

Watching the Dark

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**PETER
ROBINSON**
Watching the Dark

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To Sheila



I

On nights when the pain kept her awake, Lorraine Jenson would get up around dawn and go outside to sit on one of the wicker chairs before anyone else in the centre was stirring. With a tartan blanket wrapped around her shoulders to keep out the early morning chill, she would listen to the birds sing as she enjoyed a cup of Earl Grey, the aromatic steam curling from its surface, its light, delicious scent filling her nostrils. She would smoke her first cigarette of the day, always the best one.

Some mornings, the small artificial lake below the sloping lawn was covered in mist, which shrouded the trees on the other side. Other times, the water was a still, dark mirror that reflected the detail of every branch and leaf perfectly. On this fine April morning, the lake was clear, though the water's surface was ruffled by a cool breeze, and the reflections wavered.

Lorraine felt her pain slough off like a layer of dead skin as the painkillers kicked in, and the tea and cigarette soothed her frayed nerves. She placed her mug on the low wrought-iron table beside her chair and adjusted the blanket around her shoulders. She was facing south, and the sun was creeping over the hill through the trees on her left. Soon the spell would be broken. She would hear the sounds of people getting up in the building behind her, voices calling, doors opening, showers running, toilets flushing, and another day to be got through would begin.

As the light grew stronger, she thought she could see something, like a bundle of clothes, on the ground at the edge of the woods on the far side of the lake. That was unusual, as Barry, the head groundsman and general estate manager, was proud of his artificial lake and his natural woodlands, so much so that some people complained he spent far more time down there than he did keeping the rest of the extensive grounds neat and tidy.

Lorraine squinted, but she couldn't bring the object into clearer focus. Her vision was still not quite what it had been. Gripping the arms of her chair, she pushed herself to her feet, gritting her teeth at the red-hot pokers of pain that seared through her left leg, despite the OxyContin, then she took hold of her crutch and made her way down the slope. The grass was still wet with dew, and she felt it fresh and cool on her bare ankles as she walked.

When she got to the water's edge, she took the cinder path that skirted the lake and soon arrived on the other side, at the edge of the woods, which began only a few feet away from the water. Even before then, she had recognised what it was that lay huddled there. Though she had seen dead bodies before, she had never actually stumbled across one. She was alone with the dead now, for the first time since she had stood by her father's coffin in the funeral home.

Lorraine held her breath. Silence. She thought she heard a rustling deep in the woods, and a shiver of fear rippled through her. If the body were a victim of murder, then the killer might still be out there, watching her. She remained completely still for about a minute, until she was certain there was nobody in the woods. She heard the rustling again and saw a fox making its way through the undergrowth.

Now that she was at the scene, Lorraine's training kicked in. She was wary of disturbing anything, so she kept her distance. Much as she wanted to move in closer and examine the body,

see if it was someone she knew, she restrained herself. There was nothing she could do, she told herself; the way he – for it was definitely a man – was kneeling with his body bent forward, head touching the ground like a parody of a Muslim at prayer, there was no way he was still alive.

The best thing she could do was stay here and protect the scene. Murder or not, it was definitely a suspicious death, and whatever she did, she must not screw up now. Cursing the pain that rippled through her leg whenever she moved, Lorraine fumbled for her mobile in her jeans pocket and phoned Eastvale police station.

There was something about Bach that suited the early morning perfectly, DCI Alan Banks thought, as he drove out of Gratly towards the St Peter's Police Convalescence and Treatment Centre, four miles north of Eastvale, shortly after dawn that morning. He needed something to wake him up and keep his attention engaged, get the old grey cells buzzing, but nothing too loud, nothing too jarring or emotionally taxing. Alina Ibragimova's CD of Bach's sonatas and partitas for violin was just right. Bach both soothed and stimulated the mind at once.

Banks knew St Peter's. He had visited Annie Cabbot there several times during her recent convalescence. Just a few short months ago he had seen her in tears trying to walk on crutches, and now she was due back at work on Monday. He was looking forward to that; life had been dull for the past while without her.

He took the first exit from the roundabout and drove alongside the wall for about a hundred yards before arriving at the arched entrance and turning left on the tarmac drive. There was no gate or gatehouse, but the first officers to arrive on the scene had quite rightly taped off the area. A young PC waved Banks down to check his ID and note his name and time of

entry on a clipboard before lifting the tape and letting him through.

