

School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts

**Characterisation and Ideology in Recent Crime
Fiction set in the First World War
A Novel and Exegesis**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature

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Abstract

Characterisation and Ideology in Recent Crime Fiction set on the Western Front in the First World War.

This thesis consists of two distinct but related parts: a creative component, the novel “Watershed”, and a theoretical essay. Both will attempt to answer the question: What narrative strategies of characterisation might be utilised to represent the detective figure as a bearer of ideological significance in crime novels set in the First World War?

The novel “Watershed” is a detective story set in a Cambridge village in 1924. The murder victim is an ex-soldier, Oliver Walters and his death is being investigated by Detective Inspector Bannister. The main characters of this novel, however, are ex-Captain Richard Frampton, ex-Corporal Danny Doyle (an Australian), and Miss Jane Cresswell. These three are involved in a search for meaning in the execution of Jane’s brother in 1916. His death and the murder of Oliver Walters are related yet no-one seems to be aware of this fact for some time. Various narrative strategies of characterisation are employed in the creation of these agents and several glimpses of their attitudes to war are inscribed in those characterisations.

The exegetical component firstly provides background to ideology, narrative strategies of characterisation, writing war and writing crime. It then discusses the hybrid form of war and crime fiction. This background informs a reading of twenty novels in the hybrid genre examining characters for pro-war or anti-war attitudes illustrated by such sentiments as heroism, patriotism, nationalism or disillusionment.

By the use of a fictional creative work and an exegetical component this project provides an analysis of this relatively new hybrid genre and a useful methodology for the examination of other aspects of hybridity in fiction, particularly crime/detective fiction, in the future.

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Watershed: A Novel

Prologue: France, 1916

Richard closed his eyes, rested his knee against the fire-step and pushed his forehead into the gritty earth. The guns had thundered all night, hundreds of them all along the line north and south. Tens of thousands of rounds.

The pain of the chalky soil against his skin drove out the fear, stopped the trembling in his legs. First, there is the fear of death— if it comes, let it be quick. Everyone had seen men caught on the wire like crows along a fence, screaming for mercy, suspended between Earth and heaven, between life and death. The artillery barrage will cut the wire; they say it will kill every living thing within a hundred yards of the German line, but no one believes it.

Fear of death and the manner of its coming then. But another fear, greater even than these—the fear of cowardice. How much would it take before he was no longer able to speak to the men, to give the order and obey it himself? One foot in front of the other, up the ladder, forming lines, standing in the open. What if he cannot speak, if his limbs refuse?

Runners had brought dixies of tea to the jumping off line at three in the morning, but it was cold before they could drink it and tasted, as always, of petrol. At four-thirty, the sergeant major dished out the rum and after that they had waited.

The first grey light of dawn made the shapes in the trench clear: men bent forward, silent. Now the guns fall silent, too, while the gunners adjust their range with the first light. The earth stops

shaking and slowly the men realise—what the officers have known all along—the attack will be in broad daylight. The first wave had gone in against the village a couple of miles to the east at 0340 hours. In total darkness. Half their luck.

Then had come the whistles, the rattle of kit, a shuffling of boots on the ladders. Men swarming from the stepping-off trench like ants leaving a nest, up the parapet and over the sandbags . . . open ground . . . lost in smoke and shells . . . half-marching . . . stumbling . . . in chaos to reach the German wire, already draped with three or four British bodies. Black crows on a fence line.

The earth, broken into pits and mounds, smelled of old sacking and decaying vegetation. The air stale and thick with smoke. German heavy artillery hammered on but the shells whined overhead. Some other poor sod was copping it this time. Warmer now as the sun rose and the ruins of a village to the east came into view: Pozieres, he guessed. And to his left more drunken walls caught in the sunlight—that must be Ovillers, the designated objective. Twenty-four hours earlier he had led his company through Albert, under the shadow of the basilica, the golden statue of the Virgin tilted like a strand of hair against the skyline. Now he had no landmarks, no clear memory of the map they'd shown him.

His company had drifted too far south across the right flank and he knew the day was lost. Where were the men with the wire cutters? Where was his battalion? He'd watched some of them fall in the first hour: the first forty yards. He staggered forward, dazed from the shells, lost in the smoke but no longer afraid. The sun barely visible in the haze overhead.

There were more bodies now, no longer fresh, the result of two weeks fighting over this same ground. Bodies ugly and bloated.

A German machinegun opened up close to his right and he sank to the ground, pinned down and vulnerable, confused. He knew subalterns like him were the highest casualties in attacks like this. Too late for fear now.

Two men ran crouching low and threw themselves into the dirt beside him. One was short and wore spectacles, the other tall and hatless with a mop of hair falling across his forehead.

“Machinegun nest,” the tall man shouted above the noise. He pointed to a low crest beyond the wire where hot, white flashes could be seen now. Two or three enemy gunners in a low hole in the ground behind the ridge were holding back any Allied advance.

“We have to take out that gun,” he shouted. Both men nodded. There was nothing heroic in his decision: they couldn’t go forward, and to move away now would expose them to the full fire of the German gunners.

“Move to the right,” he shouted, and the two men shuffled across to the relatively safe ground behind the bodies of two fallen soldiers. The odds of success weren’t great. More likely to be killed or maimed, but it had to be done. He gave a quick glance back towards their own lines and saw no troops crossing no-man’s land behind them. The attack had petering out after just a few hours; no one could move with this gun raking the field in front of them.

“Mills bombs, anyone?” He shouted over the roar of an exploding shell to his left: a ‘minenwerfer’. The taller of the two men reached down and unhooked two grenade-like shells from his belt, moved them from hand to hand like a juggler before handing one to Richard.

“Should do it,” he grinned at Richard through a layer of mud on his cheeks and signalled with his free hand over towards the

German line. "Like fielding on the boundary. I suggest we throw 'em and get our heads down quick bloody smart."

Without considering the stupidity of it, Richard counted to three and they rose from the dirt and threw the grenades as far and fast as they could. Two rifle shots hit the dirt by his foot then the German machine gun rattled. The soldier with the glasses fell backwards with a spray of blood curving from his chest. Richard felt a guilty relief that it was someone else and not him, then he sensed the other man, the big man who'd given him the grenade, collapse into the dirt behind him and instinctively he threw himself flat on the ground. They lay for several seconds panting until they heard the grenades explode in succession and the machine gun rattle stopped.

"Shit, I've been hit." The soldier next to him winced in pain and reached down to hold his thigh just above the right knee. "Can't stay here," he panted and pushed himself up on his elbow to move back to a more sheltered point, but fell back in pain.

Richard edged closer and touched the wounded man's leg. His hand came up soaked in blood. He lifted the knee slightly and the soldier gritted his teeth. He looked about for a safer place and saw the edge of a crump hole where an artillery shell had bored into the earth and emptied out a great crater.

"Hang on," he grunted, "this is going to hurt." And he grabbed the man under the shoulders and dragged him to the edge of the shell hole before sliding him over the lip. The big man half slithered, half fell into the pool of water at the bottom of the crater. Richard rolled onto his side and made to swing his legs across to follow him as a small shell burst over to his left and a great cloud of dirt and hot metal showered across him. He felt the sting of the shrapnel fragment as it cut into his shoulder and pushed him flat to the

ground. He cried out in pain but the initial hurt passed and became a dark throbbing in his whole body. He struggled to breathe and gasped for air as the injured soldier, dragging his own legs up the slope of the crater, grabbed his arm and pulled him into the hole. Richard slithered headfirst towards the muddy sludge at the bottom of the crater. The movement brought back the stabbing pain and he winced.

The two of them lay still some time before the big man tried to shift his legs again but fell back in agony. Richard knew, lying head down with a shoulder wound, he'd bleed to death. He'd have to move. He slipped his good hand under his tunic and felt a warm, wet hole in his flesh, and a lot of blood soaking through his shirt.

"Move up here." The man's voice, strange and distant. "Get your head up out of that bloody water." The words echoed around inside his head. He just wanted to rest. But the man was right; if he stayed like this, he'd either slip into the water and drown or simply die where he was. He closed his eyes tight and squeezed his teeth together, his breath bubbling as he exhaled.

So easy to just drift off. Sleep. Forget . . . then something hard hit him in his side and he thought he'd been shot as well as hit by shrapnel. "God will this day never end?" he whispered. Then he was hit again, on the chest this time. And again the disembodied voice from across the lip of the crater above him.

"Move your fuckin' arse." The words floated heavily to him and he opened his eyes and saw the soldier swinging at him with the butt of his rifle. The man's face, beneath the layers of mud caked on his cheeks, was twisted into a grimace as if the movement was excruciating in itself, "Don't you fuckin' die on me here, you hear me? I want to get out of this shithole and you're my best chance."

Richard dug his fingers into the mud and dragged himself slowly to the left, like the hour hand of some great clock, inch by inch moving away from the water, until his body was level with his legs, then he kicked out at the mud under him and shuffled up the slope. The pain almost made him black out, but finally he was lying feet down, his head just below the lip of the crater. He looked across at his companion who was grinning at him.

“You’re a Pommy officer,” the man said, pulling back his rifle and pointing at the muddy sleeve of Richard’s tunic. “If I’d bloody known I might’ve let you drown.”

“Australian?” Richard gasped. “How the hell did I get tangled up with your lot?”

“We drifted to the left and your mob shifted over this way. I should think everyone along the line is mixed up like a packet of all-sorts. God only knows what Haig’s map looks like.”

“You’re the first Australian I’ve met.”

“Can’t say that you’re the first fuckin’ Pommy officer I’ve met.” The soldier laughed and winced again.

“Don’t suppose you’ve got any brandy in that water bottle?” Richard had heard rumours that the AIF men sometimes substituted alcohol for their water.

“Not brandy, no. But if I can get to it there should be a swallow or two of rum left.”

The Australian pulled at his webbing straps and brought out a water bottle, shook it against his ear, and unscrewed the cap carefully. He tipped it into his mouth and swallowed with a gasp.

“Not my drink of choice,” he coughed, “but it’s all I could scrounge. Here’s to my friend the quartermaster.” He raised the water bottle once more and took a second swallow before handing it over to Richard.

A soldier with rum in his water bottle faced serious charges, but now it hardly mattered. Especially if they were both to die out here in the mud. He pushed the bottle to his lips and felt the warmth rushing through him. There was something ridiculous in the moment; lying in the wet mud of no-man's land, waiting to die and drinking rum from a stranger's water bottle. He felt grateful for the ill discipline of the Australian divisions; they were famous for it; and proud of it.

"To your good friend the quartermaster," he said, and took a second swig.

The two men lay and waited for the hours to pass. The big Australian lost consciousness and Richard edged across and checked his injuries: a gunshot wound in one thigh and the other leg was visibly torn open at the ankle. The man wasn't going to walk out of there in a hurry. Richard tested his own wound but it proved very tender to his touch. All he could do was raise his arm a few inches and roll his injured shoulder a fraction before the pain shot through him. They were both in desperate trouble. No point in waiting for stretcher-bearers out here so close to the German wire. Fritz wasn't going to allow anyone to wander about in no-man's-land. Gentlemen's agreements might have existed in 1914 but, after two years of bitter conflict, neither side was willing to forfeit military advantage for chivalry. No, he thought, if we're getting out of here then we'll have to get ourselves out. But not until dark.

