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Bad Boy

Written by Peter Robinson

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PETER ROBINSON

Bad Boy



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To Sheila

I

By the end of August, the waterlogged Yorkshire countryside was a symphony of green and gold under a blue sky scribbled with white clouds. Heaven only knew how the farmers had managed to mow and bale the hay, as the rain seemed to have been falling for days without end, but somehow they had succeeded, and their neat straw cylinders dotted the fields. Bright tractors ploughed in the stubble and turned the earth a dark fecund brown. Smells of the recent harvest and of the coming autumn chill mingled in the mild air. On the moors, the purple heather was in bloom. By the roadside, swallows gathered on the telephone wires preparing for their long flight to South Africa.

Annie Cabbot wished she could go with them as she drove the last few miles to work that Monday morning. A few days on a game reserve would do her the world of good, photographing and sketching giraffes, zebras, leopards, lions and elephants. Then perhaps a tour of the Winelands, a taste of fine Cape Town cuisine and nightlife.

But it was not to be. She had exhausted her entire holiday allowance for the year, apart from a few days, which she planned to use to create occasional long weekends between now and Christmas. Besides, she couldn't afford to go to South Africa; she would be hard pushed to pay for a mini-break in Blackpool. Lucky swallows.

The traffic came to a halt about half a mile from the big roundabout on the southern edge of Eastvale, and when Annie finally got close enough to see the fender-bender that was causing the delay, she was already late for work. A patrol car had arrived at the accident scene, so she felt she could safely leave the uniformed officers to deal with the obvious case of road rage between the two drivers, who were standing by their cars shouting at each other, fists raised. Traffic wasn't her department.

Annie made her way through the increasingly built-up and busy streets around the college, where a few late summer students strolled across the green to morning lectures, rucksacks slung over their shoulders. From there, she cut down a long narrow street of three-storey red-brick Victorian houses, mostly converted into student flats, over to Market Street. When she reached the market square, she took the narrow lane between the buildings and parked at the back of the Tudor-fronted police station. She said hello to a couple of officers she recognised standing outside sneaking a quick smoke break, then swiped her card in the slot on the back door and entered Western Area Headquarters.

A couple of people greeted her when she walked into the Major Crimes squad room. Geraldine Masterson, their new probationary detective constable, told her that Winsome Jackman and Doug Wilson – known to most of his colleagues as 'Harry Potter' owing to his uncanny resemblance to Daniel Radcliffe – were already out interviewing witnesses to last night's hit-and-run on the Lyndgarth Road. The incident had left two teenagers in hospital and one no doubt very shaken driver holed up at home, just waiting for the knock on the door, wishing he hadn't had that one last drink for the road.

Annie had hardly made a dent in the accumulated paperwork when her phone rang. She put down her pen and picked up the handset. 'DI Cabbot.'

It was the desk sergeant. 'Someone to see DCI Banks,' he said. 'A Mrs Doyle.' There was a moment's pause while the sergeant apparently conferred with the visitor, their voices muffled. 'Mrs Juliet Doyle,' he went on. 'She says she knows the DCI. Says it's urgent.'

Annie sighed. 'All right,' she said. 'Send her up. Might as well have someone show her to DCI Banks's office. It's a bit more private there.'

'Will do, ma'am.'

Annie closed the thick folder of crime statistics on her desk and walked down the corridor to Banks's office. The few occasions she had been in there recently had unnerved her even more than her brief visits to his cottage to water the plants, take in any parcels and flyers and make sure all was well. Banks's absence seemed even more palpable in the cool silence and the slight musty smell of his office. His desk was empty except for the computer, which hadn't been switched on in ages. A CD player/radio combination stood silent on one of his bookshelves next to a couple of tattered Kingsley Amis paperbacks he'd picked up from the second-hand bookshop in the market square a few days before he had left. Annie moved the computer monitor aside so that she would have an unobstructed view of the person sitting opposite her. A young PC knocked at the door and showed the woman in.

'I thought this was Alan's office,' Juliet Doyle said. 'It has his name on the door. Who are you? I don't mean to seem rude, but I specifically asked to see Alan.'

She seemed nervous, Annie thought, her movements jerky and bird-like as she took in the sparse room. 'DCI Banks is

on holiday,' Annie explained, standing up and extending her hand. 'I'm DI Annie Cabbot. Can I help you?'