Driving up to the car park was like arriving at a luxury spa hotel, Banks had always thought when he visited Annie. It was no different today. St Peter's presented a broad south-facing facade at the top of the rise that led down to the lake and surrounding woods. Designed by a firm of Leeds architects, with Vanburgh in mind, and built of local stone in the late nineteenth century, it was three stories high, had a flagged portico, complete with simple Doric columns at the front, and two wings, east and west. Though not so extensive as some other local examples, the grounds were landscaped very much in the style and spirit of Capability Brown, with the lake and woods and rolling lawns. There was even a folly. To the west, beyond the trees and lawns, the outlines of Swainsdale's hills and fells could be seen, forming a backdrop of what the Japanese called borrowed scenery, which merged nature with art.

The forensic team had got there before Banks, which seemed odd until he remembered that a detective inspector had made the initial call. Kitted out in disposable white coveralls, they were already going about their business. The crime-scene photographer, Peter Darby, was at work with his battered old Nikon SLR and his ultra-modern digital video recorder. Most SOCOs – or CSIs, as they now liked to be called – also took their own digital photos and videos when they searched a scene, but though Peter Darby accepted the use of video, he shunned digital photography as being far too susceptible to tampering and error. It made him a bit of a dinosaur, and one or two of the younger techies cracked jokes behind his back. He could counter by boasting that he had never had any problems with his evidence in court, and he had never lost an image because of computer problems.

DI Lorraine Jenson stood with two other people about five or six yards away from the body, a lone, hunched figure resting her weight on a crutch by the water's edge and jotting in her notebook. Banks knew her slightly from a case he had worked a few months ago that crossed the border into Humberside, where she worked. Not long ago, he had heard, she had a run in with a couple of drug-dealers in a tower block, which ended with her falling from a second-floor balcony. She had sustained multiple fractures of her left leg, but after surgery, the cast and physio, she would be back at work soon enough.

'What a turn up,' she said. 'Me finding a body.'

Banks gestured towards the CSIs. 'I see you've already called in the lads.'

'Judgement call. I thought it best not to waste any time. The Divisional Duty Inspector made all the decisions.' She turned to introduce the others. 'By the way, this is Barry Sadler, estate manager, and Mandy Pemberton, the night nurse.'

Banks greeted them then asked them if they would mind returning to the main building, where they would be asked for statements. Still in shock, they headed up the slope.

'Who's the Crime Scene Manager?' Banks asked Lorraine.

'Stefan Nowak.'

'Excellent.' Stefan Nowak was one of the best. He would protect his scene to the death, if necessary, but he was still a delight to work with, Banks found, a charming, witty and intelligent man. Bank glanced towards the body, slumped forward by the treeline. 'Know who he is?'

'Not yet,' said Lorraine. 'But I might when I see his face. If he's from here, that is.'

It was too early for Dr Glendenning, the Home Office pathologist, who lived in Saltburn, so the police surgeon, Dr Burns, knelt over the body making notes in his little black book. Banks squatted beside him and watched, hands on his knees.

‘Ah, Alan,’ said Burns. ‘I’d like to get him turned over, if I may?’

‘Peter Darby finished with his camera?’

‘Yes.’

Banks studied the body for a few moments and, finding nothing particularly interesting or unusual about it except for its odd position, helped Dr Burns. Carefully, they turned the body over on its back. As soon as they had done so, they exchanged puzzled glances. Banks stood up. He heard Lorraine Jenson, hovering over them, give a faint gasp.

Something was sticking out of the man’s chest. On first appearances, it resembled the kind of wooden stake that Van Helsing wielded to kill vampires in the old Hammer films, though it had feathers on the end, like an arrow. But it was too deeply embedded to be an ordinary arrow. ‘Looks like a crossbow bolt,’ said Banks.

‘I think you’re right,’ Dr Burns agreed.

‘We don’t get many of those around these parts.’ In fact, Banks couldn’t remember ever investigating a crossbow murder before.

‘I can hardly say it’s my area of expertise, either,’ said Dr Burns. ‘I’m sure Dr Glendenning will be able to tell you more, once he gets him on the table.’ Dr Burns stood up. His knees cracked. ‘From the position and angle, I’d say it almost certainly pierced his heart. He would have died almost instantaneously. Of course, he might have been poisoned first, but there are no apparent signs of strangulation, bruising or other physical trauma.’

‘Do you reckon he was killed here, or was he moved after death?’