Richard had to keep the Australian alive. He didn't know if it was better to let him lapse into unconsciousness or to rouse him. Something in his brain said, "don't let him sleep, or he'll die," but he didn't know. After half an hour of watching the man closely, counting the regularity of his breathing, he was relieved when the

eyes opened and peered out of the muddy face, then the grin as the man saw that he was watching.

“Thought I was dead, did you?”

“Seen plenty of dead men,” Richard said. “But none of them snored.”

“It’s Doyle, incidentally,” said the Australian. “Danny Doyle.”

“Frampton,” he said in reply. “Richard Frampton.” And he laughed at the stupidity of it: two men from opposite sides of the world making formal introductions in a muddy shell hole, when the chances of either of them getting out alive were close to zero. Most of Britain’s Expeditionary Force were dead now; or injured and working as instructors for Kitchener’s New Army. No, perhaps the Australian’s had it right, discipline and military decorum stood for nothing out here in no-man’s-land.

“Tell me about Australia, Doyle,” Richard said, as Doyle’s chin started to fall onto his chest. The Australian pursed his lips beneath the layers of mud and when he spoke his mind was elsewhere, back on some isolated station or the open bush that Richard could only imagine. He was talking about his old job contracting for small constructions on the farms around the town where he lived; the way fence posts would be cut from local timber and how small windmills drew water from the underlying aquifers. He told Richard about sheep stations and wheat farms. Finally, he spoke about a woman, Sally Sixsmith, on a property where he’d built a windmill in the first weeks of the war. “Might’ve been the day war was declared?” he muttered to himself. “You’d think a man would remember what he was up to on such a day as that, wouldn’t you?”

“I was living with my aunt,” Richard said, remembering happier times. “My uncle was a captain in the county reservists who formed the second wave to the regular army. I was finishing university and

joined the college OTC when war broke out.” Richard paused as a shell hummed close to the ground over the crump-hole and fell short of the British trenches behind them. “Never thought I’d find myself out here, though,” he added with a laugh, then fell silent as he remembered the first weeks of the war; he’d come down from university to live at Sadec House again. But his uncle’s absence had changed the dynamic, and Richard was no longer a boy. His Aunt Elizabeth was not many years older than him, with dark hair and soft green eyes. And his feelings towards her were different now, feelings he knew he should not have, but he could not deny them. Sometimes he ached for the touch of her skin. But she never encouraged him—until that last night before he left for France.

But Richard said nothing to Doyle about that last night. He described Sadec House and the village, and the grandfather he’d never known, who made a fortune in the shadowy world of Indochina in the glorious days of the last century. He described the English countryside and what little he knew about the farming practices in England.

They kept each other awake until the light began to fade and they saw the shadows of other men making their way back to the Allied lines and heard the zing of German rifle fire from the enemy wire picking them off one by one.

As darkness finally fell Richard had to face the next difficulty; how were they to get out of here? It was obvious Doyle could not walk; both his legs had been hit. And Richard’s left shoulder was shattered. The darkness made the devastation around them surreal; a blighted landscape, piles of brick rubble fifty yards to the north east marked the place where the village must have been. No roads or fields remained; not one tree had survived; just splintered trunks and crushed debris, mud and bodies.

“You’ll have to leave me here,” said Doyle. “There’s no way I can stand, my left foot and . . . my thigh . . . clean through.” He pulled his leg clear of the mud with his hand, the knee bent at an odd angle. “The stretcher bearers can collect me in the night.”

“They won’t be coming tonight. Fritz is too nervous.” But Richard, with a shoulder wound and weak from loss of blood would have a hard time lifting the Australian. But if he left him, he would be leaving him to die.

He raised himself on his right knee and hefted Doyle over his uninjured shoulder but the effort was too much and the two of them collapsed back into the crater.

Doyle gasped between gritted teeth. “Leave me . . . get yourself out.”

“I’ll take you back if I have to drag you there.”

He shuffled into a position behind the Australian and grabbed him under the arms. Shuffling backwards, he managed to move the big man a foot at a time, like a creature dragging its prey home to the nest.

It was slow progress over uneven ground in the darkness, but by midnight, as the moon rose, they were closer to the Allied lines than they were to the enemy. Doyle winced in pain with every movement. Richard was exhausted and flattened himself into the mud waiting for the clouds to mask the face of the moon before moving on. His only hope was to get close enough to the British line for someone to come to their aid.

They were twenty yards from safety when the sky lit up like daytime; a German flare arced across from the south and hung over no-man’s-land. Richard, kneeling behind Doyle, wanted to throw himself down flat, but he knew that it was movement that gave men away. A man huddled on the ground might be a harmless pile of

rubble or a mound in the dirt, but if he moved The snipers on both sides knew this and rarely wasted a bullet until they were sure. Richard froze and prayed that the theory was correct. The earth around him was brightly lit and seemed to show every rock and broken brick and tree stump, the shadows shifted and dimmed and finally the light fell back to earth with an audible fizz over to their left. Several rifle shots peppered the ground around their position then there was darkness: total and absolute. Richard suffered temporary blindness from the Verey flare as the darkness engulfed them. With renewed effort he pulled the injured Australian for all he was worth, ignoring the pain, until they heard familiar English voices as the forward spotters in the saps heard his cries and Richard fell exhausted across the body of the wounded man.

Chapter One

Cambridgeshire, England.

1924

It was over 200 years old; the ivory handle, almost two feet long, slightly curved, delicately inscribed with scenes of village life— not his village, certainly, a fictitious village thousands of miles from here, foreign, Chinese, peasants, a bridge, fish, a multilayered pagoda; the images worn away and faded now. He ran his fingers along the stem as if reading the old Chinese text with his touch. He knew little about ivory. Somehow, it had been handled and traded into China where it was finally converted from an animal's tusk into a work of art. He felt little for the elephant, long dead, its immortality assured only by this stick of ivory no longer than a man's arm.

The bowl was secured to the stem by a silver clasp, ornate and worn smooth by the hands of eager men, lusting for its fruits. The bowl, less than an inch across and no deeper than the first joint of his thumb, was some form of ceramic, hard and decorated with two dragons in faded blue, the inner surface mottled brown and black.

It came on its own lacquered tray inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The total paraphernalia: a second bowl, less-used with identical silver clasp; a straight wire needle, five inches long; a small metal cleaner for scraping the bowl after use; a tiny glass lamp with its funnel top to direct and concentrate the heat into one spot.

He placed the tray on the small wooden table beside the armchair, his movements ritualised, like a priest laying out his

altar. He lit the old Victorian gaslight and turned off the harsh electric lamp on the desk. It was part of the pleasure.

He unlocked the middle drawer of the great desk, took out the silver case, and opened it with the same ceremonial care. Nestled inside a fold of greased paper, were three small brown pellets each no larger than a garden pea.

He'd bought them to ease the pain in his right shoulder where a small fragment of shrapnel still pressed against his collarbone. The first time—an experiment really—he'd used one pellet and slept for thirty minutes. That had been eighteen months ago, when his Uncle Robert had died.

The next occasion—almost twelve months ago now—he'd doubled the dose. The effect had been dramatic. Soft, gentle sleep for over two hours. And the dreams. It was as if she were still alive.

Tonight he would take three.

A soft breeze brushing against his face revived him. He was in the front garden halfway to the gate. Behind him the door to the house stood open and a rhomboid of light slanted across the path and a corner of the flowerbed. The door had been open when he came down. He felt sure it had. And the gate was open too. He would never have left things like that. She'd been there, not just in his dreams. Elizabeth had been into the house; up in the study on the first floor. She'd been shouting something at him but she wouldn't listen to him.

Confused, he spun in a full circle and the dizziness from the drug almost made him fall. He staggered to the porch and held the oak rail, staring in disbelief at the front door—all the proof he had—all the proof he needed.

He shuffled to the gate and looked into the darkness of the lane, the shadow of the stone bridge and the dark shapes of the houses. The lights of the village were out. Nothing but the stirring of the leaves on the hawthorn bushes. Otherwise silence. She was gone. He'd slept . . . confused . . . but she'd been here. The open door and the gate told him that much.

He closed the gate with a wave of sadness and turned back towards the house. Why had she come back now? Did she know? Did she see the paraphernalia and know that he was smoking opium? He shook his head at the thought, the misnaming of an ancient practice. Of course, he wasn't smoking opium. He was heating it and inhaling the vapour, the way it was done in the east. This way was better.

Back in the house, he went upstairs to the study, his uncle's study, and stood looking down at the armchair. She'd been here. The air still held a faint trace of her perfume: lavender, or lily-of-the-valley, he wasn't certain. The effects of the pipe were fading now. He checked the clock over the fireplace. Two in the morning. He'd slept for four hours. And Elizabeth had stood right here berating him. It was the beginning of the dream; the light from the gas mantle had formed a halo around her. And she'd been chiding him. It was all so real, it was her: it was his aunt. "Elizabeth," he said to the empty room.

Jane Cresswell had set off too late in the day, but she'd waited until her mother had left the house—otherwise there'd be questions to answer. And she'd only intended to visit the library in Cambridge to read the maps; something she'd done many times before. She liked maps and timetables. She loved to plan journeys she might one day

make: America, Brazil, China. But today she'd been looking for something much closer to home. Two journeys she might actually make: the nursing home near Bury St Edmunds or a place called Stenbridge. She knew where Bury St Edmunds was so she spent some time checking railways and buses, departures and arrivals. Then she returned to the map and traced a widening spiral around Cambridge; Madingley, Cottenham, Newmarket—had she ever been to Newmarket? *You're too easily distracted, my girl.* St Ives and Huntingdon—these she knew well enough. Sutton, Ely . . . and there it was. Not much more than a speck. Smaller than her own village, Carfenton, then. Only, she lived about six miles to the west of the city and this place, Stenbridge, was about ten miles to the northeast. More scrambling through timetables. She found two alternate ways to reach Stenbridge: by train to Mill Point and walk along the river for about three miles, or a bus that went directly to the village. But the buses were infrequent and the next wasn't until half-past-five. But she hadn't meant to go there today, had she? Nervously she checked her watch against the library clock. Mother would be home soon. There'd be questions to answer anyway. She could go today. Was it impolite to knock on a stranger's door in the evening? *Stupid girl. You're too rash. You don't think anything through.*

Her mother was still upset about the diaries, the notebooks, whatever she called them. Then there had been the strange man who'd called at the house last week. Returning from work Jane had found her mother flushed and angry talking to a stranger on the front step. "We'll just see what Captain Frampton has to say, shall we?" That was all she'd heard. The man had almost knocked her over as he turned to leave, but tipped his hat politely enough and apologised for his clumsiness before rushing off down the lane.