'I . . . I don't know. I was expecting Alan. This is all so . . .' Juliet fingered the chain around her neck. A heavy gold-and-jade pendant hung from it in the lightly freckled cleft between her breasts. She was probably in her mid-forties, Annie guessed, smartly dressed, her clothes definitely not from any of the shops you would find in the Swainsdale Centre, more likely Harrogate or York, wavy blonde hair with dark brown roots, tasteful make-up, still attractive, and not concerned about showing a little cleavage. Her skirt was a modest knee-length, legs nicely tapered beneath it, and she wore a tan suede jacket in an elegant hourglass cut. Annie wondered whether she fancied Banks, whether there had been something between them.

'Please sit down,' Annie said. After a slight hesitation, Juliet perched at the edge of the chair opposite her. 'Is it anything I can help you with, or was it something personal?'

'That's why I was hoping to see Alan,' Juliet went on. 'You see, it's both, really. Oh, this is *so* difficult. When will he be back?'

'Not until next week, I'm afraid.'

Juliet Doyle seemed to consider this for a few moments, still fidgeting with her chain, as if debating whether the matter could wait that long.

'Would you like some tea? Coffee?' Annie asked.

'No, thank you.'

'I can't help you if I don't know what it's about,' Annie went on. 'You say it's both police business and personal, is that right?'

Juliet nodded. 'That's why it's so hard. I mean, Alan would *understand*.' She had shifted her attention from the necklace

to the chunky diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand, twisting it around and around. Her fingernails were bitten low and painted pink.

'Why don't you try me?' Annie said. 'Just tell me what the problem is.'

'Alan would know *what to do*.'

Annie leaned back in the chair and linked her hands behind her head. She felt as if she were in for a long haul. 'Perhaps you could start by telling me exactly what your relationship is with DCI Banks?'

Juliet appeared startled. 'Relationship? We don't have a relationship.'

'I simply meant how you came to know one another.'

'Oh, that. I see. Yes. I'm sorry. We're neighbours. Were.'

Annie happened to know that Banks had no neighbours anywhere close to his Gratly cottage, so she assumed that Juliet Doyle was referring to the past, perhaps when he had lived on Laburnum Way, about a mile down Market Street from the police station. But Banks hadn't lived there for ten years. Had they kept in touch all that time? Was there something she was missing? 'When was this?' she asked.

'When he and Sandra were still together. I still think it's so tragic that they parted like that, don't you? Such a lovely couple.'

'Yes,' said Annie, whose only experiences of Sandra had been humiliating and more than a little frightening.

'Anyway,' Juliet went on, 'we were friends and neighbours. That's why I thought he might be able to help me.'

'Mrs Doyle,' said Annie, 'if this is a police matter, you really should tell me. Are you in some sort of trouble?'

Juliet flinched as if she'd received a surprise tap on the shoulder. 'Trouble? Me? No. Of course not.'

'Then what is it?'

Juliet scanned the office as if she suspected Banks were hiding behind a filing cabinet or in a cupboard. 'Are you *sure* Alan's not here?'

'Positive. I told you. He's on his holidays.'

Juliet twisted her diamond ring again and let the silence stretch. Just when Annie was about to get up and show her the door, she blurted out, 'It's about Erin.'

'Erin?'

'Yes. Our daughter. Mine and my husband's, that is. Patrick. He sent me. He's stopping home with Erin.'

'Is Erin in trouble?'

'I suppose she is. Yes. You don't know what they get up to, do you? Do you have any children?'

'No.'

'Well, you wouldn't know, then . . . It's too easy to blame the parents, the way they do in the papers and on television. But when you just don't know . . .' She let the sentence trail.

'I'm going to ring for some tea,' said Annie. The good old English panacea, she thought, as she picked up the phone and asked for a pot to be sent up, a nice cup of tea. This was clearly going to take some time, and if Juliet Doyle didn't need a cuppa, Annie certainly did. Maybe they'd bring chocolate digestives, too, if she was lucky.

'Erin lives in Leeds,' Juliet said. 'In Headingley. Hardly a den of iniquity, you might say, but you'd be surprised.'

'Like most big cities, it can be a dangerous place if you're not careful,' said Annie. 'But I must tell you, we're North Yorkshire. If the problem is in Leeds, then you need to—'

'No, no. That's not it. You don't understand.'

Of course I don't understand, Annie thought, gritting her

teeth. I'd have to be a bloody mind-reader to understand. 'Tell me, then,' she said.