Dr Burns unbuttoned the man’s shirt and examined the shoulders and chest area. ‘These are lividity marks, hypostasis, which means he’s been in this position for some time, and the blood has pooled here. But I can’t say for certain. Not

until Dr Glendenning does the PM. It certainly seems as if he dropped to his knees, then keeled over and fell forward, so that his head rested on the ground. You can see there are traces of blood on the grass there, approximately where his heart would have been directly above it. That's consistent with his injuries. There isn't much blood. Most of the bleeding will have been internal.' Dr Burns pointed towards the woods. 'The shot probably came from where those CSIs are working around that tree, say fifty, sixty feet away. Hard to miss at that range, but it means your shooter could also stay hidden by the trees, in case anyone from the centre happened to be watching out of a window.'

Banks glanced at Lorraine Jenson, who was still staring, horrified, at the crossbow bolt in the man's chest. 'He seems vaguely familiar to me,' said Banks, 'but I've met a lot of coppers in my time. Do you recognise him now, Lorraine?'

Lorraine nodded slowly, a little pale. 'It's Bill,' she said. 'DI Bill Quinn. He was a patient here, too.'

'Bloody hell,' said Banks. 'Bill Quinn. I thought I recognised him.'

'You knew him, too?'

'Only in passing. He worked out of Millgarth, in Leeds with DI Ken Blackstone.' Banks paused and turned back to Dr Burns, who was busy with his thermometer. 'Time of death?'

'As usual, I can't be really precise. You've seen the lividity. Rigor's started, but it isn't complete yet. Judging by the temperature, I'd say he's been dead about seven or eight hours. I'd guess that he was killed no later than one in the morning, say, and no earlier than eleven last night. Of course, that's only an estimate. You might do better pinning down his movements, such as when he was last seen. It shouldn't be too difficult in a place like this.'

'Just hoping you might be able to save us some time.'

'Sorry. Perhaps—'

‘Actually, you have,’ said Banks. ‘Two hours is a pretty good window to work with. Wouldn’t it have been too dark for the killer to shoot?’

‘As I said, the killer was probably pretty close,’ Dr Burns answered. ‘Maybe even closer than I estimated. It was a clear night, and there was a bright three-quarters moon, very few clouds. The victim would have made an easy enough target against the backdrop of the building, especially if the killer knew his way around a crossbow. I don’t think it would have been too difficult at all.’

Banks squatted again and went through the dead man’s pockets. He found nothing and decided that that, in itself, was odd. When he mentioned it, Dr Burns said, ‘Maybe he left his stuff in his room? You don’t usually need your wallet and mobile if you’re just nipping out for a quick walk before bedtime.’

‘If that’s what he was doing. And people these days tend to be glued to their mobiles. They’re like a lifeline, or something. Then there are the keys.’

‘What about them?’

‘There aren’t any.’

‘Maybe he didn’t need them.’

‘Maybe not. Or maybe someone took them. We’ll find out.’

A black Toyota swung through the arch, and the officers on the gate let it through after their usual checks. DS Winsome Jackman jumped out, all six feet something of her.

‘Not like you to be late, Winsome,’ said Banks, glancing at his watch. ‘Wild night last night, was it?’

Winsome looked aghast, then smiled. ‘No, sir. I never have wild nights. You should know that.’

‘Of course not,’ said Banks. He explained the situation. ‘Will you go up to the house and get the practicalities organised?’ he asked. ‘A murder room in the main building, phone lines, civilian personnel, the usual.’

‘Yes, sir,’ Winsome said.

‘You’d also better organise a thorough search of the buildings and grounds as quickly as possible, before everyone gets wind of what’s going on down here. We’re after the murder weapon, a crossbow. Can’t be that easy to hide.’

‘Including the patients’ rooms?’

‘Especially the patients’ rooms. They won’t like it. They’re cops, like us. But it has to be done. They ought to understand that much, at least. This is one of our own that’s been killed. It could be an inside job, and if this place is as wide open as it appears, then anybody could come and go as they please. Set up interviews, too. You can start with the two who were just here. Barry . . .?’ Banks glanced at Lorraine Jenson.

‘Barry Sadler and Mandy Pemberton.’

Winsome headed off. Lorraine fell in beside her. She moved well, he noticed, despite the crutch. She made some comment, and Banks spotted Winsome glance over her shoulder and laugh.

Banks gazed down at the body again. Though they had only met once, at a retirement do with DI Ken Blackstone, he remembered lanky Bill Quinn, prematurely grey-haired, with his stained and crooked teeth, smiling quietly in his seat through the ribald speeches, a small whisky in his hand. ‘Bill Quinn,’ he muttered to himself. ‘What have you been up to?’ He looked around at the lake, the trees and the big house on the hill, sniffed the air, then set off after Winsome and Lorraine, up to the main building.