The notebooks must've come last year and her mother had kept them hidden. Jane had found them in the bottom of a wardrobe but had barely had time to read them through before her mother discovered her, sitting on the floor with them. That had been six months ago and after that they'd disappeared again. But she was good at remembering names and places, and then, a month ago, she'd come across a name in an old magazine at the hairdresser's; an article about ex-soldiers in a home near Bury St Edmunds. Soldiers so badly wounded that they had been hidden away from the world since the end of the war. Several of the men, she read, were still suffering from the effects of gas. One man, a Captain R Frampton, solicitor from Stenbridge, had been admitted when his lungs succumbed to the cold or the moisture in the air, but it was hoped he would shortly be fit enough to return home and resume his work.

Frampton was a name in Sam Pickering's diaries. And the man had said it to her mother just this week. And now she knew where to find him. If he wasn't in the Wellington Home for Wounded Soldiers, then he was living in Stenbridge working as a solicitor.

On an impulse, she'd left the library in a hurry; gathered her things and checked the money in her purse. She would go and pay this Captain Frampton a visit. Perhaps he could answer the questions her mother couldn't —or wouldn't.

Waiting for the bus in Cambridge, she'd watched a man with no legs sliding along the pavement on a flat, wheeled trolley and begging for money. She'd looked away, shocked, as she always was. What if this Captain Frampton turned out to be like that man, not just damaged in the lungs, but deformed? Still she could not look at them, poor men. Nevertheless, she would go anyway. She would find this man and ask her questions. Although, in truth, she had little

idea what it was she wanted to know. She already knew what had happened, but she didn't know why. The important things were known. The letter from the War Office, although her mother kept that hidden from her too. The lack of detail after the war. No recognition. No medals. No honour. She knew it all well enough. So what could Captain Frampton add to this sum of knowledge that was no knowledge at all?

Perhaps she wasn't looking for information, just somewhere to leave her anger, her frustration.

The bus was smelly and uncomfortable and she was glad to be off it. Dusk had fallen and she made her way into the village by moonlight. Few of the houses showed light but a larger building at the end of the lane had several windows brightly lit. She took it for a tavern of some kind. *This journey was a huge mistake, foolish child, you should never have come.* There was a smell of beer and warm bread. A man now, in the doorway asking if he could help. A pleasant man. And she was asking for someone. Someone whose name she had not yet spoken aloud. Yes, he knew Mr Frampton. Big house, end of the lane, over the footbridge. "Mind yer step," he warned her. Yes, she would certainly do that, and thank you. Thank you so much.

Still not too late to turn back, my girl. She crossed the narrow bridge and saw the house in the moonlight and pushed down her fear. She knew she must see this through. She must confront the captain. She would find someone who was responsible. Her brother was no coward; she knew that, in spite of anything anyone else said.

The front door was through a low gate, along a path and cocooned in a small porch. She stepped into the porch and gathered herself together, breathed in deeply, clasped her bag in front of her with both arms. The windows in the floor above were lit by a pale

lamp. Someone was home. The waves of fear grew suddenly louder in her ears, and a voice she knew well. *You are a fool, girl. What are you doing here? You are a fool.* But she had learned long ago that it was a voice she could ignore if she tried hard enough.

Her knock at the door was strong and loud; it might have been the knock of a confident woman, she told herself. But it brought no response. Although she could feel the sweat on her skin beneath her dress, the evening carried a distinct chill and she shivered in the darkness and drew her coat closer about her chest. And who would know where she was? She'd told no one. Mother would be ill pleased with her. She'd only gone to the library.

She knocked again and still no sound. She leaned back and looked up at the facade of the house. Still a low light flickering in the upstairs rooms told her that someone was home. If anyone was in bed up there, they must surely have heard her knocking. But there was no sound. She felt affronted. Who was this person who felt they could simply ignore her knocking at their door? *You're a fool girl. You're a fool.* But the voice only made her more determined to see it through. Then she remembered that the man she'd come here to see had been ill. Perhaps he was trapped in bed, unable to answer her call. Or worse, what if he were . . . and nobody knew? She tried the handle, it turned easily, and the door opened. She looked back towards the gate and lane, in total darkness again now. No one there. No one to see her, for the first time in her life, enter another person's house unbidden. She felt a frisson of pleasure she had not felt since she was small girl: the delight of mischief.

"Hello," she called into the hallway. No reply. "Anybody in?" The words bounced back from the walls and from the staircase. "My name is Jane Cresswell," she told the empty space. "Miss Jane Cresswell," she said, pushing her words up the staircase now.

Silence.

Emboldened by the stillness she moved around the door and stood in the hall. Coats and boots; the mixed smells of polish and dampness. And above her somewhere a small light leaked onto the uppermost steps. She called out twice more before taking the first step. The door behind her stood open to the night, her escape route to the garden and the laneway back to the village. And what then? She dare not ask herself.

At the top of the stairs she could see the source of the light. A door to her left stood ajar, was someone in bed? By what right did she feel she could intrude further into someone else's private world? Captain Frampton was, after all, a sick man. She froze as another wave of panic flooded over her, then gently pushed open the door.

At first she thought the room unoccupied but there was an unusual smell in the air. The earlier scent of polish and wet coats she'd sensed in the hallway was replaced by a smell she could not name, could not describe: dry burnt paper perhaps. She stood in the doorway and knew that she was not alone in the room. Someone was sitting in the armchair between her and the great desk with his back to her. She had to walk into the room and cross behind him.

She spoke again. "Hello, I'm looking for..." one further step towards the desk. *You're a fool girl. A fool. You've no right to be here.* Was she cutting off any line of escape she might need? *What if he's a madman?* She knew nothing. She could hardly defend herself.

He wasn't dead. Maybe he wasn't even sick. Suddenly she felt foolish and angry. She was looking down at a man in his chair, sleeping awkwardly with his head bent forward onto his chest. He didn't appear to be wounded at all. But he'd surely wake with a crick in his neck if he slept much longer in that position. He seemed like a small child.

She reached down and touched his arm. He stirred but didn't wake. Still the pervasive smell, stronger now, more like stale food mixed with freshly mown hay.

"Captain Frampton," she said, trying to raise her voice but she'd never been one to shout and now when she needed it her voice seemed to desert her altogether. She repeated herself, louder this time and shook his arm.

He opened his eyes. "Elizabeth," he said. "You came."

"Captain Frampton," she said, softer now. "My name is Jane Cresswell."

"I knew you'd come. I prayed for it."

"Captain . . ."

His eyes began to roll and the lids drooped shut. "You of all people should . . . there's no need . . . the war's over . . . Elizabeth."

"I'm sorry," she stammered. "My name is . . . I'm not Elizabeth."

He was screwing his eyes up, peering at her, as if he found it difficult to focus. Did he normally wear spectacles, perhaps? But she studied his face, the eyes, the bridge of the nose, and concluded that, no, he did not normally wear spectacles. What then? Was he going blind but refusing to acknowledge the fact? She'd heard of such people. No, not that. He was seeing someone else though, not her. He was seeing this Elizabeth person.

Gradually a realisation came to her. Of course, the man was drunk. She'd been a fool all right, coming here so late in the evening. Why, she thought, should a man not be allowed to drink himself into oblivion in his own home? And a war veteran too—although she seldom gave as much respect to the great myth of the ex-serviceman as many people she knew. *You left it too late to come here. You've no right to be here. Should have waited until tomorrow.* She could've checked the trains and buses from Carfenton properly

and left early the next day. But her mother was going to be very angry as it was. *Foolish girl.* Perhaps this time the voice was right. *Where on earth have you been until this hour? You'd better have a good reason."*

But she was here now, so what to do? She would have her answers tonight or not at all. Only . . . only she still had not worked out exactly what it was she wanted to ask. What did she want to know? What could this man possibly tell her?

"Listen to me," she began firmly. "My name is not Elizabeth." She raised her voice to add some authority but now, she thought, it sounded as if she was hysterical. "I'm Jane Cresswell and I live with my mother in Carfenton, that's near St. Ives . . . it's near Huntingdon . . ." Why was she explaining herself? *You're always explaining yourself, girl.* "My brother was Alfie Cresswell." There, she'd said it. The very sound of his name on her lips for the first time in years felt strange, like swearing in church, not that she'd ever, ever sworn in church. "Private Alfred Cresswell. You knew him . . . you . . . he was . . . you were present at his court martial. I don't understand—" She was fighting back tears now. Foolish tears. She really didn't want to look unsophisticated in front of this man. But the way he was looking at her, smiling, he wasn't seeing the tears. Was he hearing a word she said? She remembered the beggar near the bus stop in Cambridge and a flush of anger came to her cheeks. Perhaps, she thought, this man's injuries can't be seen.

"Elizabeth, I knew you'd come."

She raised her voice again. She didn't care if she sounded hysterical. Maybe she was. "Listen to me, Captain Frampton; there are things I need to know." A sudden thought struck her that this might not be the man she wanted to speak to. The man she had

trailed halfway across the county to see. “You are Captain Frampton, aren’t you?” She positively bellowed in his ear now.

“You know I am my sweet. It’s me, Richard.” He closed his eyes and the muscles of his face relaxed. “And I knew you’d come.”

“Yes, yes, so you said . . . but I’m not her . . . not Elizabeth . . . my name’s—.” But he wasn’t listening now. He was asleep. “Oh you stupid, stupid man.” She stamped her foot. “Oh!” she shrugged in exasperation and ran from the room, the tears flooding her eyes as she stumbled down the stairs and out through the open door into the night air and the darkness.

Chapter Two

Detective Inspector Roland Bannister enjoyed being out of the office; he liked the countryside but his job afforded him little opportunity to walk beside canals and rivers as he'd done this particular morning. What he didn't like was suspicious deaths and it was one of those that had brought him to this particular pathway, beside the slow-moving stretch of water on this pleasant September morning. He pushed away an overhanging branch and checked the surface of the water again. No possibility that a man could have been thrown into this narrow stream here and drifted down to the sluice gates at Broughton Mill. Too shallow; too slow moving; reeds and soggy pastureland to the far bank and overhangs and snags on this side. He stepped free of the branch and stood looking at the house. He took it all in with one glance. The garden, badly in need of a mower and a sharp pair of shears; the white pebbledash of the rear of the house with the back door leading, he felt certain, to a kitchen and the stairs up to the bedrooms. And in the window of one of those upstairs rooms, a man was watching him.

The inspector turned away and made his way back past the overhanging bush to the pathway leading across to the lane and the front of the house. He would circle round to the front of the place, although he didn't expect any surprises there. But he didn't like approaching any house from the back door: he'd had enough of tradesmen's entrances, he was a senior policeman now, and he'd knock at the front door to make his enquiries, in spite of the fact that the owner had been watching him from that upstairs' window.

The path back beside the river split and the left fork took him onto the lane and round to the front of the house. From here he

could see the stone bridge leading into the village. That would be Stenbridge, he noted to himself as he looked back at the house. An impressive house for a little village like this, a professional man's house, he thought with a touch of cynicism.