The tea arrived. A welcome interruption. No chocolate digestives, though. Normally, Annie would have asked or made some sort of comment to the young PC who brought in the tray, but it wouldn't do to take up a petty issue like the lack of chocolate biscuits with Juliet Doyle sitting opposite her.

'Erin's a good girl. I think she must have fallen in with a bad crowd,' said Juliet, accepting the cup Annie handed her, adding milk and sugar with slightly shaking hands.

'How old is she?'

'Twenty-four.'

'Working?'

'Yes. As a waitress. It's a nice restaurant. Very upmarket. Down in The Calls, with all those fancy new boutique hotels and waterfront flats. And she makes decent enough money. But even so . . .' She shrugged.

'It's not what you expected for her?'

'Not with a good upper second in psychology.'

'Times are hard. Perhaps she's just waiting for the right job to come along.'

'I'd like to think so, but . . .'

'What?'

'Well, I think she's more likely been wasting her time. It's been two years now since she got her degree. She took a gap year before she went.'

'Does she have a boyfriend?'

'As far as I know she still does,' said Juliet. 'Not that we've met him, or even that she's told us much about him. Mostly we keep in touch through phone calls, texts. You know what the young are like. The last thing they think of sometimes

is visiting their parents unless they need something, or it's a special occasion.'

'Young people can be very secretive,' Annie agreed.

'She's a grown woman. I was married when I was her age.'

'But times change,' said Annie. 'Kids aren't so quick to leave the nest these days.'

'Erin's not a parasite, if that's what you mean. She was happy enough to get away from home in the first place. Couldn't get out fast enough. That wasn't the problem.'

'Then what is?' Annie said, close to the end of her patience. She was beginning to think that this was some sort of domestic matter, and she was starting to feel resentful that she was left not only to do Banks's job while he was away, but handle his personal problems, too. 'Why are you here? What did you think Alan could do for you?'

Juliet's back stiffened. 'He'd *know* what to do, wouldn't he?'

'About what?' Annie knew she was almost shouting, but she couldn't help herself.

'About the gun,' said Juliet Doyle, head bowed, speaking so softly that Annie could barely hear her. 'She has a gun.'

'Tell me how it happened.'

Detective Superintendent Catherine Gervaise was sitting on the edge of her desk with her arms folded, and the way she towered over Annie and Juliet Doyle made Annie feel as if they were two truant schoolgirls brought up before the headmistress. Gervaise could have that effect when she wanted. Annie had her notebook open and her pen in her hand, waiting. No matter what action the situation warranted, there was likely to be a lot of red tape ahead, and she had to get it down right.

'I was dusting and cleaning her room,' Juliet began. 'Honestly, I wasn't prying. Erin was downstairs watching breakfast television. I like to keep a neat and clean house, and it was my morning to do the upstairs, so I didn't see any harm in it.'

'So Erin still lives at home?' Gervaise asked.

'No. As I told Ms Cabbot here, she lives in Leeds.'

'Would you give us the address, please?'

'Of course.' Juliet gave an address in Headingley and Annie wrote it down. She knew the area and recognised the street name.

'What is she doing in Eastvale?'

'She . . . she didn't really say.'

'What did she say?'

'Just that she needed to come home for a while. I thought she might have split up with her boyfriend or something.'

'Did you ask her if she had?'

'Yes, but she just told me to mind my own business. She isn't usually so rude. We brought her up to be polite and respectful to her elders. But she's upset. I thought if I left her alone, she would tell me what was bothering her eventually. She usually does.'

'Are you very close?'

'I wouldn't say *very* close, but I like to think that we are close, yes, that she feels she can talk to me, tell me anything. That's why it was such a shock, finding the gun.'

'What do you know about her boyfriend?'

'Just what she told me on the phone, really.'

'What's his name?'

'Geoff. I don't know his last name. They only use first names, don't they?'

'How long has she been going out with him?'

'About six months.'

'Do you think he's been a bad influence on her?'

'Quite the opposite, really. From what she says, he's a nice lad, and he's done very well for himself, not like her usual scruffy student types. And I must say, I've noticed a great change for the better in her appearance on the few occasions I have seen her since they've been together.'

'Like what?'

'Her dress sense, for a start. Her whole style. Much smarter. For so long she dressed like a typical student, but she turned up for her dad's birthday in a nice summer frock with a lovely heart pendant around her neck. She never used to wear jewellery unless it was the cheap kind, plastic coloured beads and the like. She's had her hair done, too. You can tell she went to a good hairdresser. It's a professional job.'

'When was this?'

