a time, careful not to make runs. As she bent over, the taut skin folded in a dark crease across her stomach and her breasts hung so that each nipple touched each knee in turn.

Standing again, she hooked her thumbs into the elastic of her black panties and bent forward as she eased them down. As she stepped out of them, she caught the waistband with her left foot and flicked them into the corner by the wardrobe.

At last, completely naked, she tossed back her wavy blonde hair and walked towards the dresser.

It was then that she looked towards the chink in the curtains. His whole body tingled as he watched the shock register in her eyes. He couldn't move. She gasped and instinctively tried to cover her breasts with her hands, and he thought how funny and vulnerable she looked with the triangle of hair between her legs exposed. . . .

As she grabbed for her dressing-gown and dashed towards the window, he managed to drag himself away and run off, scraping his shin and almost falling as he jumped the low wall. He had disappeared into the night by the time she picked up the telephone.

## II

"Where on earth did I put that sugar bowl?" Alice Matlock muttered to herself as she searched the cluttered room. It was a birthday present from Ethel Carstairs — a present for her eighty-seventh birthday three days ago. Now it had disappeared.

Alice was having trouble remembering little things like that these days. They said it happened when you got older. But why, then, should the past seem so vivid? Why, particularly, should that day in 1916, when Arnold marched off proudly to the trenches, seem so much clearer than yesterday. "What happened yesterday?" Alice asked herself, as a test, and she did remember little details like visiting the shop, polishing her silverware and listening to a play on the radio. But had she really done those things yesterday, the day before, or even last week? The memories were there, but the string of time that linked them like a pearl necklace was missing.

necklace was broken. All those years ago — that beautiful summer when the meadows were full of buttercups (none of those nasty new bungalows, then), the hedgerows bright with cow-parsley (“gypsy” slippers, always called it, because her mother had told her that if she picked it the gypsies would take her) and hollyhocks, the garden full of roses, chrysanthemums, clematis and lupins — Arnold had stood there, ready to go, his brass buttons reflecting the sunlight in dancing sparks on the whitewashed walls. He leaned against the doorway, that very same doorway, with his kitbag and that lopsided grin on his face — such a young face, one that had never even seen a razor — and off he marched, erect, graceful, to the station.

He never came back. Like so many others, he was destined to lie in a foreign grave. Alice knew this. She knew that he was dead. But hadn't she also been waiting for him all these years? Wasn't that why she had never married, even when that handsome shopkeeper Jack Wormald had proposed? Down on his knees, it was, by the falls at Rawley Force; got his knees wet, too, and that didn't half vex him. But she said no, kept the house on after her parents died, changed things as little as possible.

There had been another war, too, she vaguely remembered: ration books; urgent voices and martial anthems on the radio; faraway rumblings that could have been bombs. Arnold hadn't come back from that war either, though she could imagine him fighting in it like a Greek god, lithe and strong, with a stern face and a face that had never seen a razor.

Other wars followed, or so Alice had heard. Distant ones. Little wars. And he had fought in them all, an eternal soldier. She knew, deep down, that he would never come home, but she couldn't lose hope. Without hope, there would be nothing left.

“Where on earth did I put it?” she muttered to herself, down on her knees rummaging through the cupboard under the sink. “It must be somewhere. I'd forget my head if it was loose.”

Then she heard someone running outside. Her eyes were not as good as they used to be, but she was proud of her hearing and often ticked off the shop-girls and bus conductors who assumed that they had to shout to make her hear them. After the sound of running came a gentle knock at her door. Puzzled, she stood up slowly, grasped the draining-board to keep her balance, and shuffled through to the living-room. There was always a chance. She had to hope. And so she opened the door.

### III

“Perverts, the lot of them,” Detective Chief Inspector Alan Banks said, adjusting the treble on the stereo.

“Including me?” asked Sandra.

“For all I know.”

“Since when has making artistic representations of the naked human form been a mark of perversion?”

“Since half of them don't even have films in their cameras.”

“But I always have film in my camera.”

“Yes,” Banks said enthusiastically, “I've seen the results. Where on earth do you find those girls?”

“They're mostly students from the art college.”

“Anyway,” Banks went on, returning to his scotch, “I'm damn sure Jack Tatum doesn't have a film in his camera. And Fred Barton wouldn't know a wide-angle lens from a putting iron. I wouldn't be at all surprised if they imagined you posing — a nice willowy blonde.”

Sandra laughed. “Me? Nonsense. And stop playing the yahoo, Alan. It doesn't suit you. You don't have a leg to stand on, acting the idiot over photography while you're inflicting this bloody opera on me.”

“For someone who appreciates artistic representations of the naked human form, you're a proper philistine when it comes to music, you know.”

“Music I can take. It's all this screeching gives me a headache.”

“Screeching! Good lord, woman, this is the sound of the human spirit soaring: *Vissi d’arte, vissi d’amore* —”  
Banks’s soprano imitation made up in volume what it lacked in melody.

“Oh, put a sock in it,” Sandra sighed, reaching for her drink.

It was always like this when he found a new interest. He would pursue it with a passion for anywhere between one and six months, then he would have a restless period, lose interest and move on to something else. Of course, the detritus would remain, and he would always profess to be still deeply interested — just a little too pushed for time. That was how the house had come to be so cluttered up with the novels of Charles Dickens, wine-making equipment, twenties jazz records, barely used jogging shoes, a collection of bird eggs, and books on almost every subject under the sun — from Tudor history to how to fix your own plumbing.

He had become interested in opera after seeing, quite by chance, a version of Mozart’s *Magic Flute* on television. It was always like that. Something piqued his curiosity and he wanted to know more. There was no order to it, neither in his mind nor in his filing system. He would plunge into a subject with cavalier disregard for its chronological development. And so it was with the opera craze: *Orfeo* rubbed shoulders with *Lulu*; *Peter Grimes* was *Tosca*’s strange bedfellow; and *Madama Butterfly* shared shelf-space with *The Rakoczi March*. Much as she loved music, opera was driving Sandra crazy. Already, complaints from Brian and Tracy had resulted in the removal of the television to the spare room upstairs. And Sandra was forever tripping over the book-sized cassette boxes, which Banks preferred to records, as he liked to walk to work and listen to Purcell or Monteverdi on his Walkman; in the car, it was generally Puccini or Giuseppe Verdi or good old Joe Green.

They were both alike in their thirst for knowledge, Sandra reflected. Neither was an academic or intellectual, but both pursued self-education with an urgency often found in bright working-class people who hadn’t had culture thrust down their throats from the cradle onwards. If only, she wished, he would take up something quiet and peaceful, like beekeeping or stamp collecting.