He knocked at the door and waited a moment until it was opened by a man in his mid-thirties; black curly hair and casually dressed in pale blue shirt and one of those multi-coloured cardigans that had been so fashionable before the war.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, good morning." The inspector studied the man closely. He looked harmless enough but you could never be too careful. "I'm Detective Inspector Bannister of the Cambridge police. I wondered if I might have a word."

"Police?" The man stepped back into the hall and the policeman automatically stepped forward to follow him into the house. No obvious signs of distress on the man's face. Not shocked. Surprised, perhaps, at finding the police on his doorstep, but nothing else. But then again, he thought, he'd seen me from the rear window over by the water. He'd had time to compose himself.

"What's this all about, Inspector?"

"Routine enquiries," he replied, wondering idly to himself how many times in these thirty-six years he'd used that hackneyed old phrase. And what did it mean, exactly? Well, in his book, it meant whatever he wanted it to mean. "Perhaps if we could go inside. Just a few questions."

Richard led the policeman into the hallway and hesitated a moment as he decided whether to take him up to the study or into the kitchen. He decided on the study; it was more professional. Following him up the stairs, the inspector was a little confused but pleased to see the room he was being ushered into had wide

windows on both sides of the house. He went directly to the rear window and looked down at the short section of river towards the hawthorn bush where he'd stood a few minutes earlier. Not as much to see as he'd expected; obscured by trees and bushes: just part of the river and the path leading to the garden gate.

"You can't see the bridge from here then?" he asked lightly.

"From the front, yes," Richard replied. "The village is over there."

The inspector walked across to the east-facing window that overlooked the front garden and the lane. Much more extensive view from here. He could see the first couple of buildings in the village, a house and a pub and the stone bridge.

"Ah, no, I meant the pedestrian bridge across the water down there." He waved vaguely in the direction of the back of the house.

Richard thought for a moment. "No," he said. "As you see it's overgrown along the banks, and, anyway, the footbridge is actually at the junction, where the canal cuts off, you couldn't see it from here even if the trees were all down. Even in winter, you see, the bend in the river before the canal—."

"The canal, sir?"

"Dyke really, I suppose you'd say, except it's always been known as the canal. Splits the water to drive the old watermill."

"I see," the policeman pursed his lips and sucked in making a clicking sound with his tongue. He'd just walked down the canal bank across the footbridge and along the flat path beside the river to arrive at the house. Now he was crosschecking the details against his own impressions. "Get much use these days, does it?" He asked casually.

"The mill?"

“No the footbridge, the path along the canal. Where does that take me, exactly?”

“Melthorpe and Mill Point,” said Richard. “About twenty minutes’ walk on the other side of the river and the canal, past Broughton Mill.” Richard stopped and watched his visitor’s face. The inspector must know all that; hadn’t he just come from that direction? “Nice little village. You should take a look at it sometime.” Richard smiled to let the inspector know that he too was playing games but the policeman was not paying attention to him any longer. Instead, he was walking about examining the study. What was the man looking for precisely? Richard waited silently. The inspector was standing in front of the bookcase reading the backs of the books.

“Interesting assortment,” he said, turning back to face Richard.

“Mostly my grandfather’s,” Richard said, unable to check himself from looking up at the shelf where the opium pipe and the tray of accoutrements lay. “He was a businessman in Indochina, trading and suchlike.”

“I see,” said Inspector Bannister without much passion in his voice. “And what is it you do yourself, Mr Frampton? Solicitor, I believe?”

“Solicitor? No, that was my uncle you’re thinking of. Nothing so grand for me, I’m afraid. Since the war I’ve been working for Thatchers, the publishers.”

“I see. So you must travel into Cambridge every day then.”

“Mostly I work from here. It’s mainly reading and reporting. I go into town once or twice a month.”

“I see,” said the inspector again. “So, if you work from here, from this room, then you would be able to observe any comings and

goings along the river. Walkers between Stenbridge and Melthorpe, say?”

“Sometimes,” Richard replied cautiously.

“Clever man was he?”

“Sorry?”

“Clever man, your uncle? Can’t say as I get along with many solicitors. The right barrister can get any mongrel off.” The inspector continued to look out of the window as he spoke. “Can make a lot of difference in my opinion, a good solicitor, the right advice. Still live here, does he? Your uncle?”

“He died last year. Look inspector, I’m sure I’d like to reminisce about my uncle all day but I’m sure you’re a busy man, and I’m sure you didn’t come here to—.”

“Quite right, sir. So there’s just yourself then is there?”

Inspector Bannister turned back to face Richard and his eyes took in the whole room. “Probably nothing, sir, but the body of a man has been found down at the mill. Trapped by the sluice gate to be precise.”

“That’s dreadful,” said Richard, with some shock.

“Local people tell me it could have come from upstream somewhere.” The inspector turned back to the window overlooking the back garden again. “Perhaps fallen off one of these bridges they suppose.”

“Well, not the stone bridge, that’s a fact,” said Richard.

“Oh, and why can you be so certain of that, sir?”

“Too shallow, Inspector. Even at high water, which it isn’t right now, there’s not enough depth to float a body down to the mill. Even from the footbridge, I don’t suppose it’s all that much deeper there, either.”

“You’re quite right, sir, I’ve just come by there and I couldn’t see how anybody could drown a cat in that stream. You could walk across without too much difficulty.”

“Lots of people do. Birdwatchers and such.” Richard saw the look of surprise in the policeman’s eyes and continued, “If they don’t want to come round by Stenbridge village. Nature-lovers and botanists traipsing across the fens. Avoids the canal but they do need waterproof boots . . . I suppose in summer they could wade over barefoot.”

“Quite so, sir.” Inspector Bannister was pulling his mouth to one side as if thinking. “And would anyone of that nature have been rambling or bird watching down there in the last week, say?”

“Not that I’ve noticed, Inspector, but then I hardly spend all day looking out of the window.”

“No strangers then?”

“No.”

“And you, yourself, Mr Frampton, have you had visitors at all this last week? We’re particularly interested in the weekend. Last weekend, that is. Say late Saturday evening.”

Richard shook his head. He’d had a visit from someone that night, of course, but he could hardly mention it. How would he explain his confusion? *My dead aunt called to see me, Inspector but I was suffering from the effects of opium and she left in a hurry.* If someone had been in this room, and he was certain someone had, then it might be better to keep that to himself.

“What about on your walks, sir, seen anyone unfamiliar at all?”

“Walks? Oh, I don’t go out much myself. Maybe down by the canal if the weather’s nice . . .”

“Exactly sir. Been down there to the canal this week, have we?”

“We haven’t, Inspector, no.”

“Now that would be deep enough to carry a body along, wouldn’t you agree, Mr Frampton?”

“The canal? Yes, I suppose so.”

“Well, I can see you’re a busy man, Mr Frampton.” The inspector looked around the room one last time and made for the door leading to the stairs. “As I say, probably nothing.”

Richard followed him down to the front door where the policeman paused with his hand on the knob.

“Don’t suppose you were familiar with the deceased, Mr Frampton,” he said, turning slightly so that one side of his face was in darkness. “Name of Oliver Walters? Shortish build, reddish hair?”

“No, Inspector, the name means nothing to me.”

“No well, just a chance, I suppose.” And with that the policeman opened the door and set off up the path. Richard closed the door behind him and moved across to the window to watch as the inspector turned left into the lane going back towards the stone bridge and the village.

Richard felt unsettled; he’d lied about his possible visitor last weekend, but, more than that, the inspector had given the impression that he didn’t believe anything Richard had said. But it was a shock to learn that someone had drowned in the river or the canal only a hundred yards downstream from Sadec House. He never locked his doors at night but perhaps for the next few nights he’d try to make a point of it. The thought of strangers prowling around the village at night was not a pleasant one.

Chapter Three

The telephone at Sadec House had not rung since Richard's uncle died and that was over a year ago. When it rang now Richard felt a resentment towards it, the outside world intruding on his peace and quiet.

It was Martin Chambers, landlord of the public house in the village.

"Yes, Martin, what is it?"

"Thought I'd better give you a call, Mr Frampton, not that I . . . well, it's just that there's someone in here asking after you. Big chap. Sounds foreign; South African or could be Australian. Doesn't look like a reporter but I thought with all the . . . things being as they are, an' all . . . well, I thought I should check with you before sending him across . . . hope that doesn't . . . says his name's Doyle. Like I say he don't look like a newspaper person or nothing."

Doyle. Australian. Big man. Yes, Doyle was a big man and an Australian.

"You still there, Mr Frampton?"

"Yes . . . yes, Martin. It's all right, Doyle's not a newspaperman. Just someone . . . someone I knew once . . . during the war. Yes, of course, you did right to call. But he's all right to come over, Martin. Just—."

"I'll just tell him how to get to the 'ouse then, shall I? Can't exactly get lost in Stenbridge can he?"

"No, not exactly," Richard said as the line went dead. He hung the earpiece back on its hook and added to himself, "But if Danny Doyle's still here in England after all this time, then he might be a bit lost already."

For a moment he felt confused. Too many thoughts, too many visitors to Sadec House. In the last three weeks, his aunt. Or was

that simply the effect of the opium? He knew his aunt was dead, a German bomb at the dressing station near Mametz in the spring of 1918. But someone had been to the house; the front door had stood open and there had been a woman's perfume in the study. He was certain of it. Then that policeman came asking about the dead man found in the sluice at Broughton Mill. Richard might've dismissed his visit easily enough, except that he'd lied and that still disturbed him. The world in its way was truly intruding on his solitude. And now Doyle would be bringing the war back with him too.

Northern France: December 1916

The rumble of the big guns could still be heard in Armentieres even over the racket of the troops in the crowded little bar of the estaminet. The place stank of damp uniforms, sweat and stale alcohol, but Richard was used to the smells of war now.

He pushed his way through to the bar and ordered a beer.

"Here mate, have a proper drink." Richard looked up at the big man beside him and saw the grin on his face.

"My God! It's Doyle, isn't it? Never expected to see you alive."

The Australian reached across the wooden bar and brought up a small glass into which he poured a generous shot of brandy from the bottle in his other hand. "Nor me you. We were both a bit of a mess, eh?"

"Recovered from your wounds, then?"

"Just about," Doyle said, touching his glass to Richard's. "Re-joined the battalion last month. The thigh healed up fine but the ankle on this leg went bad and they almost took my foot off. I told the quack I didn't join up to donate parts of my body to France."

Richard laughed. "Why did you, join up, I mean?"

“See the world, I suppose. I’d never even been to the big city.”

“And have you seen the world, do you think?”

“Suppose I have. My intake were too late for Gallipoli, thank God. But my division spent a couple of months in England, Salisbury bloody Plain, then I’ve spent the last twelve months over here. Thought it would be like shootin’ roos but it isn’t.”

“You shoot them? I thought they were on your coat-of-arms.”

Richard wished he knew more about Australia. “Do you eat them?”

“The roos? Christ no! All tick and bloody worm they are. No, I wouldn’t eat them. There’s some as does, but not me. Just rabbit. Rabbit stew, rabbit pies, rabbit a dozen different bloody ways.”