‘You’ll be treating me as a suspect, then, as well as searching my room?’ Lorraine said, as she put her crutch aside and settled down in her armchair. Her bedsit resembled a pleasant hotel room, Banks thought, with a single bed in one corner, en suite bathroom and toilet, a writing desk, and three armchairs arranged around an oval table. There were also tea- and

coffee-making facilities on the top of the chest of drawers, a spacious wardrobe, and a flat-screen television fixed to the wall. A combination radio, CD player and iPod dock completed the set-up.

‘Don’t be silly,’ Banks said. ‘Why would you think that?’

‘I discovered the body. It’s always the person who discovers the body.’

‘Or the nearest and dearest,’ added Banks. ‘What have you been doing here, reading too much Agatha Christie?’

‘It just stands to reason.’

‘*Did* you do it?’

‘No, of course not.’

‘Well, we’ve got that out of the way, haven’t we?’

‘You should suspect me. I would if I were you. We’re all suspects. All of us here.’

Banks gazed at her with narrowed eyes. Early forties, looking older and more frail since her injury, once-plump body wasted by the recovery process, pale skin sagging, shrewd eyes with bags underneath, a ragged fringe of dark hair. ‘We’ll talk about that later,’ he said. ‘For now, you’re just a witness. We’ll want a full written statement later, of course, but all I want now is a few basics, your immediate impressions, what you knew of the victim. That sort of thing. I saw you making notes, so it’s probably still fresh in your mind. Let’s start with what you were doing outside so early, and what made you walk down to the lake.’

‘I’m not sleeping very well because of the pain,’ Lorraine said, after a brief hesitation. ‘Most days I get up early, when it starts to get light, and I feel claustrophobic. I need to get out. It’s peaceful sitting there before the place comes to life. And I can enjoy a cigarette.’

‘What drew you to the lake?’

‘I saw something down there, at the edge of the woods. That’s all. A bundle. It seemed unusual. Out of place. The grounds are usually immaculate.’

'And when you saw what it was?'

'I kept my distance and phoned it in.'

'You didn't touch anything?'

'No.'

'Did you notice anything else?'

'Like what?'

'Anything odd, apart from the bundle itself.'

'No, not really. I stood and listened. I saw a fox. The sound startled me. I thought the killer might still be in the woods, but it was only a fox.'

'You couldn't see the crossbow bolt at this point, could you?'

'No. He was practically face down on the ground. You saw for yourself.'

'But you just said "killer". What made you assume he'd been killed, rather than just, say, dropped dead of a heart attack or something?'

'I don't know. It was just the way he was lying, kneeling. It looked suspicious. It was instinct, a hunch. I can't really think of any logical explanation.'

Banks knew how easily witnesses got confused, and how easy it was for the questioner to take advantage of that, to make them even more nervous and defensive. Question anyone for a few minutes, and pretty soon they all sounded as if they were lying. Cops were apparently no different. 'I just wondered whether there was anything in particular that made you feel that way, that's all,' Banks said. 'You didn't see or hear anyone running away, a car starting out on the road, or anything like that?'

'No. Just the fox. And birds, of course. The birds were already singing. Why are you asking? When do you think he was killed? He must have been there for a while. Surely he can't have been killed just before I found him?'

'Did you know Bill Quinn well?'

'No, not really. I'd talked to him, chatted briefly in the

lounge over a nightcap, that sort of thing, but I wouldn't say I *knew* him. We're both smokers, so we'd meet up occasionally by chance and pass the time of day. We're all pretty civil here, but we don't really socialise all that much.'

'You weren't involved in any sort of relationship?'

'Good God, no.' She held up her left hand. 'The only people I'm in a relationship with are my husband and my two children.'

'Did you ever witness DI Quinn arguing with any of the other patients, or hear anyone making threats towards him?'

'No. It's a pretty peaceful place here, as you might have noticed. He was quiet most of the time, abstracted. I didn't see much of him. I didn't witness any arguments at all.'

'Noticed anyone hanging around? Anyone who shouldn't be here?'

'No.'

'When did you last see Bill Quinn alive?'

'At dinner last night.'

'When was that? What's the routine?'

'Dinner's usually at half past six, then three nights a week there's quiz night at eight. After that, about half past nine, people either meet for a drink or two in the library bar or head off to their rooms to watch TV.'

'And when there's not a quiz night?'

'There's a film sometimes, usually a quite recent one, in the gym, or people just amuse themselves, play cards, read, whatever.'