The soprano reached a crescendo which sent involuntary shivers up Sandra’s spine.

“You’re surely not serious about some people in the Camera Club being perverts, are you?” she asked.

“I shouldn’t be surprised if one or two of them got more than an artistic kick out of it, that’s all.”

“You could be right, you know,” Sandra agreed. “They’re not only women, the models. We had a very nice Rastafarian the other week. Lovely pector —”

The phone rang.

“Damn and blast it.” Banks cursed and hurried over to pick up the offending instrument. Sandra took the opportunity to turn down the volume on *Tosca* surreptitiously.

“Seems that someone’s been taking unasked-for peeks at the naked human form again,” said Banks when he sat down again a few minutes later.

“Another of those Peeping Tom incidents?”

“Yes.”

“You don’t have to go in, do you?”

“No. It’ll wait till morning. Nobody’s been hurt. She’s more angry than anything else. Young Richmond is taking her statement.”

“What happened?”

“Woman by the name of Carol Ellis. Know her?”

“No.”

“Seems she came back from a quiet evening at the pub, got undressed for bed and noticed someone watching her through a gap in the curtains. He took off as soon as he realized he’d been spotted. It was on that new estate, Leaview, those ugly bungalows down by the Gallows View cottages. Great places for

voyeurs, bungalows. They don't even need to shin up the drainpipe." Banks paused and lit a Benson and Hedges Special Mild. "This one's taken a few risks in the past, though. Last time it was a second-floor maisonette."

"It makes my skin crawl," Sandra said, hugging herself. "The thought of someone watching when you think you're alone."

"I suppose it would," Banks agreed. "But what worries me now is that we'll have that bloody feminist group down on us again. They really seem to think we haven't bothered trying to catch him because we secretly approve. They believe all men are closet rapists. According to them, our secret hero is Jack the Ripper. They think we've got pin-ups on the station walls."

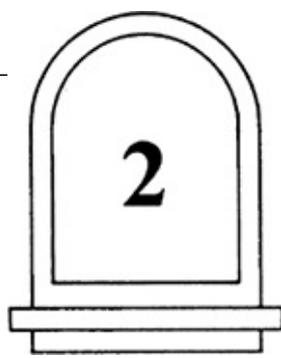
"You do. I've seen them. Not in your office, maybe, but downstairs."

"I mean pin-ups of Jack the Ripper."

Sandra laughed. "That's going a bit far, I agree."

"Do you know how difficult it is to catch a peeper?" Banks asked. "All the bugger does is look and run away into the night. No fingerprints, no sightings, nothing. The best we can hope for is to catch him in the act, and we've had extra men and women walking the beat in the most likely areas for weeks now. Still nothing. Anyway," Banks said, reaching out for her, "all this talk about naked bodies is exciting me. Time for bed?"

"Sorry," answered Sandra, turning off the stereo. "Not tonight, dear, I've got a headache."



## I

“And where the bloody hell do you think you were till all hours last night?” Graham Sharp roared at his son over the breakfast table.

Trevor glowered into his cornflakes. “Out.”

“I know you were bloody out. Out with that good-for-nothing Mick Webster, I’ll bet?”

“What if I was? It’s my business who I hang out with.”

“He’s a bad ’un, Trevor. Like his brother and his father before him. A rotten apple.”

“Mick’s all right.”

“I didn’t raise you all these years with my own hands just so you could hang about with hooligans and get into trouble.”

“Well, if you weren’t such a bleeding little Hitler my mum might not have run off.”

“Never mind that,” Graham said quietly. “You don’t know nothing about it, you was only a kid. I just want you to do well for yourself,” he pleaded. “Look, I’ve not done much. Never had the opportunity. But you’re a bright lad. If you work hard you can go to university, get yourself a good education.”

“What’s the point? There’s no jobs anyway.”

“It’s not always going to be like this, Trevor. I know the country’s going through a bad time right now. You don’t need to tell me that. But look to the future, lad. It’ll be five or six years by the time you’ve done your ‘A’ Levels and your degree. Things can change a lot in that time. All you need to do is stay in a bit more and do your homework. You never found it hard, you know you can do it.”

“It’s boring.”

“Look what happened to Mick, then,” Graham went on, his voice rising with anger again. “Left school a year ago and still on the bloody dole. Sharing a hovel with that layabout brother of his, father run off God knows where and his mother never home to take care of him.”

“Lenny’s not a layabout. He had a job in London. Just got made redundant, that’s all. It wasn’t his fault.”

“I’m not going to argue with you, Trevor. I want you to stay in more and spend some time on your schoolwork. I might not have made much out of my life, but you can — and you’re bloody well going to, even if it kills me.”

Trevor stood up and reached for his satchel. “Better be off,” he said. “Wouldn’t want to be late for school, would I?”

After the door slammed, Graham Sharp put his head in his hands and sighed. He knew that Trevor was a difficult age — he’d been a bit of a lad himself at fifteen — but if only he could persuade him that he had so much to lose. Life was hard enough these days without making it worse for yourself. Since Maureen had walked out ten years ago, Graham had devoted himself to their only child. He would have sent Trevor to a public school if he’d had enough money, but had to settle for the local comprehensive. Even there, despite all the drawbacks, the boy had always done well — top of the class, prizes every Speech Day — until last year, when he took up with Mick Webster.

Graham's hands shook as he picked up the breakfast dishes and carried them to the sink. Soon it would be opening time. At least since he'd stopped doing morning papers he got a bit of a lie-in. In the old days when Maureen was around, he'd had to get up at six o'clock, and he'd kept it going as long as he could. Now he couldn't afford to employ a flock of paper-carriers, nor could he manage to pay the assistant he would need to deal with other business. As things were, he could just about handle it all himself — orders, accounts, stock checks, shelf arrangements — and usually still manage to come up with a smile and a hello for the customers.

His real worry was Trevor, and he didn't know if he was going about things the right way or not. He knew he had a bit of a temper and went on at the lad too much. Maybe it was better to leave him alone, wait till he passed through the phase himself. But perhaps then it would be too late.

Graham stacked the dishes in the drainer, checked his watch, and walked through to the shop. Fifteen minutes late. He turned the sign to read OPEN and unlocked the door. Grouchy old Ted Croft was already counting out his pennies, shuffling his feet as he waited for his week's supply of baccy. Not a good start to the day.