Richard took a swig of brandy and felt the warmth of it permeate through him. He’d hardly call himself a drinker; at university he’d been too serious, a boring sort of youth, his main interest had been the OTC at Trinity. Now, after seven months in France, he’d grown accustomed to the tot of rum the quartermaster issued for the men, and the occasional bottle of whisky or brandy passed among his brother officers in the dug-out at night. He remembered the rum in Doyle’s water bottle that day on the Somme. Low-grade stuff, like this brandy they were drinking now, but like nectar then. Remembering it now, he felt that he probably owed this man his life; they owed each other. No-man’s-land was a sad and lonely place to die but they’d kept each other talking, awake. They’d got each other out somehow.

“You intend on getting drunk,” he said and regretted saying it almost as soon as the words left his mouth. Doyle was obviously well on the way.

The Australian re-filled his own glass. “Probably,” he said, “sounds like a good idea to me. We could all be dead in a week.” He

slugged the drink down in one. Richard took another swallow of his and again felt the heat hit the back of his throat.

"I'm just celebrating the death of another bloody Aussie." Doyle re-filled his glass without spilling a drop onto the bar. "Here's to Bull Sixsmith, late of the 16th battalion, Australian Imperial Force."

"He must've been a good mate." Richard hoped the Australian wasn't going to go maudlin on him, but Doyle wasn't looking for sympathy.

"Nah! Sixsmith was a bloody shit. A bully and a woman beater. So here's to his memory." He finished his glass with a single movement, tipping his head back and smacking his lips.

"Table free over in the corner," the Australian said. "What say we plonk our arses down there and see how much we can remember of that day, eh?" Doyle collected the two glasses and the bottle in his massive hands and set off for the vacant table with Richard following. How much can I remember, thought Richard. Not much. Doyle had talked about fences and windmills and sheds and a girl called . . . what was it? Sally. That was it.

"You had a girl, you said, back home. Sally, wasn't it? Still in touch with her, are you?"

"In touch, nah," said Doyle. "But the pitch is now clear. She was married to this bastard Sixsmith, see. So now she's his widow. Think his bad luck might be my good fortune, eh?"

"Is that why you dislike him so much, he was Sally's husband, and you were sweet on her?"

"No, not that. The man was a bastard. Beat her and was cruel to his animals, too. We was at school together, Bull, Sally and me, and Bull's brother, Bing. They wasn't their real names, just what they was always called. I couldn't for the life of me see why she took up

with either of the Sixsmiths, she could run the farm and all, virtually on her own.”

“You told me you slept with her once . . . when you were building the windmill.”

“Oh, you remember that? Yes, maybe I caught her at a bad time, or a good time for me, but I bedded her in her own house while Bull and his brother was off whoring in town.”

“So you’ll have someone to go back home to now then?”

“Reckon so, only I’ll have to get my head right before I do. Lots happened since then. Things I’d rather not talk of, if you don’t mind. But a man’s got to be a real man to be good enough for a girl like Sally.”

“What makes you think you’re not man enough?”

Doyle shook his head. “Like I said, things have happened. A man gets troubled. Best not to talk of home at those times, eh?”

“There’s not much else to talk about unless you want to discuss the war.”

“Better that than . . .” Doyle wiped his lip with the back of his hand. “So what do you think of the killing then?” he asked, scraping the glasses along the wet tabletop and filling them again. Richard was in no mood to talk about the war. He was on his way back to join his battalion after a week resting in Boulogne, and all the talk of Doyle’s girl, Sally, had reminded him of his aunt. So, perhaps the Australian was right, better to talk about the war than the women folk you might never get to see again.

“Look,” he said, scratching the back of his head with his free hand. “I’m sorry about your friend, of course, but . . .”

“I told yer, he was no mate of mine,” the Australian separated the two glasses with the back of his hand. “Maybe I’ll tell you about Bull Sixsmith some other time, eh? No, I wanted to know what you

think of this killing.” Doyle waved his arm towards the front where the rumble of big guns could still be heard.

Richard looked at him for a moment and then glanced around the room. This was a bad place to talk about the war, without being hanged for dissent. But something was obviously troubling the Australian so he took a swig of brandy and said, “I don’t suppose the German soldier wants to be here any more than we do,” he said without thinking too much about it.

“Bullshit!” Small droplets of spittle formed at the corners of Doyle’s mouth. “If they don’t want to be here they shouldn’t’ve bloody well started it.”

“Did they start it?” Richard knew as soon as the words left his lips that might be the wrong thing to say at this moment, in this place. Firstly, he shouldn’t be discussing these things with the rank and file and secondly, his own thoughts might be seen as mildly pacifist. And that was a dangerous thing to be accused of in the present circumstances.

“Course they fucking did. Marched into Belgium didn’t they? Everyone knows that.”

Sometimes it really was as simple as that and Richard knew it but he was in no mood to let this Australian reduce the last two years of carnage to one simple action by the Germans.

“What about all the empires we’d built around the world?” he said, wondering how far he could take the argument. How much of it he actually believed himself. “We’d carved the world up between us. The Pacific, India, Africa. We’d all become too powerful. War between the European countries was unavoidable.” Richard wasn’t convinced by his own argument but the brandy was beginning to strike now. “So we’re all responsible.”

“Bullshit!”

“Perhaps the Serbs are responsible. The man who fired the shot in Sarajevo. The Russians who mobilized too readily. Or the Austrians. Have you seen the size of Austria-Hungary?”

The big man nodded but in truth he had no idea how big Austria or Hungary were. Nor where they were on the map for that matter.

“Perhaps they started it,” Richard continued. “Or the French who wanted Alsace Lorraine back...”

“The what?”

“The slice of territory they lost to the Germans back in seventy-one.”

“Before I was bloody born mate,” The Australian pushed his fingers across the table to represent an invading army. “Nah! The Germans invaded Belgium and that’s why we’re all here.”

They fell silent for a few minutes. The Australian’s fingers slowly drew an arc in the moisture on the table, following roughly the line of the German sweep into northern France.

“And the bloody Froggies were simply protecting themselves. That’s why we’re here.”

“Yes,” Richard felt his argument falling apart as he’d known it would.

“And why defend the bloody Belgians?” The Australian demanded suddenly. “You talk about your colonies in India and all, but what about the Belgies in Africa? They’re not so squeaky bloody clean as far as I know.”

Richard nodded. The Belgians had a bad reputation in central Africa, but Britain had agreed to help them and it was a matter of honour. But it would sound foolish to say that and it didn’t seem like an excuse for all those deaths. He doubted if he believed it himself anymore.

“Anyway,” the big man continued. “You haven’t answered my question. How do you feel about killing Germans?”

How do I feel? he thought solemnly. “When I first came over,” he said. “I was patriotic . . . full of patriotic fervour as the papers would say. I believed all the propaganda about Germans stabbing women and babies with their bayonets. I really wanted to kill as many of them as I could. And maybe I thought that doing that would help to end the war. But we know better now, don’t we?”

The Australian nodded. “What about just after they’ve lobbed over some bloody wiz-bangs and killed one of your mates. Or some sniper pops one through the head of your best trooper? How do you feel right then?”

“Angry. Bloody angry.” It was true enough. Richard knew what Doyle was getting at but something deeper was troubling the Australian, a man’s feelings changed from place to place and day to day.

“Could you kill a German if he was unarmed?”

“That hardly seems fair does it?”

The Australian laughed. “Not bloody cricket, what?” he said, smiling.

“No,” Richard said. “Not bloody cricket.” And he laughed. It felt strange to laugh and he could see that the Australian felt it too, but Doyle was hiding something: keeping something back. Richard knew it was pointless to ask what the problem was. Every man among them had some little rat gnawing way from the inside.

“Cricket,” said Doyle with a shrug. “Now there’s something we could discuss at great length without getting to any trouble.”

They laughed and talked about the last Ashes tour before the war and the Australian’s worries seemed to lift. Perhaps it was the talk of cricket; perhaps it was the drink. After a while the big man

struggled to his feet and stretched out his hand to shake Richard's. His grip was firm but not brutal. "I have to be off, cobber, er, Captain Frampton. Got to report in before 2300 hours or else."

Richard rose and took the giant hand. "Good to see you again, Doyle. Good to know you lived after all."

"You too, mate." And with that he headed for the door leaving Richard with a third of a bottle of brandy.

"Look after yourself, Corporal," he said, but the Australian wouldn't have heard over the noise in the bar.

Chapter Four

Danny Doyle paused for a moment on the narrow stone bridge and looked down into the stream: clear shallow water, pale brown pebbles and here and there streaks of green weed, like long hair waving in the slow current. The English village, so different from the hard dry country of the Western Australian wheat belt. Different, too, from the shabby ruined villages of northern France. He looked across the low wall at the lane and the corner of the house nestled behind its tidy fence. That had to be the Sadec House the newspaper had mentioned. The reporter had suggested the body might have gone into the water here, but this stream wasn't deep enough to carry a body. If that's what the police thought then they were fools too. He pulled the newspaper from his jacket pocket and read the first two paragraphs again but learned nothing new.

Approaching from the narrow lane he could see the garden had once been carefully planted but was now overgrown and untidy. Someone had tended it once, but several years of neglect had passed since then.

A small porch shaded the front door from the mid-morning sun as he rapped the brass knocker and stepped back. The door opened in a second and Richard Frampton stood in the darkened hallway studying him with a grin on his face.

"Danny Doyle," he shouted. "I could hardly believe it when Martin told me . . . how have you . . . what the devil are you . . . ?"

"Hello Richard," Danny replied, awkwardly using Frampton's first name.

"Come in, come in." Richard stepped back and ushered his guest into the hallway and up the stairs. The first floor room was some sort of study, an eclectic mix of old English and exotic oriental furniture and bric-a-brac; collector's stuff, like ceramic plates and

watercolours; work pieces, like the massive desk and dark wood bookcases; an untidy collection of paperwork on a side table; pens and pencils balanced on the arm of the chair. A man's room but not just one man: a couple of generations of men, he guessed.

"Nice place," Doyle said, examining one of the paintings closely. "Bet that's Australia. The light's different over there. A good artist will spot that straight away . . . and this, I would say, is by a good artist." He tapped the frame lightly as if to confirm his assumption then turned back into the room and for a moment both men looked each other up and down, checking for damage, missing limbs or visible scar tissue. Richard Frampton looked little changed from the last time they'd met in late 1916. Both men had aged eight years since then, but it felt longer. Visible scars might be absent but the war had taken its toll nonetheless. Danny bent forward and ran his hand across the outside of his thigh in an involuntary gesture. Under his finger, through the material of his trousers he could feel the raised welt of his wound. But it bothered him less and less each year; but it still bothered him.

"So this is where you came from, is it?" he laughed and Richard smiled again. "Funny really."

"Not what you imagined?"

"Don't know what I imagined." He walked across and admired the desk before settling his huge frame into one of the armchairs. "Nothing like this where I came from," he added. "My parents had some pieces brought out to Australia from Ireland by my grandfather, but nothing grand, and the weather took its toll on the European timber." He shrugged. "All sold off now since they died."