'Thirtieth of July'

'Do you know what this Geoff does for a living?'

'He's in sales and marketing. That's all I know. And he's got a company car. A BMW.'

'Sounds like a good catch,' said Gervaise. 'What was Erin like when she came back home? What was her state of mind? You said she was upset.'

'Yes. She seemed distant, distracted. Quiet and withdrawn.'

'Is that like her?'

'No. She's usually quite normal, when it comes to conversation and such. Always has been. Cheerful. Quick to smile. Gregarious, even. But this time she's been acting like a hermit, staying in her room.'

'Did she ask you for any help at all?'

Juliet frowned. 'What do you mean? What sort of help?'

'Financial, emotional, medical. Anything. Could she be in trouble?'

'You mean *pregnant*?'

'It's a possibility,' said Gervaise. 'Though that wasn't what I meant specifically. Would she have been able to talk to you about something like that?'

'I'd like to think so.'

'How long has she been back here in Eastvale?'

'Since Friday morning. We kept her room. Always. Just as it was. Well, tidier.'

'Lots of parents do that,' Gervaise said. 'It offsets the sense of loss when their children leave home. Sometimes it's hard to let go.'

Annie knew that the superintendent had two children of her own, though it was hard to imagine it at the moment, as she perched there in her pinstripe skirt, buttoned-up jacket and crisp white blouse, all business.

'Yes,' said Juliet.

'Did you get the impression that this time it's more than a passing visit?'

'Definitely.'

'And is this the first time she's come to stay for any length of time since she left home?'

'Yes.'

Gervaise paused. 'Now, about the gun you found on top of the wardrobe,' she went on.

'It was near the back, where you couldn't possibly see it unless you stood on a chair or a stepladder. It was wrapped in a tea cloth. I suppose she thought it was safe up there. I mean, she doesn't really think about housework or anything like that.'

'It would have been if it hadn't been for your thoroughness,'

said Gervaise. 'You did the right thing coming to us, Mrs Doyle.'

'I don't know,' Juliet said, shaking her head. 'My own daughter. I feel like such a . . . Judas. What will happen to her?'

Annie had deeply conflicted feelings towards Juliet Doyle at that moment. On the one hand, the poor woman was turning in her own daughter, and she must be going through hell. Whether Juliet was aware of it or not, Annie knew there was a mandatory five-year sentence for possession of a handgun, and the courts tended to be strict in its application, though there had recently been some complaints about overly lenient judges. Perhaps they would take special circumstances into account for a young woman with no prior record, but however forgiving they were, Erin Doyle was looking at a prison sentence of some sort, rather than probation or community service. And she would come out with a criminal record. Juliet probably didn't suspect this. Still, Annie reminded herself, as yet they had absolutely no evidence that Erin Doyle was guilty of anything.

'It's a very serious matter,' Gervaise went on. 'Guns are dangerous weapons, and the more we get off the streets the safer our towns and cities will be.'

It was the party line, Annie knew, and Gervaise was clearly trying to make Juliet feel more at ease with her betrayal, feel like a right-thinking citizen. But Annie sensed that Juliet Doyle was getting seriously worried now, and beginning to regret that she had come. She was probably thinking that she and her husband could have dealt with the whole mess themselves, disposed of the gun, chucked it in the river, given Erin a good talking-to. In a way, Annie thought, she was right.

For a mother to take such a step was almost inconceivable to Annie, no matter how much police policy encouraged it, or how much, as an officer of the law and a campaigner against gun crime, she was supposed to applaud it. While a part of her admired Juliet's sacrifice to duty, to the greater good, another part of her felt disgust for what the woman was doing. Though Annie had never raised a child herself, she didn't think she would be capable of betraying her daughter. She was certain that her own mother never would have done such a thing, though she had died when Annie was very young. Her father would have given her a stern talking-to and thrown the gun in the sea, but he would never have turned her in to the police, either. But, she reminded herself, Juliet Doyle had come here asking for Banks's help. No doubt she had hoped that he would be able to deal with the matter unofficially, off the record.

'What happens now?' Juliet asked.

Gervaise moved away from the edge of her desk and went to sit behind it. She didn't seem quite so imposing there, and Annie felt the atmosphere lighten a little. 'There are procedures to be followed,' Gervaise said. 'Where is the gun now?'

'In the kitchen. Patrick has it. We didn't think it would be a good idea for me to carry it in the street, and I must admit the idea made me very nervous.'

'And your daughter?'