## II

Banks reluctantly snapped off his Walkman in the middle of Dido's lament and walked into the station, a Tudor-fronted building in the town centre, where Market Street ran into the cobbled square. He said "Good morning" to Sergeant Rowe at the desk and climbed upstairs to his office.

The whitewashed walls and black-painted beams of the building's exterior belied its modern, functional innards. Banks's office, for example, featured a venetian blind that was almost impossible to work and a green metal desk with drawers that rattled. The only human touch was the calendar on the wall, with its series of local scenes. The illustration for October showed a stretch of the River Wharfe, near Grassington, with trees lining the waterside in full autumn colour. It was quite a contrast to the real October: nothing but grey skies, rain and cold winds so far.

On his desk was a message from Superintendent Gristhorpe: "Alan, Come see me in my office soon. You get in. G."

Remembering first to unhook the Walkman and put it in his desk drawer, Banks walked along the corridor and knocked on the superintendent's door.

"Come in," Gristhorpe called, and Banks entered.

Inside was luxury — teak desk, bookcases, shaded table lamps — most of which had been supplied by Gristhorpe himself over the years.

"Ah, good morning Alan," the superintendent greeted him, "I'd like you to meet Dr Fuller." He gestured towards the woman sitting opposite him, and she stood up to shake Banks's hand. She had a shock of curly red hair, bright green eyes with crinkly laugh-lines around the edges, and a luscious mouth. The turquoise top she was wearing looked like a cross between a straight-jacket and a dentist's smock. Below that she wore rust-coloured cords that tapered to a halt just above her shapely ankles. All in all, Banks thought, the doctor was a knock-out.

"Please, Inspector Banks," Dr Fuller said as she gently let go of his hand, "call me Jenny."

"Jenny it is, then," Banks smiled and dug for a cigarette. "I suppose that makes me Alan."

"Not if you don't want to be." Her sparkling eyes seemed to challenge him.

"Not at all, it's a pleasure," he said, meeting her gaze. Then he remembered Gristhorpe's recent ban against smoking in his office, and put the pack away.

"Dr Fuller is a professor at York University," Gristhorpe explained, "but she lives here in Eastvale."

Psychology's her field, and I brought her in to help with the Peeping Tom case. Actually," he turned a charming smile in Jenny's direction, "~~Dr Fuller — Jenny — was recommended by an old and valued friend of mine in the department. We were hoping she might be able to work with us on a profile.~~"

Banks nodded. "It would certainly give us more than we've got already. How can I help?"

"I'd just like to talk to you about the details of the incidents," Jenny said, looking up from a notepad that rested on her lap. "There's been three so far, is that right?"

"Four now, counting last night's. All blondes."

Jenny nodded and made the change in her notes.

"Perhaps the two of you can arrange to meet sometime," Gristhorpe suggested.

"Is now no good?" Banks asked.

"Afraid not," Jenny said. "This might take a bit of time, and I've got a class in just over an hour. Look what about tonight, if it's not too much of an imposition on your time?"

Banks thought quickly. It was Tuesday; Sandra would be at the Camera Club, and the kids, now trusted in the house without a sitter, would be overjoyed to spend an opera-free evening. "All right," he agreed. "Make it seven in the Queen's Arms across the street, if that's okay with you."

When Jenny smiled, the lines around her eyes crinkled with pleasure and humour. "Why not? It's an informal kind of procedure anyway. I just want to build up a picture of the psychological type."

"I'll look forward to it, then," Banks said.

Jenny picked up her briefcase and he held the door open for her. Gristhorpe caught his eye and beckoned him to stay behind. When Jenny had gone, Banks settled back into his chair, and the superintendent rang for coffee.

"Good woman," Gristhorpe said, rubbing a hairy hand over his red, pock-marked face. "I asked Ted Simpson to recommend a bright lass for the job, and I think he did his homework all right, don't you?"

"It remains to be seen," replied Banks. "But I'll agree she bodes well. You said a woman. Why? Has Mrs Hawkins stopped cooking and cleaning for you?"

Gristhorpe laughed. "No, no. Still brings me fresh scones and keeps the place neat and tidy. No, I'm not after another wife. I just thought it would be politic, that's all."

Banks had a good idea what Gristhorpe meant, but he chose to carry on playing dumb. "Politic?"

"Aye, politic. Diplomatic. Tactful. You know what it means. It's the biggest part of my job. The biggest pain in the arse, too. We've got the local feminists on our backs, haven't we? Aren't they saying we're not doing our job because it's women who are involved? Well, if we can be seen to be working with an obviously capable, successful woman, then there's not a lot they can say, is there?"

Banks smiled to himself. "I see what you mean. But how are we going to be seen to be working with Jenny Fuller? It's hardly headline material."

Gristhorpe put a finger to the side of his hooked nose. "Jenny Fuller's attached to the local feminist. She'll report back everything that's going on."

"Is that right?" Banks grinned. "And I'm going to be working with her? I'd better be on my toes, then, hadn't I?"

"It shouldn't be any problem, should it?" Gristhorpe asked, his guileless blue eyes as disconcerting as a newborn baby's. "We've got nothing to hide, have we? We know we're doing our best on this one. I just want others to know, that's all. Besides, those profiles can be damn useful in a case like this. Help us predict patterns, know where to look. And she won't be hard on the eyes, will she? A right bobby-dazzler, don't you think?"

"She certainly is."

"Well, then." Gristhorpe smiled and slapped both his hands on the desk. "No problem, is there? Now

how's that break-in business going?"

"It's very odd, but we've had three of those in a month, too, all involving old women alone in the homes — one even got a broken arm — and we've got about as far with that as we have with the Tom business. The thing is, though, there are no pensioners' groups giving us a lot of stick, telling us we're not doing anything because only old people are getting hurt."

"It's the way of the times, Alan," Gristhorpe said. "And you have to admit that the feminists do have a point, even if it doesn't apply in this particular case."

"I know that. It just irritates me, being criticized publicly when I'm doing the best I can."

"Well, now's your chance to put that right. What about this fence in Leeds? Think it'll lead anywhere with the break-ins?"

Banks shrugged. "Might do. Depends on Mr Crutchley's power of recall. These things vary."

"According to the level of threat you convey? Yes, I know. I should imagine Joe Barnshaw's done some groundwork for you. He's a good man. Why bother yourself? Why not let him handle it?"

"It's our case. I'd rather talk to Crutchley myself — that way I can't blame anyone else if mistakes are made. What he says might ring a bell, too. I'll ask Inspector Barnshaw to show him the pictures later, get an artist in if the description's good enough."

Gristhorpe nodded. "Makes sense. Taking Sergeant Hatchley?"