"This was my uncle's place," Richard said. "Well, my grandfather's really. When he finally came home from his travels." He moved some papers and pens from the chair and put them on

the corner of the desk suddenly aware of the clutter that had built up over the last twelve months. "Bit tidier in Robert's time. He was a solicitor, my uncle, worked from here."

"Major Frampton of the West Suffolks," the Australian said quietly.

"Of course," said Richard. "You would've known him."

"Not really, saw him a couple of times but I don't think we ever spoke. A bloody corporal in the colonial rabble hob-knobbing with a Major."

"As I remember you never had much trouble coming forward. Never stood on ceremony with me, if I recall."

Danny Doyle chuckled softly and Richard remembered how surprisingly gentle the big man could be. "That was different, stuck in a bloody crump hole all day, both of us bleedin' to death, didn't seem much point in standing on ceremony, did there? Anyway, you were so coated in mud I didn't even realise you were an officer for long enough. Great leveller, the mud. And I was a little groggy . . . more than a little maybe. And that time in Armentieres we were both a bit drunk if I recall."

As if taking a hint Richard stood and walked across to the cabinet behind the desk. The drop-down front revealed a row of bottles and a compartment with four short tumbler glasses. "Brandy, if my memory serves me?" he said, taking two glasses and half filling them without waiting for Doyle's reply. "For old time's sake, as they say."

They sipped their drinks in silence, each man remembering a different time and place: the estaminet in Armentieres; the crump hole in no-man's land; a field hospital; the chaos of stretchers; the blood; a narrow dug-out in a trench wall, lit by a guttering candle.

"So you decided to stay in England."

“Me? No, I went home. Long slow process that repatriation was. But I went home. Back to the farms and the labouring.”

“Building windmills, right?”

“Yeh, that too. Bit of everything really, windmills, sheds, fences mainly. Had my own business, fixing up places. I might’ve told you. And there was plenty of fixing to be done after the war. Lost a lot of men from the land and some of those who came back had lost the heart it takes to make a place work. So I did all right.”

“What about that girl . . . the one you always said . . . ?”

“Ah yes, Sally . . . Sally Sixsmith. Yes, she was waiting for me all right. And we got together and tried to make a go of it, but . . . well, one thing and another . . . things didn’t work out.” Doyle looked down at his drink his face growing red. “I’d changed, you know . . . not just the war . . . there was something else . . . can’t really . . . anyway, I just up sticks one day and walked away from it all. I’d come into a fair bit of cash myself by then. Dad’s farm had been sold off during the war. My parents were both gone by then. My fencing business was sold as a going concern, and . . . well, let’s just say, I had my reasons for coming back. Like I said, I’d changed.”

“We all had Danny, we all had.”

“Some more than most, I can tell you.”

A small late summer squall blew across the garden and spattered the windows with a light shower of rain as the two men sat and drank their brandy. For a long while neither man spoke and Richard felt a contentment he had not felt in over a year. This was the way he’d once been with his Uncle Robert after they came home from the war—except by then Richard was hiding the guilty secret of his night with Elizabeth in 1916. Not just for what had happened while Robert was off at the front, but the thought that it could happen again. Except, Elizabeth had not come home.

“My uncle was never well after the war,” he said, refilling the glasses. “The gas had damaged his lungs and then he had that dreadful flu in the summer of 1919. Almost killed him then but he fought on for another five years. Reopened his business, too. A few old clients who’d stayed loyal. But it all proved too much and he died last year.”

“And your aunt?” Danny Doyle raised an eyebrow meaningfully as he asked. “She still on the scene.”

Richard looked up sharply at the realisation that Doyle knew about Elizabeth. That day in the shell hole, the mud, he’d said too much, but they’d both thought they were dying. What secrets does a dying man need to take with him? But he remembered the day in the estaminet in Armentieres; Doyle had wanted to say something then—and what about now, there was still something Doyle wasn’t saying.

Richard was silent for so long that Danny Doyle thought he was ignoring the question.

“She’s missing,” Richard’s voice sounded hoarse when the words finally came. “Everyone thinks she’s dead. Officially pronounced dead last year . . . sometimes I find it hard to believe, even now.”

Doyle swirled the liquid in his glass and watched the rain drops sliding diagonally across the window behind Richard’s head. “Maybe it’s time to let go, Richard. It’s over . . . the past—”

“No,” Richard’s face suggested that some things couldn’t be shaken off so easily. “She was in France, you know, volunteered. Driving ambulances. She went missing in the April of 1918 in that last German push. A field hospital was over-run near Fanvillers. Her kit was in the nurses stores in the women’s quarters. Several vehicles had been hit, either artillery or an aircraft. Ambulances, cars. It was presumed she’d died that day.”

"I didn't know."

"She was never found. Nothing was ever found but our people had retreated as far as Montdidier and it was almost six weeks before we got back to find the burnt out ruins of the village and what was left of the field hospital."

"Richard, you should know as well as anyone. There were lots of people missing, never found again. They're all dead, Richard. Your aunt among them. I'm sorry to sound . . . but you've got to . . ."

"I thought she'd come back," Richard's words were very quiet now and Danny had to lean forward to hear them. "Thought I saw her in this room two weeks ago."

"You saw her? Here? Where's she gone then?"

"I don't know," Richard shook his head. "It's all rather fuzzy."

"Then maybe you imagined it."

"Maybe I did," Richard stood and walked to the window. "Except someone was here . . . if not Elizabeth, then who? Who else...? And the front door was open. I would've closed it, I'm sure. I don't lock up or anything, not out here, but . . . I know I closed the front door and it was open. And there was a perfume in the room. This room. Jasmine or some such. I wasn't imagining that, was I?"

"Perhaps you were mate. Perhaps you were." Doyle looked at Richard's glass.

"I wasn't drunk," Richard shook his head. "I don't drink much these days," he laughed raising his glass. "You're a bad influence on me, Doyle. It was you who introduced me to brandy, I think. Armentieres. I was on my way back from Boulogne and you'd been where, Etaples, was it? Now it's brandy again you see. It's been years since I drank as much as this." He lifted the bottle and examined the contents, poured the last of it into Doyle's glass. "There's another bottle in the bureau."

"I'll get it," said the Australian, and levered his great frame up and reached across for the fresh bottle. "Then maybe I'll have had enough booze to tell you my bloody story. But I warn you it's not pretty."

"So, what brings Danny Doyle back to England all of a sudden?" Richard said as the Australian re-filled the glasses. "And what brings you to Sadec House?"

"Sadec House," Doyle repeated. "It was in the news. That and the book. Cropped up twice in the last couple of months."

"What? Sadec House?"

"Friend of mine showed me a book of poetry he was reading. Your book of war poems, the one you did for Thatchers. Can't say as it's my cup of tea, poetry, and certainly not a load of Pommy officer, public school types trying to get the war straightened out. Anyway, there it was on the flyleaf, *edited by Captain R Frampton. Captain Frampton lives at Sadec House in Stenbridge.*"

The book had finally gone to print three or four months ago and Richard had taken very little notice of the copies he'd been sent by the publishers. But he remembered the inscription.

"Then Stenbridge came up again," Doyle continued. "In the local paper. Report of a body in the river at some mill near Broughton . . . near Sadec House, it said. That's when I thought I should pay a visit to the man who saved my life. 'Course I wasn't sure if it was you or your uncle, but I seemed to remember that Robert was a Major last I heard, so it had to be you. So here I am . . . come to look up an old friend."

Richard didn't take a newspaper and was shocked to hear that Sadec had been mentioned in connection with the body in the sluice. "I don't often read the papers," he said. "Not since the war, you know. But this man . . . Bannister, he came here last week, told

me they'd found a body downstream at Broughton. There's a weir there and the river splits around the mill."

"Does he reckon the body went in here at that little bridge?"

"Or somewhere along the bank."

"I've seen the level of water flowing under that bridge. A body falling in here would just stick on the stones. It would hardly make it very far downstream."

"That's what I told the inspector."

"You didn't know this chap, then. The dead man?"

"No. Why?"

"The article was a bit . . . I dunno, it didn't explain. I just wondered if there was any trouble. You're not in trouble are you, Richard?"

"This body has nothing to do with me if that's what you mean. Is that why you came? You think I'm involved in this?"

"Nah! I didn't think that at all. I came because I saw this house mentioned in a newspaper report. I thought maybe . . . the reporter wasn't clear. Room for doubt."

They sat for a long moment in silence. Then Doyle added softly. "I suppose there is something crook in the matter? Wouldn't exactly warrant a Detective Inspector if the poor bastard simply fell in and drowned, would it?"

"I have no idea. They . . . that is, Bannister, came here late last week and asked me a few questions, but he never . . . he didn't say the man had been murdered. I thought . . . well, I don't know what I thought."

"So, you've been a busy boy then. First, your aunt comes calling in the night, then the police. Any connection there, do you think?"

"Connection," Richard felt mildly irritated now. "Elizabeth, you mean, connected to this man. No, no connection at all."

"I think we both know it wasn't her, Richard, but you say someone left the door open. Could it have been . . .?" Doyle stopped and pointed his finger into the air. "I take it this strange visit from beyond the grave was before the inspector came?"

"She wasn't a ghost, Danny. And yes, it was before the inspector came. I don't . . . that is, I didn't connect the two things." And yet, thought Richard, I lied to the policeman, denied . . .

As if reading his friend's thoughts, Doyle said, "And the police, do they know about your nocturnal visitor?"

Richard looked confused and shook his head. "I don't know. I don't understand any of this Danny, I really don't. Anyway, you didn't tell me why you're back in England. Naturally, I'm pleased to see you, but . . ."

Doyle looked for a moment as if he was about to unburden himself of some secret but the moment passed as quickly as it had come. "Why I came back to England is too difficult to explain right off, you understand. I'll get round to it some other time, maybe. But I came to Sadec House because I thought, from the newspaper, you might've been . . . I know what it feels like. I've been falsely accused too. I didn't like it when it happened to me, and I wouldn't like it if it was happening to you."

"Nobody's accused me of anything," Richard reached across and slapped his friend's leg. "The policeman didn't seem very bothered about me when he came here."

Danny studied Richard's face. "Men like us, Richard, we're part of a huge embarrassment, a past the world wants to put behind it. It's not just the war that gets you, it's the peace too," Danny said with a sigh. The brandy was making his words blurred about the edges. "Maybe I'm reading too much into it. But at least it's given me a chance to look up an old friend."

Their conversation drifted onto other things until darkness fell and the shadows of the trees through the window merged into the night. The rain had eased but still pattered on the glass with the evening breeze.

After a while the brandy seemed to clear Richard's head—although he knew that in all probability the reverse was true. Why was it, he thought, that I can talk to this man I hardly know, this Australian, as if he were my closest friend? When, in truth, he had to admit to himself that friends were not something he had accumulated in great abundance at any stage of his life.