'No karaoke?'

Lorraine laughed. 'Hardly. Though I think sometimes it might liven things up a bit.'

'How did Bill Quinn appear at dinner last night? Did he seem agitated, distracted, edgy?'

Lorraine frowned with the effort of memory. 'Maybe a little. I'm not sure. He didn't say much, but then he rarely did.'

He was always a bit distracted and edgy. Not agitated, mind you, just in another world, as if he was carrying a burden. It's far too easy to read things into a situation with hindsight.'

'What would you read into his behaviour last night?'

'That he seemed maybe a bit more anxious than usual, that's all, as if he had something on his mind. He didn't stick around to chat over coffee, for example, and he didn't go to the library bar for an after-dinner drink.'

'Did he usually stay for a chat and go for a drink?'

'Yes. A small malt. Just the one, as a rule. He also missed quiz night, which was not like him at all. He enjoyed quiz nights.' Lorraine paused. 'He wasn't easy to know. Hard to get a handle on.'

'Any idea who might have killed him?'

'I doubt if it was anyone here,' Lorraine said. 'We've all been thrown together by chance and circumstance, and there hasn't been really much of an opportunity to form grievances and vendettas so far.' She gestured towards her crutch. 'Besides, most of us are incapable.'

'Even so,' Banks said. 'An old grudge suddenly confronted?'

'Bit of a coincidence, though, wouldn't you say? I reckon you'd be better off checking out the villains he brought down, rather than cops he was spending a couple of weeks' rest and recuperation with.'

'Fair enough.' Banks glanced around the room. 'Nice digs,' he said. 'And you can get a decent single malt here, too?'

'It's not a health spa, you know, or a fitness centre.'

St Peter's, Annie Cabbot had explained to Banks, was a charity-run convalescence centre for injured police officers, those recuperating from operations, or suffering from stress and anxiety, job-related or otherwise. It offered a range of treatments, from physiotherapy to reiki, including massage, sauna, hydrotherapy and psychological counselling. The general length of stay was two weeks, but that was flexible in

some cases; Annie had stayed for three weeks and still returned regularly, as an outpatient, for physio and massage therapy.

‘Did you hear anything during the night?’ Banks asked. ‘You said you don’t sleep well.’

‘I usually take a pill when I go to bed. That knocks me out for a few hours, then I can’t get back to sleep again, so I get up early. But from ten o’clock, when I usually go to bed, until about three or four, I’m dead to the world.’

‘So you didn’t hear anything after you woke up early?’

‘No. Only the birds.’

‘Where did Bill Quinn go instead of staying for a drink and participating in quiz night?’

‘I’ve no idea. I wasn’t keeping tabs on him. To his room, I suppose. Or out for a late smoke. All I know is I didn’t see him again.’

‘And you didn’t hear him leave the building after you went to bed?’

‘No. As you can see, my room’s right at the back, on the first floor, and he’s on the second floor at the front. The ground floor is all offices and treatment rooms, along with the dining room and library bar. Then there’s a basement, with the gym and swimming pool. I wouldn’t even have heard Bill Quinn if he’d had a wild orgy in his room. I wouldn’t necessarily hear anyone leaving through the front door. He could have gone out during quiz night for all I know. As I said, I didn’t see him at all after dinner.’

‘You were at quiz night?’

‘Yes.’

‘OK. We’ll ask the others. Someone might have seen something. What’s the security like here? Is access easy?’

Lorraine snorted. ‘Security? There isn’t any, really. I mean, it’s not a prison, or even a hospital. More like a posh hotel. Maybe there are a few expensive bits of gym gear or medical equipment around, but they don’t keep drugs or cash on the

premises. As you know already, there's a big wall, but no gate, so I suppose anyone can walk or drive in and out whenever they want. We can. It would be easy enough for someone to slip into the woods by the gate without being seen and just wait there. The nearest village is a mile and a half away, and sometimes some of the people here nip out for a jar or two in the pub. There's no sentry post, no porter's lodge, no curfew, no book to sign. There's the night nurse on duty, you met Mandy, and she might have noticed something, but even she was probably fast asleep by then. We come and go as we please.'

'Was Bill Quinn in the habit of going down to the woods at night?'

'Not that I know of, no. Whenever I saw him outside, he'd be having a smoke by the front door.'

'Is there CCTV?'

'I don't think so. You'd better ask one of the staff. I mean, why would there be? We're all honest coppers here, right?'

'Hmm.' Banks stood up. 'I'll be off, then. Thanks for your time, Lorraine. I might be back.'