"No, I'll handle this by myself. I'll put Hatchley on the peeper business till I get back."

"Do you think that's wise?"

"He can't do much damage in an afternoon, can he? Besides, if he does, it'll give the feminists a target worthy of their wrath."

Gristhorpe laughed. "Away with you, Alan. Throwing your sergeant to the wolves like that."

### III

It was raining hard. Hatchley covered his head with a copy of *The Sun* as he ran with Banks across Market Street to the Golden Grill. It was a narrow street, but by the time they got there the page-three beauty was sodden. The two sat down at a window table and looked out at distorted shop-fronts through the runnels of rain, silent until their standing order of coffee and toasted teacakes was duly delivered by the perky, petulant young waitress in her red checked dress.

The relationship between the inspector and his sergeant had changed slowly over the six months Banks had been in Eastvale. At first, Hatchley had resented an "incomer," especially one from the big city, being brought in to do the job he had expected to get. But as they worked together, the Dalesman had come to respect, albeit somewhat grudgingly (for a Yorkshireman's respect is often tempered with a sarcasm intended to deflate airs and graces), his inspector's sharp mind and the effort Banks had made to adapt to his new environment.

Hatchley had got plenty of laughs observing this latter process. At first, Banks had been hyperactive, running on adrenalin, chain-smoking Capstan Full Strength, exactly as he had in his London job. But all that had changed over the months as he got used to the slower pace in Yorkshire. Outwardly, he was now calm and relaxed — deceptively so, as Hatchley knew, for inside he was a dynamo, his energy contained and channelled, flashing in his bright dark eyes. He still had his tempers, and he retained a tendency to brood when frustrated. But these were good signs; they produced results. He had also switched to mild cigarettes, which he smoked sparingly.

Hatchley felt more comfortable with him now, even though they remained two distinctly different breeds, and he appreciated his boss's grasp of northern informality. A working-class Southerner didn't seem

so different from a Northerner, after all. Now, when Hatchley called Banks "sir," it was plain by his tone that he was puzzled or annoyed, and Banks had learned to recognize the dry, Yorkshire irony that could sometimes be heard in his sergeant's voice.

For his part, Banks had learned to accept, but not to condone, the prejudices of his sergeant and to appreciate his doggedness and the sense of threat that he could, when called for, convey to a reticent suspect. Banks's menace was cerebral, but some people responded better to Hatchley's sheer size and gruff voice. Though he never actually used violence, Hatchley made criminals believe that perhaps the days of the rubber hosepipe weren't quite over. The two also worked well together in interrogation. Suspects would become particularly confused when the big, rough-and-tumble Dalesman turned avuncular and Banks, who didn't even look tall enough to be a policeman, raised his voice.

"Hell's bloody bells, I can't see why I have to spend so much time chasing a bloke who just likes to look at a nice pair of knockers," said Hatchley, as the two of them lit cigarettes and sipped coffee.

Banks sighed. Why was it, he wondered, that talking to Hatchley always made him, a moderate socialist, feel like a bleeding-heart liberal?

"Because the women don't want to be looked at," he answered tersely.

Hatchley grunted. "If you saw the way that Carol Ellis dressed on a Sat'day night at The Oak you wouldn't think that."

"Her choice, Sergeant. I assume she wears at least some clothes at The Oak? Otherwise you'd be derelict in your duty for not pulling her in on indecent exposure charges."

"Whatever it is, it ain't indecent." Hatchley winked.

"Everybody deserves privacy, and this peeper's violating it," Banks argued. "He's breaking the law, and we're paid to uphold it. Simple as that." He knew that it was far from simple, but had neither the patience nor the inclination to enter into an argument about the police in society with Sergeant Hatchley.

"But it's not as if he's dangerous."

"He is to his victims. Physical violence isn't the only dangerous crime. You mentioned The Oak just now. Does the woman often drink there?"

"I've seen her there a few times. It's my local."

"Do you think our man might have seen her there, too, and followed her home? If she dresses like you say, he might have got excited looking at her."

"Do myself," Hatchley admitted cheerfully. "But peeping's not my line. Yes, it's possible. Remember, it was a Monday, though."

"So?"

"Well, in my experience, sir, the women don't dress up quite so much on a Monday as a Sat'day. See, they have to go to work the next day so they can't spend all night —"

"All right," Banks said, holding up his hand. "Point taken. What about the others?"

"What about them?"

"Carol Ellis is the fourth. There were three others before her. Did any of them drink at The Oak?"

"Can't remember. I do recollect seeing Josie Campbell there a few times. She was one of them, wasn't she?"

"Yes, the second. Look, go over the statements and see if you can find out if any of the others were regulars at The Oak. Go talk to them. Jog their memories. Look for some kind of a pattern. They needn't have been there just prior to the incidents. If not, find out where they do drink, look up where they were before they were . . ."

"Peeped on?" Hatchley suggested.

Banks laughed uneasily. "Yes. There isn't really a proper word for it, is there?"

“Talking about peeping, I saw a smashing bit of stuff coming out of Gristhorpe’s office. Is he turning in a dirty old man?”

“That was Dr Jenny Fuller,” Banks told him. “She’s a psychologist, and I’m going to be working with her on a profile of our peeper.”

“Lucky you. Hope the missis doesn’t find out.”

“You’ve got a dirty mind, Sergeant. Get over to The Oak this lunch-time. Talk to the bar staff. Find out if anyone paid too much attention to Carol Ellis or if anyone seemed to be watching her. Anything odd. You know the routine. If the lunchtime staffs different, get back there tonight and talk to the ones who were last night. And talk to Carol Ellis again, too, while it’s fresh in her mind.”

“This is work, sir?”

“Yes.”

“At The Oak?”

“That’s what I said.”

Hatchley broke into a big grin, like a kid who’d lost a penny and found a pound. “I’ll see what I can do then,” he said, and with that he was off like a shot. After all, Banks thought as he finished his coffee and watched a woman struggle in the doorway with a transparent umbrella, it was eleven o’clock. Opening time.

## IV

It was a dull journey down the A1 to Leeds, and Banks cursed himself for not taking the quieter, more picturesque minor roads through Ripon and Harrogate, or even further west, via Grassington, Skipton and Ilkley. There always seemed to be hundreds of ways of getting from A to B in the Dales, none of them direct, but the A1 was usually the fastest route Leeds, unless the farmer just north of Wetherby exercised his privilege and switched on the red light while he led his cows across the motorway.