Doyle was saying something about his job in the Cambridge gardens and his pleasure at finding how easy it was to grow things in England.

"And autumn," Doyle was saying. "There's a glorious season for you. The trees are turning now. We don't get this back home."

Richard replied that he hardly noticed the seasons anymore. "The weather, perhaps, too hot or too cold; snow and rain, you know. But not the passing of the seasons."

"That's because you've lost your innocence, as the writers are so keen to remind us. Apparently our whole generation lost its innocence over there."

"What rot. Don't think I ever had any, innocence, that is."

"Oh, you were innocent once, Richard. I can picture the angelic child listening patiently to his father's sermons. No, more accurately, your problem is you didn't lose it. As pure as the driven snow the soul of Richard Frampton. Loss of innocence is no bad thing in a grown man."

"I can assure you . . ." Richard began to protest, but he knew it was not the war that had stolen the purity of his childhood soul, not directly, at least. It was that last night before he left for France—the

last night he'd spent in Sadec House with his Aunt Elizabeth. "I think it's connection that I lost. Do you sometimes think you aren't connected to it all anymore? The war or the peace."

"I'm a man without a country, perhaps," said Doyle pensively. "But I've made connections. And the war, oh yes, that resonates with me still."

They fell silent and Richard tried to recall the horror of it all. He remembered the soldier from the Gloucesters, caught up on the wire and dying slowly and noisily for several hours; the brother officer from the Herewards who blew his brains out with his own Smith and Wesson; how the body had lain propped up in the latrine trench; the smell of it, the rain sluicing down and filling the shattered bowl of the skull like some awful soup. Yes, he remembered the details, but he no longer felt the horror of it and he knew he should. He no longer felt connected to it.

"Where are you staying?" Richard stood up and stretched. "It's getting too late to be moving off now." And without waiting for a reply he opened the door to the landing and pointed up to another floor above. "There's a bed in the front room but it's not made up. You'll find some stuff, blankets and such, in the wardrobe. Been a while since anyone stayed at Sadec House." He crossed the narrow landing and tripped on the bottom step. "God, I'm beaten. It's bed for me." He set off awkwardly up the stairs, Danny following unsteadily behind.

Chapter Five

Richard was sitting at the large, farmhouse table drinking from a half-pint mug when Danny Doyle made his way down the stairs and into the kitchen. Richard's face was drawn and pale from too much drink the evening before. They'd sat talking well into the night. Doyle tried to remember what had been said. He'd mentioned the newspaper article, the police investigations, the dead man at Broughton Mill, but he'd told his friend little enough about himself. He felt a pang of guilt at holding something back from this man, but he knew that Richard Frampton was troubled, too. Last night had not been the time for such things.

"Tea's fresh," said Richard with a croak in his throat. "Help yourself."

"Billy's on."

"Sorry?"

"Nothing. Just translating into my native tongue." Danny poured himself a mug of tea and added sugar to clear his head. "How many Australian diggers would be on chatting terms with English officers over a mug of tea, six years after the war . . . back in the old country, sitting here . . ." Danny shrugged.

"We're not so different, you and I."

Danny looked around at the kitchen. Certainly very different from anything he'd known in Western Australia. But Richard was right, ignoring the trappings, he suspected the Englishman, like him, had few enough friends, never talked about himself, except . . . whenever they'd come together, thrown together by circumstance. They'd talked then. Whatever secrets they were keeping from each other now would come out when the time was right.

"You always lived here?" he asked taking a sip of tea.

Richard looked up. "Sadec House? No," he said. "I came here when I was twelve. It belonged to my grandfather at one time. The name comes from Indochina or Siam somewhere. One of the many things he brought back with him. Don't know what he did. Well, the official story is import and export of goods, fine pottery and such. But the old bugger amassed a fortune somehow. Probably opium. No-one in the family ever spoke of it, but there are clues." Richard fell silent staring down at the surface of the tea in his mug. "I never met him but I have him to thank for my semi-luxurious lifestyle."

"So you inherited the old man's money, then? And the family home."

"What? Well, yes, but not exactly. This was my Uncle Robert's place after grandfather died. Grandfather's wealth was split equally between my father and his brother, that's Uncle Robert. Robert's share included this house. Apart from moving his legal practice into the old man's den upstairs, he left it much unchanged. Aunt Elizabeth had this floor renovated not long before the war."

Danny nodded. "And your father?"

"I grew up in a little agricultural village called Barnes about twenty miles from here. My father was vicar of St Mark's there. I don't know when he came into the money, or exactly how much, but it must have been substantial because Robert always said that the value of this house was deducted from his share." He fell silent again and Danny watched Richard's left hand rubbing nervously at the table. "They weren't the same, Robert and my father. And my mother wasn't like my father, although I never knew it until after he died. Aunt Elizabeth wasn't much like Robert, either, for that matter." Richard stood and moved his shoulder as if relieving an ache. Danny was reminded of a bowler warming up before his next over. "I think I need some fresh air." Richard waved a hand vaguely

in the direction of the kitchen window. "Fancy a stroll along the river bank? Too early for breakfast."

Danny followed him out into the back garden; two fruit trees, bare and dark-limbed, at the far end; an overgrown pathway curving between old vegetable patches and, beyond the fruit trees an unfenced slope down to the water. The landlord at the Three Pikes had called it a river, and so did the newspaper article but Danny thought it was little more than a stream. Back home such a stretch would dry up for half the year and only flow like this after the rains.

"I didn't really know I had an Uncle and Aunt until my father died. They came over for the funeral. Even then I didn't pay them much heed." Richard broke a twig from a low-hanging branch and ducked under it to follow the footpath beside the water. "My father had wanted to be a missionary," he said over his shoulder. "It was his purpose in life. Africa. He seemed to be in love with Africa. Never went there, of course. His plans were somewhat thwarted by meeting my mother. I suppose he loved her a lot. Must've. He gave up his life's vocation to stay here in East Anglia and preach to the farmers of Barnes. But he still behaved like a missionary and gave most of his money to the poor, both here in England and Africa. Not Asia. He saw Asia as a hotbed of depravity. It was the source of his father's wealth and I suppose that tainted his inheritance in his mind, something to be expunged."

The river was wider and deeper now as they moved away from the village; the cuffs of Danny's trousers were wet from the dew on the long grass. Looking back he could see the house and beyond it the narrow stone bridge he'd crossed and the first buildings of the village.

"I think my mother had spirited away a little money of her own, rescued from the charity boxes, hoarded under the mattress, or

something. Anyway, after he died—some contagion acquired from the poor and destitute of Barnes—mother went a bit wild. I was left in the care of Mrs Bradstock, our housekeeper at the vicarage, and saw little of my mother after my father died. Mother was killed in London about nine months later; hit by a horse and cart or something. I was spared the details. I was very upset that I'd seen so little of her after my father's death. Thought it was all my fault, you know. It was years later in France when Robert told me that she'd been what people euphemistically call a wild woman and most likely been blind drunk when she died."

"Unlike my father, Robert invested his money wisely. There are income streams from unusual places still putting odd amounts into my bank today." Across the stream a thrush called, clear and bell-like. Both men stopped to look as it launched itself away from them over the reed beds. "Of course Robert was hardworking like my father—I suppose they got that from grandfather, but, as you see, diligence and industry are not traits which I display. I was not an assiduous child. School came easily to me, especially after I moved here and went to Craick's School. Unlike most boys my age, I walked into a university place. And now, as you see I am supported by the hard work and shrewd judgement of my uncle."

"So you don't work?"

"I don't work very hard." Richard stopped and threw a stone into the river. Danny came up beside him. "I work freelance for a publishing house. I read stuff and edit a bit. And I write these pieces for a magazine, criticizing other people's books. I suppose that sums me up, unable to write anything decent myself I have taken to tearing up better writer's efforts, one way or another."

Richard kicked a stone loose from the riverbank and watched it roll into the water. A slight bend in the river revealed another bridge,

iron-framed and wider and more substantial than the one by the village. They stopped walking and Richard turned back towards the house.

“Fancy that breakfast yet?”

Danny’s head had cleared and his appetite was strong. The fresh country air had done its work. Looking around at the damp grass, ankle high and lush after the autumn rains, he remembered the humid dawns of the West Australian wheat belt, the early-morning flies and the dust, farmers anxiously checking the flock for dead animals and watching the horizon for any sign of storm clouds, but finding none, turning back to their work. He thought of cooking pots of rabbit stew or damper bread, the embers kept alight in the dry sand until morning, and billy tea, re-heated leftovers. He’d loved that country once, before he’d known any different. Now whenever he looked back, he felt the sting, the pain of coming home to a country that could not cope with its losses, where so many people had lost loved ones that surviving the war had become, to some people, a crime. He understood that it would take his country a long time to get over the war, but he could find no excuse for the way they’d driven him out of town.

As they walked back to the foot of the garden Doyle looked at the dead and drying flower heads in their overblown beds and imagined Sally Sixsmith’s place left empty and neglected too no doubt; the corrugated tin over the veranda loosened by the storms of winter, flapping in the breeze. Weeds forcing themselves through the cracks in the dry earth. Clumps of Spinifex like cabbages dotting the yard.

“If you’re all right I’ll stay outside a while longer yet,” he said as Richard moved into the house. He could do nothing for Sally’s place, the sheep and wheat, scrawny in the dry season, sodden in the wet,

but he pulled at the dead plants in Frampton's flowerbed, straightening the border and snapping back overgrown shrubs. This country was reliable, he thought. Damp. Cool. Plants knew when to grow. Animals in the fields fattened and thrived. But he hadn't come here to tear out weeds, he reminded himself, he'd come because of a report in the newspaper and the hint of suspicion it held. Strange how the two of them seemed to get along. Seeing Frampton's name again on the fly-leaf of a poetry book, he'd felt that this was the only man he could talk to honestly—not even his partner back in Cambridge could claim that privilege.

Gardening, even rough weeding like this, helped him think. What did he really know about Frampton? He owed him his life, he knew that much. And Richard Frampton wasn't a cold-blooded killer. The newspaper report had been vague and he might've read too much into it. A man had fallen into the water somewhere near this house. The house backed onto the water. The man might've been a drunk or he might've been pushed. And Richard had said someone had been here at Sadec House during the night—that same night—a few days before the police came to the house

Richard's thoughts were not so far different to Doyle's. He turned away from the stove and watched him through the window for several minutes. Why was he doing this? Why was this man he hardly knew clearing the weeds in his garden when he himself hadn't touched them in all the time he'd been back from France? Before the war, it had been Aunt Elizabeth who'd laid it all out and tended it. So what was Danny doing here? Why was he back in England? He'd been back to Australia, he'd said, but where did he live now, what did he do?

He turned the eggs in the pan where the bacon sizzled happily; the smell of it filled the kitchen. He laid the table with two settings

and was struck by how unusual that felt. Not since his uncle's death had he set two places at the table, or fried bacon and eggs for more than himself. Everything was feeling strange, and yet it felt comfortable at the same time.