'She's with him. We agreed this was the best way. They would stay at the house. I would come here and talk to Alan, ask him to go back with me, but . . .'

'Yes, I understand that DCI Banks was a neighbour,' Gervaise said. 'Don't worry, we're all professionals here. We'll deal with this just as he would. I know it's much more

pleasant to have a familiar face around in a situation like this, but we all want the same thing. First of all, are you absolutely certain it's a real gun? You have no idea how many people we get reporting replicas or ball-bearing guns.'

'Patrick said it is. He used to belong to a gun club, many years ago, after grammar school. I don't know about such things.'

'Did he also happen to check if it's loaded?'

'He says it is. He handled it very carefully.'

'Good,' said Gervaise. 'Did he unload it?'

'No. He said it was best to leave it as it was, not to contaminate the evidence.'

Wonderful, thought Annie. Another one been watching too many episodes of *CSI*. A loaded gun. Now they would have to bring in the Firearms Support Unit for certain. It would have made more sense, and been much safer, if Patrick Doyle had unloaded the gun. Annie also knew that most people rarely act sensibly during crises. After all, how often do you find a loaded gun in your daughter's bedroom?

'Did he happen to mention what kind of gun it is?' Gervaise asked.

'He said something about a semi-automatic. Can that be right?'

Annie knew very little about firearms, but she knew that a semi-automatic used a removable magazine to hold cartridges, rather than a cylinder. It usually held several rounds of ammunition, and it fired one shot each time you pulled the trigger.

'So when you left the house,' Gervaise went on, 'your husband and daughter were in the kitchen and the gun was on the table?'

'Yes.'

'Still wrapped?'

'Patrick wrapped it up in the tea cloth again after he'd examined it, yes.'

'What state of mind was Erin in then?'

'She was upset, obviously. Angry. Tearful. Frightened.'

'Did you ask her who she'd got the gun from?'

'Of course. But she wouldn't say.'

Gervaise pursed her lips and thought for a moment, then she glanced at Annie and stood up. 'Thank you,' she said to Juliet Doyle. 'I'm going to ring for someone to take care of you for the time being while we deal with the problem of the gun. That has to be our priority, you understand. We need to get that loaded gun out of your house and into safe keeping, and there are strict procedures we need to follow.' She picked up the telephone and talked to the officer on the front desk.

Juliet looked pleadingly towards Annie. 'Will you stay with me?' she asked.

'I'm afraid I need DI Cabbot,' said Gervaise. 'She's the only other senior officer I have here at the moment. But don't worry, I'll make sure you're nice and comfortable with WPC Smithies in the canteen.'

'Can't I go home?'

'Not just yet,' said Gervaise. 'Not until we've cleared the premises of the firearm.'

'But can't I go with you?'

'I'm afraid not,' said Gervaise. She touched Juliet's arm. 'Don't worry. I told you, you'll be well taken care of.'

'Can I ring my husband?'

'Sorry,' said Gervaise. 'It might seem petty and silly to you, but we can't allow any contact until the matter is settled and the firearm is safely in our possession.'

'But what harm could it possibly do if I talked to my husband?'

It could do a lot of harm, Annie thought. It could precipitate an argument between father and daughter in the house, for example, and with a loaded gun lying on the table and tempers no doubt already stretched to breaking point, that could prove fatal. But before Gervaise could answer the question, assuming she was intending to, WPC Smithies knocked at the door and escorted a reluctant Juliet Doyle to the canteen.

Gervaise beckoned Annie to stay. 'We'll do this by the book, Annie. I don't want any guns on my patch, and I certainly don't want any accidents with them due to haste or negligence. Is that clear?'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Annie. 'Want me to log the incident and call in an Armed Response Vehicle?'

'Yes. And get one of the DCs to run a check on the Doyles, especially the daughter. Everything seems hunky-dory on the surface, but find out if we've any cause for alarm. I'll ring ACC McLaughlin and he'll no doubt get in touch with the Deputy Chief Constable. I also want to arrange for the Leeds police to search Erin's house. I hardly think she's an arms dealer, but we'd better cover it. Let's get this in motion. The longer we delay, the more chance there is of something going wrong.'

It wasn't the first time Annie had witnessed an armed police raid. She had been involved in two of them in London a few years earlier. The first had gone smoothly, but the second had been a disaster. Shots had been fired and two men had been killed. This time, she felt much stranger, being just down the road from the police station, across from Banks's old suburban

semi. It all seemed so ordinary. A black cat picked its way through a flower bed; people passed by the end of the street with their shopping and paused to see what was happening.