As he left, two uniformed WPCs entered Lorraine's room. 'Damn,' he heard her say. 'If you must go through my knicker drawer, try not to make too much of a mess.'

Banks walked down the broad wooden staircase to the reception area, letting his hand slide along the dark polished banister. A stair lift had been fitted on one side for those patients who had difficulty climbing the stairs. Annie had used it, he remembered. The whole place was crawling with police now. Banks spotted DC Doug Wilson and asked him if Winsome was still upstairs searching Bill Quinn's room.

'As far as I know she is, sir,' said Wilson. 'It's 22B, west wing. I'm just getting the guest interviews organised. It'll take us a while. We're using one of the staff meeting lounges as the murder room. It's being set up now.'

‘Excellent. How many patients in all?’

‘Only twelve, sir. Then there’s the staff, mostly part-time. We’ll use the library bar and the ground-floor offices and treatment rooms for the interviews. That way we can conduct more than one at a time and get finished sooner.’

‘Fine,’ said Banks. ‘Got enough help?’

‘I’ve got Gerry, sir. I mean DC Masterson.’

DC Geraldine Masterson had just finished her probationary period and was shaping up very well. She was young and still had a lot to learn, but that wasn’t such a bad thing. More important, she was bight and keen, and showed above average aptitude for grasping things. She also had a degree in IT.

‘I’ll see if I can manage to draft in some help,’ Banks said. ‘Until then, just do the best you can.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And get a couple of officers asking around the general neighbourhood, the village, find out if anyone was seen hanging around here lately, last night in particular. A car, anything suspicious.’

‘It’s pretty isolated, sir.’

‘That’s why someone might have noticed something. You can get the word out to the media, too. No information about DI Quinn’s murder, especially about method of death, but we want to talk to anybody who passed by St Peter’s between, say, ten o’clock last night and two in the morning. The press will be here soon, so make sure you warn the men on the gate to keep them at bay. Did DS Jackman mention anything about searching the grounds and rooms?’

‘Yes, sir. We’re trying to get it done as quickly and discreetly as possible.’

‘Carry on, Doug,’ said Banks.

‘OK, sir.’ Doug Wilson strode off.

‘Sir? Excuse me. Just a minute, sir. Are you in charge of all this?’

Banks turned towards the new voice. The woman behind the reception desk was calling out to him. The area reminded him of a hotel reception, with the rows of pigeonholes on the wall behind her for keys and messages, a laptop computer on a pullout shelf, filing drawers, printer, fax and photocopy machine. The woman was perhaps a little older than Banks, grey-haired, matronly, and her name badge read 'Mary'.

'I'm DCI Banks,' he said, offering his hand. 'Sorry for all this upheaval, Mary. What can I do for you?'

'Well, I was just wondering, you know, about the regular schedules. The patients. I mean physio, massage and suchlike. We do have our routines and timetables.'

'A police officer has been murdered,' said Banks. 'I'd say normal operations are pretty much suspended for the moment, wouldn't you? I'll let you know when they can be resumed.'

Mary reddened. 'I'm sorry. But what should I tell people? I mean, one of our physiotherapists drives all the way over from Skipton, and her first appointment isn't till two this afternoon. Should I phone and cancel?'

'I'm afraid not,' said Banks. 'We'll want to talk to everyone connected with the place as soon as we possibly can, including the staff. That means we'll need the names and addresses of any personnel who won't be coming in today. Were you here all night?'

'No, sir,' said Mary. 'I live in Eastvale. The desk isn't staffed twenty-four hours a day. No need. I'm usually gone by six or seven at the latest, depending on how much catching up I have to do. I start at eight, as a rule. In fact, I just arrived. I can't really believe what's going on.'

'Are you a police officer, Mary?'

'No, sir. Registered nurse. Retired.'

'No need to call me sir, then.'

'Oh. Yes. Of course.'

'I'm sure it's a shock,' Banks said. 'Apart from the patients and the nurse, is there anyone else who stops here for the whole night?'

'There's Barry.'

'Barry Sadler?'

'Yes. Head groundsman, porter, jack of all trades. He lives in the flat over the old stables, but he's here to help if there's ever a need for heavy lifting or anything, and he does most of the odd jobs himself. Of course, he has a small staff to call in, as and when he needs them. Cleaners, gardeners, a lawn-trimmer and topiarist and so on. But they don't live here.'

'I'll need a list of their names, too,' said Banks. 'Do you have a security system?'

Mary paused. 'Well, yes, sort of. I mean . . .'

'Yes?'