As if the rain weren’t bad enough, there was also the muddy spray from the juggernauts in front – transcontinentals, most of them, travelling from Newcastle or Edinburgh to Lille, Rotterdam, Milan or Barcelona. Still, it was cosy inside the car, and he had *Rigoletto* for company.

At the Wetherby roundabout, Banks turned onto the A58, leaving most of the lorries behind, and drove by Collingham, Bardsey and Scarcroft into Leeds itself. He carried on through Roundhay and Harehills, and arrived in Chapeltown halfway through “La Donna è Mobile.”

It was a desolate area and looked even more so swept by dirty rain under the leaden sky. Amid the heaps of red-brick rubble, a few old houses clung on like obstinate teeth in an empty, rotten mouth; grim shadows in raincoats pushed prams and shopping-carts along the pavements as if they were looking for shops and homes they couldn’t find. It was Chapeltown Road, “Ripper” territory, host of the ’81 race riots.

Crutchley’s shop had barred windows and stood next to a boarded-up grocer’s with a faded sign. The paintwork was peeling and a layer of dust covered the objects in the window: valves from old radios; a clarinet resting on the torn red velvet of its case; a guitar with four strings; a sheathed bayonet with a black swastika inlaid in its handle; chipped plates with views of Weymouth and Lyme Regis painted on them; a bicycle pump; a scattering of beads and cheap rings.

The door jerked open after initial resistance, and a bell pinged loudly as Banks walked in. The smell of the place — a mixture of mildew, furniture polish and rotten eggs — was overwhelming. Out of the back came a round-shouldered, shifty-looking man wearing a threadbare sweater and woollen gloves with the fingers cut off. He eyed Banks suspiciously, and his “Can I help you?” sounded more like a “Must I help you?”

“Mr Crutchley?” Banks showed his identification and mentioned Inspector Barnshaw, who had first p

him onto the lead. Crutchley was immediately transformed from Mr Krook into Uriah Heep.

~~“Anything I can do, sir, anything at all,” he whined, rubbing his hands together. “I try to run an honest shop here, but,” he shrugged, “you know, it’s difficult. I can’t check on everything people bring in, can I?”~~

“Of course not,” Banks agreed amiably, brushing off a layer of dust and leaning carefully against the dirty counter. “Inspector Barnshaw told me he’s thinking of letting it go by this time. He asked for my advice. We know how hard it is in a business like yours. He did say that you might be able to help me, though.”

“Of course, sir. Anything at all.”

“We think that the jewellery the constable saw in your window was stolen from an old lady in Eastvale. You could help us, and help yourself, if you can give me a description of the man who brought it in.”

Crutchley screwed up his face in concentration — not a pretty sight, Banks thought, looking away at the stuffed birds, elephant-foot umbrella stands, sentimental Victorian prints and other junk. “My memory’s not as good as it used to be, sir. I’m not getting any younger.”

“Of course not. None of us are, are we?” Banks smiled. “Inspector Barnshaw said he thought it would be a crying shame if you had to do time for this, what with it not being your fault, and at your age.”

Crutchley darted Banks a sharp, mean glance and continued to probe his ailing memory.

“He was quite young,” he said after a few moments. “I remember that for sure.”

“How young, would you say?” Banks asked, taking out his notebook. “Twenty, thirty?”

“Early twenties, I’d guess. Had a little moustache.” He gestured to his upper lip, which was covered with about four days’ stubble. “A thin one, just down to the edge of the mouth at each side. Like this,” he added, tracing the outline with a grubby finger.

“Good,” Banks said, encouraging him. “What about his hair? Black, red, brown, fair? Long, short?”

“Sort of medium. I mean, you wouldn’t really call it brown, but it wasn’t what I’d call fair, either. Know what I mean?”

Banks shook his head.

“P’raps you’d call it light brown. Very light brown.”

“Was the moustache the same?”

He nodded. “Yes, very faint.”

“And how long was his hair?”

“That I remember. It was short, and combed-back, like.” He made a brushing gesture with his hand over his own sparse crop.

“Any scars, moles?”

Crutchley shook his head.

“Nothing unusual about his complexion?”

“A bit pasty-faced and spotty, that’s all. But they all are, these days, Inspector. It’s the food. No goodness in it, all —”

“How tall would you say he was?” Banks cut in.

“Bigger than me. Oh, about . . .” He put his hand about four inches above the top of his head. “Of course, I’m not so big myself.”

“That would make him about five-foot-ten, then?”

“About that. Medium, yes.”

“Fat or thin?”

“Skinny. Well, they all are these days, aren’t they? Not properly fed, that’s the problem.”

“Clothes?”

“Ordinary.”

“Can you be a bit more specific?”

“Eh?”

“Was he wearing a suit, jeans, leather jacket, T-shirt, pyjamas — what?”

“Oh. No, it wasn't leather. It was that other stuff, bit like it only not as smooth. Brown. Roughish

’Orrible to touch — fair makes your fingers shiver.”

“Suede?”

“That's it. Suede. A brown suede jacket and jeans. Just ordinary blue jeans.”

“And his shirt?”

“Don't remember. I think he kept his jacket zipped up.”

“Do you remember anything about his voice, any mannerisms?”

“Come again?”

“Where would you place his accent?”

“Local, like. Or maybe Lancashire. I can't tell the difference, though there are some as says they can.”

“Nothing odd about it? High-pitched, deep, husky?”

“Sounded like he smoked too much, I can remember that. And he did smoke, too. Coughed every time he lit one up. Really stank up the shop.”

Banks passed on that one. “So he had a smoker's cough and a rough voice with a local accent, that right?”

“That's right, sir.” Crutchley was shifting from foot to foot, clearly looking forward to the moment when Banks would thank him and leave.

“Was his voice deep or high?”

“Kind of medium, if you know what I mean.”

“Like mine?”

“Yes, like yours, sir. But not the accent. You speak proper, you do. He didn't.”

“What do you mean he didn't speak properly? Did he have some kind of speech impediment?” Banks could see Crutchley mentally kicking himself for being so unwisely unctuous as to prolong the interview.

“No, nothing like that. I just meant like ordinary folks, sir, not like you. Like someone who hadn't been properly educated.”

“He didn't stutter or lisp, did he?”

“No, sir.”

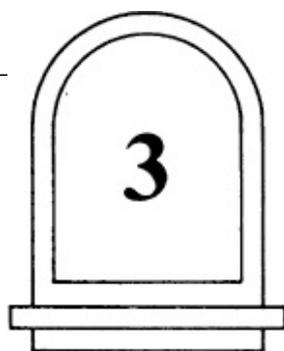
“Fine. One last question: had you ever seen him before?”