Annie sat silently in an unmarked police car with Detective Superintendent Gervaise and waited for the Armed Response Vehicles to arrive. She almost wished she smoked. It would be something to do to help pass the time. Instead, she just gazed out at the bay-windowed semis with their low walled gardens, pebble-dash and trim lawns, and she realised she found it hard to imagine Banks ever living here as a family man. To her, he had always been very much a lone figure, even when they had had their brief romance. Now she couldn't fathom him at all. Something had changed in him, something fundamental had broken, and she wasn't sure whether it could ever be mended.

Two Volvo T5s parked at the junction with Market Street. Each Armed Response Vehicle from the Firearms Support Unit comprised two Authorised Firearms Officers, or AFOs, in full Personal Protective Equipment, carrying PR24 batons, rigid handcuffs and CS spray, in addition to Glock sidearms and tasers. They would have Heckler and Koch MP5 carbines locked in the boots of their Volvos, along with an array of other lethal weapons.

Laburnum Way was a cul-de-sac about a hundred yards in length, so their arrival effectively cut off the street. Two patrol cars were parked at the far end. People were already watching at their windows.

The four AFOs had already been briefed on the layout of the house, as provided by Juliet Doyle, should they need to effect entry. They didn't expect to have to do that, however, as Patrick Doyle and his daughter knew where Juliet had gone, and they were expecting a police visit.

Annie thought one of the team members was a woman, but it was hard to tell behind all the body armour and equipment she was carrying. Another car pulled up and Mike Trethowan, the Firearms Cadre's superintendent, also wearing full PPE, spoke briefly with his officers then came over to join Annie and Gervaise.

'Any change?' he asked.

'None,' said Gervaise. 'According to our information they're just sitting there in the kitchen waiting for us to arrive.'

'And the kitchen is where?'

'Back of the house. Down the hall, door off to the right.'

The superintendent sniffed the air, nodded and went back to his team.

This wasn't a firearms hostage situation or a fatal shooting. So far, nothing had happened, and the procedure was a simple one. As it didn't appear that anyone was intent on using the firearm, and the situation was more or less under the control of the girl's father, the uniformed officers would knock at the door and shout for Patrick and Erin Doyle to come out. Once they appeared, they would be asked to hand over the weapon in question and step away. It was simply a matter of being on guard and of using the usual extra care and caution around firearms. The house was certainly quiet enough from the outside.

Things started to go wrong right from the start, when no one answered the door. Because of the natural tension when firearms are involved, everyone was a little impatient, but even Annie had to admit that a pensioner in a Zimmer frame could have got there by the time Superintendent Trethowan recalled the local officers, sent two armed men around the back and two up the front path. Annie glanced at Gervaise,

whose expression was set, teeth clenched, Cupid's-bow mouth almost a single straight red line.

Getting no response to their shouts, the AFOs used a battering ram on the door, which splintered open, and the two officers rushed inside, making as much noise as they could. Within seconds, they had disappeared from view, and after a brief silence, Annie heard a muffled shout and then a clicking sound, like some distant cicada chattering in the trees, followed by a scream and a lot of shouting and banging about.

She and Gervaise jumped out of the car and dashed for the garden, but Superintendent Trethowan, outside the house, raised his hand to warn them to stay back, then he went inside. Annie could hear the other two officers breaking in at the back, then more shouting, the sound of a chair or a table crashing over, and finally another loud scream, a different voice this time.

Annie felt her heart beating so hard and fast that she thought it would explode inside her chest. She was shaking all over. For what seemed like ages, nothing happened. The house fell silent again, apart from the sounds of the team walking about inside, doors opening and closing. Finally, Trethowan came out with two officers, and the three of them walked towards the van.

'What happened?' Gervaise asked as they passed by.

But Trethowan simply shook his head. Annie couldn't see his expression because of the protective headgear.

About thirty seconds later, someone shouted the all-clear, and another officer came out carrying a small item wrapped in a tea cloth. So that was what it was all about, Annie thought. So tiny. So deadly. And from what she could see as the man passed right by her, the tea cloth had a map of

the Yorkshire Dales printed on it. A moment later, the final two armed response officers came out, dragging between them a struggling and screaming young woman in rigid handcuffs: Erin Doyle. Then came the sound of an ambulance speeding towards them down Market Street.

'Oh, shit,' said Gervaise. 'Here we go.'