'The rule is that the front door's locked at midnight, and the burglar alarm is activated.'

'But?'

Mary gave Banks a lopsided grin. 'You know what it's like. It's a pretty laissez-faire sort of place. If someone wants to go out for a smoke, or stops out late at the pub, you don't want to be turning the burglar alarm on and off, do you?'

'Right,' said Banks, who used to smoke back in the days when it was possible to light up almost anywhere. He could hardly imagine the hassle these days, standing out in the cold in winter. Another reason to be grateful he had stopped. 'So what you're saying is that there isn't much in the way of security?'

'I suppose that's true.'

'And no CCTV?'

'Afraid not. St Peter's is a charity-run establishment, and the board decided that CCTV was too expensive to be worth it. Also, people don't like being spied on. Especially police officers.'

Banks smiled and thanked her for her time. Mary blushed. As he walked away, Banks figured he'd made a conquest there. His charm seemed to work especially well on the over-sixties these days.

Banks turned right at the top of the second flight of stairs, following the sign on the wall to rooms 20 to 30B. The door to Bill Quinn's room was open, and Winsome was still systematically searching through the drawers and cupboards.

Banks stood in the doorway. 'Anything for us?'

'Nothing yet,' said Winsome. She dangled a ring of house keys. 'Just these. They were on the desk. A few clothes in the wardrobe. Toiletries. No mobile. No wallet. No room key.'

The room was a mirror image of Lorraine Jenson's. Banks noticed a fishing rod and tackle in one corner and a stack of *Angling Times*, *Trout & Salmon*, *Gardeners' World* and *Garden News* magazines on the coffee table. An outdoorsman, then, Bill Quinn. Banks hadn't known that. Still, he hadn't known much about the man at all, a situation that would have to be rectified as quickly as possible. The solution to the crime, he had come to believe over the years, more often than not lies in the victim's character. 'I think we'd better send a couple of officers over to search his house. Where does he live?'

'It's already taken care of, guv,' said Winsome. 'He lives alone in a semi in Rawdon, Leeds, up near the airport.'

'Alone? For some reason, I thought he was married with kids.'

'He was. His wife's dead, and the kids have flown the coop. They're both at university, one in Hull, the other at Keele. The local police are trying to track them down. His parents, too. They live in Featherstone.'

'I didn't know that,' Banks said. 'About his wife, I mean.'

'I found out from his boss, sir. It was very recent. Only a month. Massive stroke.'

'Is that what he was in here for? Depression? Grief counselling?'

'No. Neck problems. Physio and massage therapy.'

'OK, carry on,' said Banks. He stood in the doorway watching Winsome work her way through Bill Quinn's room.

When she had finished, neither of them was any the wiser.

'There doesn't seem to be anything of a personal nature here,' said Winsome. 'No diary, journal, notebook. Nothing.'

'And no note signed by the killer saying, "Meet me by the lake at eleven o'clock tonight"?''

Winsome sighed. 'I wish.'

'Did it seem disturbed at all when you first came in? I suppose if someone could get into the woods to kill him and take his key, they could also get in his room.'

'No signs of it,' said Winsome. 'Anyway, it might be a bit riskier, actually entering the building.'

'Not according to what I've just heard from Mary,' said Banks. 'There's about as much security here as a kid's piggy bank. Do we know if he had a mobile?'

'I'd be surprised if he didn't,' said Winsome. 'I mean, these days . . .'

'Well, he doesn't appear to have one now,' said Banks. 'And that's very peculiar, wouldn't you say?'

'Yes, I would. I always take mine with me when I go out.'

'Better make sure we ask his fellow patients, or guests, or whatever they are, and the staff. Someone should remember if he had one. Same with a laptop or a notepad.' Banks slipped on the protective gloves he always carried with him to crime scenes and picked up a heavy book Winsome had found in a drawer. *Practical Homicide Investigation*. Bill Quinn's name was written in the flyleaf. 'And this is his only reading material, apart from the fishing and gardening magazines?' Banks flipped through the book. 'It hardly looks like the sort of reading you'd want to do if you were here recuperating for a couple

of weeks, does it? Some of these pictures are enough to turn your stomach.'

'Well, he *was* a detective, sir,' Winsome said. 'Maybe he was doing a bit of studying?'

'I suppose we can check if he was doing any courses.'