“No, sir.”

“Inspector Barnshaw will want you to look at some photos later today, and he's going to ask you to repeat your description to a police artist. So do your best, keep him in focus. And if you see him again, think of anything else, I'd appreciate your getting in touch with me.” Banks wrote down his name and number on a card.

“I'll call you, sir, I'll do that, if I ever clap eyes on him again,” Crutchley gushed, and Banks got the distinct impression that his own methods appealed more than Barnshaw's.

Banks heard the sigh of relief when he closed his notebook and thanked Crutchley, avoiding a handshake by moving off rather sharply. It wasn't a great description, and it didn't ring any bells, but it would do; it would take him closer to the two balaclava-wearing thugs who had robbed three old ladies in one month, scared them all half to death, vandalized their homes and broken the arm of one seventy-five-year-old woman.



## I

The white Cortina skidded to a halt outside Eastvale Community Centre, splashing up a sheet of spray from the kerbside puddles. Sandra Banks jumped out, ten minutes late, pushed open the creaking door as gently as she could, and tiptoed in, aware of the talk already in progress. One or two of the regulars looked around and smiled as they saw her slip as unobtrusively as possible into the empty chair next to Harriet Slade.

“Sorry,” she whispered, putting her hand to the side of her mouth. “Weather. Damn car wouldn’t start. Harriet nodded. “You’ve not missed much.”

“However beautiful, majestic or overwhelming the landscape appears to your eyes,” the speaker said, “remember, you have no guarantee that it will turn out well on film. In fact, most landscape photographs — as I’m sure those of you who have tried it know — turns out to be extremely disappointing. The camera’s eye differs from the human eye; it lacks all the other senses that feed into our experience. Remember that holiday in Majorca or Torremolinos? Remember how wonderful the hills and sea made you feel, with their magical qualities of light and colour? And remember when you got the holiday snapshots developed — if they came out at all! — how bad they were, how they failed to capture the beauty you had seen?”

“Who’s this?” Sandra whispered to Harriet while the speaker paused to sip from the glass of water on the table in front of him.

“A man called Terry Whigham. He does a lot of pictures for the local tourist board — calendars, that kind of thing. What do you think?”

It wasn’t anything new to Sandra, but she had more or less dragged poor Harriet into the Camera Club in the first place, and she felt that she owed it to her not to sound too smug.

“Interesting,” she answered, covering her mouth like a schoolgirl talking in class. “He puts it very well.”

“I think so, too,” Harriet agreed. “I mean, it all seems so obvious, but you don’t think about it till an expert points it out, do you?”

“So the next time you’re faced with Pen-y-Ghent, Skiddaw or Helvellyn,” Terry Whigham continued, “consider a few simple strategies. One obvious trick is to get something in the foreground to give a sense of scale. It’s hard to achieve the feeling of immensity you get when you look at a mountain in a four-by-five colour print, but a human figure, an old barn or a particularly interesting tree in the foreground will add the perspective you need.

“You can also be a bit more adventurous and let textures draw the viewer in. A rising slope of scree or a field full of buttercups will lead the eye to the craggy fells beyond. And don’t be slaves to the sun, either. Mist-shrouded peaks or cloud shadows on hillsides can produce some very interesting effects if you get your exposure right, and a few fluffy white clouds pep up a bright blue sky no end.”

After this, the lights went down and Terry Whigham showed some of his favourite slides to illustrate the points he had made. They were good, Sandra recognized that, but they also lacked the spark, the personal signature, that she liked to get into her own photographs, even at the expense of well-proven rules.

Harriet was a newcomer to the art, but so far she had shown a sharp eye for a photograph, even if her technique still had a long way to go. Sandra had met her at a dreadful coffee morning organized by her neighbour, Selena Harcourt, and the two had hit it off instantly. In London, Sandra had never been short of lively company, but in the North the people had seemed cold and distant until Harriet came along, with her pixyish features, her slight frame and her deep sense of compassion. Sandra wasn't going to let her go.

When the slide show was over and Terry Whigham left the dais to a smattering of applause, the club secretary made announcements about the next meeting and the forthcoming excursion to Swaledale, then coffee and biscuits were served. As usual, Sandra, Harriet, Robin Allott and Norman Chester, all preferring stronger refreshments, adjourned to The Mile Post across the road.

Sandra found herself sitting between Harriet and Robin, a young college teacher just getting over his divorce. Opposite sat Norman Chester, who always seemed more interested in the scientific process than the photographs themselves. Normally, such an oddly assorted group would never have come together, but they were united in the need for a real drink — especially after a longish lecture — and in their dislike for Fred Barton, the stiff, halitoxic club secretary, a strict Methodist who would no more set foot in a pub than he would brush the dandruff off the shoulders of his dark blue suit.

“What's it to be, then?” Norman asked, clapping his hands and beaming at everyone.

They ordered, and a few minutes later he returned with the drinks on a tray. After the usual round of commentary on the evening's offering — most of it, this time, favourable to Terry Whigham, who would no doubt by now be suffering through Barton's fawning proximity or Jack Tatum's condescending sycophancy — Robin and Norman began to argue about the use of colour balance filters, while Sandra and Harriet discussed local crime.

“I suppose you've heard from Alan about the latest incident?” Harriet said.

“Incident? What incident?”

“You know, the fellow who goes around climbing drainpipes and watching women get undressed.”

Sandra laughed. “Yes, it's difficult to know what to call him, isn't it. ‘Voyeur’ sounds so romantic and ‘Peeping Tom’ sounds so *Daily Mirrorish*. Let's just call him the peeper, the one who peeps.”

“So you have heard?”

“Yes, last night. But how do you know about it?”

“It was on the radio this afternoon. Local radio. They did an interview with Dorothy Wycombe — you know, the one who made all the fuss about hiring policies in local government.”

“I know of her. What did she have to say?”

“Oh, just the usual. What you'd expect. Said it was tantamount to an act of rape and the police couldn't be bothered to make much of an effort because it only affected women.”

“Christ,” Sandra said, fumbling for a cigarette. “That woman makes me mad. She's not that stupid, surely? I've respected the way she's dealt with a lot of things so far, but this time . . .”

“Don't you think you're only getting upset because Alan's involved?” Harriet suggested. “I mean, that makes it personal, doesn't it?”

“In a way,” Sandra admitted. “But it also puts me on the inside, and I know that he cares and that he's doing the best he can, just as much as he would for any other case.”

“What about Jim Hatchley?”

Sandra snorted. “As far as I know they're keeping Hatchley as far away from the business as possible. Obviously Alan gets along with him well enough now they've both broken each other in, so to speak. But the man's a boor. They surely didn't let him talk to the press?”

“Oh no. At least not as far as I know. No names were mentioned. She just made it sound as if all the police were sexual deviants.”

“Well that’s a typical attitude, isn’t it? Did she call them the ‘pigs,’ too?”

Harriet laughed. “Not exactly.”

“What do you think of this business, anyway?”

“I don’t really know. I’ve thought about what . . . what I would feel like if he watched me. It gives me the shivers. It’s like someone going through your most private memories. You’d feel soiled, used.”

“It gives me the creeps, too,” said Sandra, suddenly aware that the others had finished their own conversations and were listening in with interest.

“But, you know,” Harriet went on slowly, embarrassed by the larger audience, “I do feel sorry for him in a way. I mean, he’d have to be very unhappy to go around doing that, very frustrated. I do think it’s a bit sad, don’t you?”

Sandra laughed and put her hand on Harriet’s arm. “Harriet Slade,” she said, “I’m sure you feel sorry for Margaret Thatcher every time another thousand people lose their jobs.”

“Have you never thought that we’re most likely to find the culprit among ourselves?” Norman suggested. “That he’s probably a member of the club? Everyone’s a voyeur, you know,” he announced, pushing back a lock of limp, dark hair from his pale forehead. “Especially us. Photographers.”

“True enough,” Sandra agreed, “but we don’t spy on people, do we?”

“What about candids?” Norman replied. “I’ve done it often enough myself — shoot from the hip when you think they’re not looking.”

“Women undressing?”

“Good Lord, no! Tramps asleep on park benches, old men chatting on a bridge, courting couples sunbathing.”

“It really is a kind of spying, though, isn’t it?” Robin cut in.

“But it’s not the same,” Norman argued. “You’re not invading someone’s privacy when they’re in a public place like a park or a beach, are you? It’s not as if they think they’re alone in their own bedroom. And anyway, you’re doing it for an artistic purpose, not just for a sexual thrill.”

“I’m not always sure there’s much of a difference,” Robin said. “Besides, it was you who suggested it.”

“Suggested what?”

“That it might be a member of the club — that we’re all voyeurs.”

Norman coloured and reached for his drink. “I did, didn’t I? Perhaps it wasn’t a very funny remark.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Sandra said. “I could certainly see Jack Tatum staring through bedroom windows.”

Harriet shivered. “Yes. Every time he looks at you, you feel like he can see right through your clothes.”

“I’m sure the peeper’s someone much more ordinary, though,” Sandra said. “It always seems the case that people who do the most outlandish things live quite normal lives most of the time.”

“I suppose a policeman’s wife would know about things like that,” Robin said.

“No more than anyone who can read a book. They’re all over the place, aren’t they, biographies of the Yorkshire Ripper, Dennis Nilsen, Brady and Hindley?”

“You’re not suggesting the peeper’s as dangerous as that, are you?” Norman asked.

“I don’t know. All I can say is that it’s a bloody weird thing to do, and I don’t understand it.”

“Do you think he understands it himself?” Robin asked.

“Probably not,” replied Sandra. “That’s why Harriet feels sorry for him, isn’t it dear?”

“You’re a beast,” Harriet said and flicked a few drops of lager and lime in her direction.

Sandra bought the next round and the conversation shifted to the upcoming club trip to Swaledale and a recent exhibition at the National Museum of Photography in Bradford. When they had all said their goodbyes, Sandra dropped Harriet off and carried on home. Turning into the driveway, she was surprised to hear no opera coming from the front room, and even a little angry to find Brian and Tracy still up watching

a risqué film on Channel 4. It was almost eleven o'clock and Alan wasn't back yet.

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## II

If you picture the Yorkshire Dales as a splayed hand pointing east, then you will find Eastvale close to the tip of the middle finger. The town stands at the eastern limit of Swainsdale, a long valley, which starts in the precipitous fells of the west and broadens into meandering river-meadows in the east. Dry-stone walls crisscross the lower valley-sides like ancient runes until, in some places, the grassy slopes rise steeply into long sheer cliffs, known locally as “scars.” At their summits, they flatten out to become wild, lonely moorlands covered in yellow gorse and pinkish ling, crossed only by unfenced minor roads where horned sheep wander and the wind always rages. The rock is mostly limestone, which juts through in grey-white scars and crags that change hue with the weather like pearls rolled under candlelight. Here and there, a more sinister outcrop of dark millstone grit thrusts out, or layers of shale and sandstone streak an old quarry.

Eastvale itself is a busy market-town of about fourteen thousand people. It slopes up from Swainsdale on its eastern edge, where the River Swain turns south-east towards the Ouse, rises to a peak at Castle Hill, then drops gradually eastwards in a series of terraces past the river and the railway tracks.

The town is certainly picturesque; it has a cobbled market square, complete with ancient cross and Norman church, tree-shaded river-falls, sombre castle ruins, and excavations going back to pre-Roman times. But it has some less salubrious areas that tourists never visit — among them the East Side Estate, a sprawl of council housing put up in the sixties and declining fast.

A visitor sitting in the flower gardens on the western bank of the River Swain would probably be surprised at some of the things that go on across the river. Beyond the poplars and the row of renovated Georgian houses stretch about fifty yards of grass and trees called The Green. And beyond that lies the East Side Estate.

Amid the graffiti-scarred walls, abandoned prams and tires, uncontrolled dogs and scruffy children, the inhabitants of the overcrowded estate try to survive the failure of the town's two main industries outside of tourism — a woollen mill on the river to the northwest, and a chocolate factory near the eastern boundary. Some are quiet, peace-loving families, who keep themselves to themselves and try to make ends meet on the dole. But others are violent and angry, a mixed bunch of deadbeats, alcoholics, wife-beaters, child-abusers and junkies. Drawing the “east side beat,” as it is known in the police station, is a duty most young constables do their utmost to avoid.

Of course, there had been protests over the council's plan, but the sixties was an era of optimism and new ideas, so the houses went up. It was also a period of rank political corruption, so many councillors enjoyed holidays abroad at the expense of various contractors, and a great deal of tax-free money changed hands. Meanwhile, the tenants, crammed into their terrace blocks, towers and maisonettes, just had to put up with the flimsy walls, inadequate heating and faulty plumbing. Many thought themselves lucky; they were living in the country at last.