Banks flipped through the rest of the book, but nothing fell out. He examined it more closely to see if anything was sello-taped inside, or rolled up and shoved down the spine, but there was nothing. Nor were the pages cut to hold a package of some sort, the way he had cut out *The Way to Keep Fit* to hide his cigarettes when he was fourteen. It hadn't worked, of course. His mother had noticed what an unusual title it was, mixed in with James Bond, The Saint, The Toff, The Baron and Sherlock Holmes. There was no denying from which side of the family Banks had inherited his detective abilities. He had fared about as well with his copies of *Mayfair*, *Swank* and *Oui*, too, hidden under a false bottom in the wardrobe. God only knew what had tipped her off to that one.

But Bill Quinn's secret wasn't hidden in a hollowed out book, or under the false bottom of a wardrobe; it was between the hard book cover and a loosened endpaper, which had only been very superficially smoothed and pasted back down.

Banks peeled back the edge of the flap and managed to prise out a small, thin buff envelope with the tips of his gloved fingers. He sat down by the coffee table, took the envelope, which was closed but not sealed, and shook out its contents on to the table's surface. Photographs. He turned them all the right way up and set them out in a row. Three colour 4 x 6 prints, run off an inkjet printer on cheap paper. There were no times or dates printed on them, and nothing written on the backs. But they were of good enough quality to show what was happening.

The first one showed Bill Quinn sitting in a bar enjoying an intimate drink with a very beautiful, and very young, woman.

She hardly looked old enough to get served, Banks thought. Quinn was leaning in close towards her, and their fingertips were touching on the table. Both had champagne flutes in front of them. The figures in the background were blurred, as were the details of the room, and it was impossible to make out any faces or decor to identify where it had been taken.

In the second photograph, the couple seemed to have moved on to a restaurant. They were sitting in a booth, and the decor seemed darker and more plush, brass, wood and red velour. On the table in front of them, on a white linen tablecloth, were two plates of pasta and two half-full glasses of white wine beside a bottle placed upside down in a metal ice bucket. Their faces were close, as if in intimate conversation, and Quinn's hand rested on top of the woman's thigh.

The third photograph was taken slightly from above and showed Quinn on his back with the young girl, naked now, straddling him, her small breasts jutting forward, nipples hard, dark hair hanging over her shoulders. Quinn's hands rested on her thighs. The girl had an expression of ecstasy on her face, but it was impossible to tell whether it was genuine. Probably not, Banks thought, because the odds were that Bill Quinn had passed out, or had been drugged, by this time. He couldn't be certain, of course, but there was something about the pose, the way Quinn's head rested slackly on the pillow, his body slumped, and his hands lying passively on her thighs. Maybe he should have been squeezing her breasts, rearing up and sucking them, kissing them, doing *something*, at any rate. The surroundings were in darkness except for an oblong of pale light that must have been a window, and one or two pieces of furniture in the shadows. A hotel room, Banks guessed.

'What do you think?' he asked Winsome, who was perching on the arm of the chair, beside him peering at the photos.

'Escort,' she said, without missing a beat.

‘Perhaps it was more than just a sexual transaction?’ Banks suggested. ‘She’s not dressed like a hooker. Those are more like student clothes, not slutty or expensively stylish at all. Could she have been a lover, maybe? He seems a bit out of it in the room, doesn’t he? What do you think?’

‘She could be a high-priced escort,’ Winsome said. ‘I imagine you can order them dressed any way you wish. Maybe he had a thing about student chic. And you’re right, guv. There’s definitely something odd about that picture in the hotel room. His position. He’s sort of inert, when you wouldn’t expect him to be.’

Banks raised his eyebrows. ‘Winsome, you surprise me. What should he be doing, do you think?’

‘He just seems too passive, that’s all,’ she said. ‘I’d say that if a man his age was lucky enough to be in bed with a girl her age, a girl as beautiful as her, then he should probably be enjoying himself.’

Banks laughed. ‘Good point, Winsome. Thanks for sharing that.’ He stood up. ‘Lots of questions that need answers. Whichever way you look at it, it seems as if our DI Quinn has been a naughty boy. Bit of a dark horse. OK, let’s get these photos over to Photographic Services and have some copies made before they get to work on them. It would be interesting to find out when they were taken and who the girl is. Perhaps we can isolate her face so we can show it around without giving away what Quinn was up to. Will you seal off this room, Winsome, and make sure no one enters? I especially don’t want any of the media getting a scent of this. They’re bound to find out eventually – they always do – but let’s keep it under wraps for as long as we can.’

‘Yes, guv.’ Banks glanced at his watch. ‘I’d better be getting back to the station. I’m sure the boss will be chomping at the bit, wanting to know what’s going on, and I need a few favours from her.’