The railway track, raised high on its embankments, ran north to south and cut right through the estate, giving its passengers a fine view of the overgrown back gardens with their lines of washing, tiny greenhouses and rabbit hutches. Several low, narrow tunnels ran under the tracks to link one part of the estate to another, and it was in one of these that Trevor Sharp and Mick Webster stood smoking and discussing business.

The tunnel had been christened “Glue-Sniffers' Ginnel” by the estate's residents because of the great numbers of plastic bags that littered its pathway. It was a dark place, lit at one end by a jaundiced streetlamp, and it reeked of glue, dog piss and stale vomit. Locals avoided it.

Mick Webster, whatever one might call him, was not one of the glue-sniffers. Naturally, he had tried it

along with just about everything else, but he had decided it was for the birds; it dulled the brain and made you spotty, like Lenny. Not that Lenny sniffed glue, though — he just ate too much greasy fish and chips. Mick preferred those little red pills that Lenny seemed to possess in abundance: the ones that made his head race and made him feel like Superman. He was a squat, loutish sixteen-year-old with a pug nose, a skinhead crop and a permanent sneer. People crossed the street when they saw him coming.

Trevor, on the other hand, was not the kind of boy that the average townspeople would take for a bad sort. He was quite handsome, like his father, and was a slave to fashion in neither clothing nor haircut. Because he was regarded as an exceptionally hard case, nobody ever ragged him about his neat, conservative appearance.

The 10:10 from Harrogate rattled overhead and Trevor lit another cigarette.

“Lenny says it’s time we stopped it with the old dears and got onto something a bit more profitable,” Mick announced, kicking at some shards of broken glass.

“Like what?”

“Like doing houses. Proper houses where rich folk live. When they’re out, like. Lenny says he can let us know where and when. All we got to do is get in, pick up the gear and get out.”

“What about burglar alarms?”

“They ain’t got burglar alarms,” Mick said scornfully. “Peaceful little place this is, never have any crime.”

Trevor thought it over. “When do we start?”

“When Lenny gives us a tip.”

“Lenny’s been taking too much of a cut, Mick. It hardly makes it worth our while. You’d better ask him to give us a bigger percentage if we’re gonna get onto this lark.”

“Yeah, yeah, all right.” It wasn’t a new subject, and Mick was getting tired of Trevor’s constant harping. Besides, he was too scared of Lenny to mention anything about it.

“How are we going to break in?” Trevor asked.

“I don’t fucking know. Window. Back door. Lenny’ll give us what we need. It’ll be people on holidays or away for the weekend. That kind of thing. Dead easy. He keeps his ear to the ground.”

“Got the money for that last lot?”

“Oh, nearly forgot.” Mick grinned and pulled out a wad of bills from his hip pocket. “He said he only got fifty for the gear. That’s ten quid for you and ten for me.”

Trevor shook his head. “It’s not right, Mick. That’s sixty percent he’s taking. And how do we know he only got fifty quid for it? Looked like it was worth nearer a hundred to me.”

“We believe him ’cos he’s my fucking brother, that’s why,” Mick said, getting nettled. “And without him we wouldn’t be able to get rid of any of the stuff. We wouldn’t get nothing, man. So forty percent of what he does is better than a hundred percent of fuck all, right?”

“We could fence it ourselves. It can’t be that difficult.”

“How many times do I have to tell you? You need the contacts. Lenny’s got contacts. You can’t just walk into one of those wanky antique shops on Market Street and ask the geezer if he wants to buy a pile of stolen jewellery or a fancy camera, can you?”

“I just don’t think it can be all that difficult, that’s all.”

“Look, we’ve got a nice little racket going here, let’s leave it the way it is. I’ll try and get us up to fifty percent, all right?”

Trevor shrugged. “Okay.”

“Did I tell you Lenny’s got a shooter?” Mick went on excitedly. “No. Where’d he get it from?”

“Down The Smoke. This bloke what owns a club in Soho. Big fucker it is too, just like on telly.”

“Does it work?”

“Of course it works. What good’s a shooter that don’t work?”

“Have you tried it? Do you know it works?”

“Of course I haven’t fucking tried it. What do you expect me to do, walk downtown on market day and start fucking target practice?”

“So you don’t know for sure if it works?”

Mick sighed and explained as if to a small child. “These blokes down The Smoke, they don’t give you dud shooters, do they? Wouldn’t be in their interest.”

“What kind is it?”

“I don’t fucking know. A big one, like the ones on telly. Like that one Clint Eastwood carries in those Dirty Harry flicks.”

“A Magnum?”

“That’s right. One of those.”

“Powerful shooter,” Trevor said. “Seeing as this is a forty-four Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world, and can blow your head clean off, you gotta ask yourself, punk, do I feel lucky today? Well, cya, punk?”

The Dirty Harry impersonation went down very well, and the two traded shooting noises until the 10:20 to Ripon clattered overhead and drowned them out.

### III

“Look, before we start,” Jenny Fuller said, “I’d like to tell you that I know why I was chosen to help on this case.”

“Oh,” said Banks. “What do you mean?”

“You know damn well what I mean. Don’t think I didn’t notice that eye contact between you and Gristorpe this morning. There are at least two male professors in the area better qualified to deal with this kind of thing — both experts on deviant psychology. You wanted a woman because it looks good in the public eye, and you wanted me because I’ve had connections with Dorothy Wycombe.”

They were lounging comfortably in armchairs by the crackling fire, Banks cradling a pint of bitter, Jenny a half.

“It’s not that I mind,” she went on. “I just want you to know. I don’t like being taken for a fool.”

“Point taken.”

“And another thing. You needn’t imagine I’m going to go reporting to Dorothy Wycombe on everything that goes on. I’m a professional, not a snooper. I’ve been asked to help, and I intend to do my best.”

“Good. So now we know where we stand. I’m glad you said that, because I didn’t feel too happy about working with a spy, whatever the circumstances.”

Jenny smiled and her whole face lit up. She really was an extraordinarily beautiful woman, Banks thought, feeling rather distressing tugs of desire as he watched her shift her body in the chair. She was wearing tight jeans and a simple white T-shirt under a loose lemon jacket. Her dark red hair spilled over her shoulders.

Banks himself had paid more attention than usual to his appearance that evening: at least, as much more attention as he could without giving Sandra cause for suspicion. Over a hasty supper, he had told her he would be spending the evening with Dr Fuller discussing the psychological angle of the peeper case. Getting ready, he had resisted the temptation to apply some of the unopened cologne a distant relative had bought him several Christmases ago, and settled instead for a close shave and a liberal application of Right Guard. He had also taken care to smooth down his short, black hair, even though it was always cut so close to the

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