Jane Cresswell walked quickly past the public house with its faded sign showing three fish, its white walls and blackened reed thatch sagging down from the eaves; it all looked so different in daylight. Last time she'd asked directions at this very door. Dusk. Almost three weeks ago. She'd fled back through this tiny village, too, and sworn to herself that she would never again do anything so foolish. And when she got home her mother had been angrier than she ever remembered. And she had nothing to show for her trouble: she'd learned nothing. Her mother had forbidden her to read the notebooks or the letter that came with them from Australia. But she'd read them anyway. The notebooks had been hidden away again now—destroyed, perhaps—but she'd found the letter, half burned in the hearth, but no matter. She'd read the notebooks and she could remember bits of them. But she had disturbed things. She'd visited the library and studied maps and looked up timetables and, without a word to her mother, she'd come here to Stenbridge, where the river split into that long canal running into the fenland proper; all this from a few dusty maps in the library.

"I warned you girl. Forget it. But no, as usual, you think you know better. Well, that's an end of it, do you hear me." And her mother had struck her for the first time in nine years, the first time since that other letter, the one from the colonel telling them that her brother Alfie had been killed. She'd never read that letter—she'd been too young. She'd been told that her brother, who was off in the war—that much she'd always known—had died at the front. Other

families around them had such letters or telegrams from the post office, so there was nothing different about Alfie as far as she could tell. Not until nine years later, when that stiff brown package from Australia with the unusual stamp and the notebooks and the flimsy blue envelope with such thin paper that her mother had read to herself and hidden away from the young girl. Now, because she'd defied her mother, they were hidden away again—or worse, destroyed.

She slipped quietly past the pub and crossed the narrow stone bridge. Seeing the house again, this time in daylight, with its grey-white walls and red brick quoining around the porch, her bravado deserted her and she hurried past the house without looking at it and almost ran to the bend in the lane where the hawthorn was over-hanging and the remnants of hemlock flowers stood to attention in the tall grass. Isolated from the house, she leant against the bole of a tree, brought her breathing under control and waited for her heart to stop hammering. She knew it would, it always did eventually. How many times had she tried to enter the hat shop in Cambridge when she was asking for a job: a job that had been advertised quite openly in the paper the day before; a job she was quite capable of performing, perhaps better qualified for than most girls. And yet she'd been drawn up in the street in front of the shop like this, heart racing. Now she smiled at her own foolishness. Hadn't she been working as a shop assistant there for six months now and hadn't Mr Niven himself told how pleased he was with her work? But that was just a job; this was confronting that man again. How had she done it last time? Perhaps because it was late in the day and she'd been tired. This time she'd set out much earlier. What was the worst thing that could happen? Surely, Captain Frampton

would be sober now. Sober and better prepared to listen to her story. She drew back her shoulders, nothing to be afraid of.

Captain Frampton's house was the last on this lane; now she could see that further on it was just a narrow footpath, barely cleared, leading off to her left, down to the river. She would take this path for a moment, just to make sure the feeling of panic was all finished with.

The river was wider here and she stood for a minute looking at the water, wasting time, preparing herself. Somewhere in the grasses and shrubs on the far bank, a songbird sang, but she couldn't see it. Her previous visit here had been a disaster. Would this one be any better? She'd not been too sure last time what she wanted to say. And even now . . . but she had the letter this time. She would've liked to bring the diaries themselves, but she hadn't been able to find them.

"There's nothing you can do now, girl," her mother had said. "These books are nothing but trouble and best left alone, you hear me?"

She'd nodded but she knew she would have to return to Sadec House. She would not let the matter rest even if her mother would.

The diaries at least answered one question for her. Why her brother's name was being left off the new memorial in the village centre. And why his death had never been spoken of in the years since. But the diaries had confused her, as if they were trying to accuse and excuse and she had no idea what or why.

She pushed aside an overhanging branch and saw the house from the rear. She'd come to the foot of an unfenced garden sloping to the water's edge and she stood for a moment looking up at the windows. Upstairs, she knew, was some kind of office or study; there was a desk, an armchair and the man drunk and confused.

Had she any right to judge: couldn't he drink in his own house if he wanted to? Captain Frampton, she'd decided, was still a war hero, regardless of what he did to her brother, and she would treat him with the respect he deserved.

Suddenly she realised she was standing in open view of the house. Anyone at the upstairs window could see her. She jumped back behind the tree and, as she did so, she noticed someone in the garden. He was half bent forward pulling plants from the flowerbed. There was something comforting in the way he went about his work and she drew a deep breath to help her relax. She couldn't see his face but it must be him, the captain. What had he looked like, this returned war hero? It had been dim in the room upstairs that time. He'd been sitting slumped in the chair. She'd been angry. But she could not for the life of her remember what he'd looked like. He seemed bigger now, bent forward in the flowerbed. Taller, broader, more formidable than she'd expected.

Jane Cresswell pushed past the overhanging branch and stepped lightly along the overgrown path. "Excuse me," she said, clearing her throat. "Captain Frampton?"

The man seemed surprised to hear her voice but not startled. He rose slowly and turned to look at her. A big man, she thought to herself, I do hope he's not drunk.

"The Captain, you say?" His voice was softer and more relaxed than she'd expected, with a strange accent. Not European, she thought, colonial, perhaps. But why here? Brought over by the war, maybe. She realised with a start that he was studying her face and she unsuccessfully fought off a rising blush colouring her cheeks.

"No," he said, smiling. "Captain Frampton's inside." With that, he moved up the path to the back door of the house and rapped

with his massive hand on the open door. "Richard!" He called into the empty hallway. "Richard, there's someone here to see you."

Jane saw the shape of a second man half hidden in shade.

"To see me?" He stepped forward and peered out through the doorway at her. This was the man she'd seen upstairs in the armchair on her last visit to the house. Strange, she felt more afraid of this smaller man than the one she'd just found in the garden. This was the man, she reminded herself, who had once held the power of life or death over her brother. But I haven't come to confront him or accuse him, she told herself. Well, confront, perhaps, she argued back to herself as he took another step towards her and she saw his features better. This Captain Frampton was a fine looking man, she realised with a shock. Last time he had been half-asleep and confused, she remembered. And the light from the gas mantle had cast a shadow of menace across his face. She'd been angry then. Angry and afraid. Now she was simply anxious. I am not afraid of this man, she told herself.

"I'll just take a stroll into the village and pick up some tobacco for my pipe." It was the big man beside her who spoke and she jumped a little at his voice, but he turned and smiled at her again and set off round the house in the direction of the stone bridge and the village pub. Oddly, she felt deserted by his leaving. More dangerous, she told herself, to be confronted by two men than by one. And yet she had felt safer with him here in the doorway than without him.

"Captain Frampton . . . I . . . I came here once before . . . at night . . ." She wasn't making any sense, even inside her head she was rambling and she knew what she wanted to say. She shook her head and began again. "My name is Jane Cresswell, I called one evening last month, and we spoke briefly . . . it was about—"

The man seemed suddenly disturbed by her presence; his face was pale and his hand on the banister as if for support. Did men do that? In the books she'd read only young and foolish women did things like that.

"Captain Frampton," she repeated. "I've come to ask you about my brother."

"I thought you were Elizabeth," he said quietly, as if speaking to himself. "I thought . . . but you're not her . . ."

Jane considered for a moment that he might be quite mad. Hadn't he called her Elizabeth that last time, upstairs in his study? That was it, she told herself, he was suffering from—what was it they called these days? Shell shock. A victim of shellshock. A hero of the war, she reminded herself, but so badly damaged he thinks I'm . . . but she had come here about her brother and this man had been one of those . . . one of the officers . . . she tried to recall what the notebook had said. A court martial. If only her mother hadn't taken them away, those notebooks, if only she could have read them properly. It was all so confusing.

"I'm sorry, Miss . . .?"

"Cresswell, Jane Cresswell."

"Please come in," he said, recovering some of the colour in his face. "But I don't see how I can be of help to you." She saw the creases of a frown on his forehead and thought perhaps he was having trouble remembering her last visit. She would be eternally grateful if he had forgotten that visit altogether. But she had already mentioned it, reminded him of it, and stirred up his memory of this woman Elizabeth. The woman she was not.

Reluctantly she stepped inside. She would continue, she decided, as if this were her first visit. She would do as she had planned, except, she realised, she hadn't really planned at all. She

would bring out Mrs Pickering's letter from her bag and show it to him. And then she would . . . and then, she thought with a mild degree of panic, then I have no plan, then it will be up to him to tell me what I want to know, or things I have no desire to know and yet I must know them. She clutched her bag closer to her chest as she followed him into the house and into his kitchen. There was a neat domesticity here with the smell of bacon frying, and she wondered whether this man, the handsome madman, had a wife somewhere in the house.

He pulled out a chair from the kitchen table for her. The table was set for two. She would remain standing, she decided, to retain whatever authority she could, but then she wasn't sure of the etiquette of a young woman refusing to sit when offered a chair, so she sat, still clutching the bag with its precious letter to her chest.

Twenty minutes later Doyle left the Three Pikes public house and stepped into the lane leading back to the bridge. His hands and his attention were occupied with filling the bowl of his pipe with tobacco and at first he didn't see the young woman coming over the bridge. And she, it seemed had not seen him. She was in some kind of distress. As he stopped at the village end of the bridge he saw that she was crying and she was wiping the tears from her eyes with a white handkerchief as she walked.

The girl looked up and he saw the confusion in her eyes but then, in answer to his smile she smiled back and sniffed back the last tears with embarrassment and fumbled with her handkerchief. She hesitated a moment then drew herself up and continued onto the bridge. As she approached him he stepped aside to allow her to pass and she smiled again, nervously. It looked as if she might speak, but she changed her mind. Doyle did not want to stop her.

Whatever it was that upset her it was no business of his. Unless it concerned his friend Richard Frampton. Perhaps, he thought, it was to do with the death of the man in the river; had this young woman something to do with that? Had she come to Sadec House, as he had, because of the newspaper reports? Strangely, the Captain had been unaware of what was in the newspaper. But the police had been to the house; surely the inspector's visit . . . Doyle remembered his own dealings with the police two years earlier, and felt again the same sick feeling in his stomach.

As the girl walked past, he smelled a hint of her perfume, Jasmine. He looked up at her face: a pretty girl, but pale. How old? Not more than twenty-one or twenty-two, he guessed. The English weather was so kind to a lady's skin. Yes, he concluded, she might not be a raging beauty, but she was certainly very pretty. But what had she to do with Richard Frampton?

He stepped onto the bridge and began to walk away from her with a slight sense of disappointment. Her visit had raised his curiosity, and to catch her crying out here, what could that mean? None of his business, he told himself again and moved off towards the house.

"Is he your friend?"

He turned back surprised. "Sorry?"

"Captain Frampton," she said quietly. "Is he a friend of yours?"

"We knew each other during the war," he began. "Haven't seen him for six years until yesterday, but . . ."

"I see."

"Do you?"

"No, to be perfectly honest I do not see Mr . . . ?"

He turned fully back onto the bridge and moved a few paces towards her but stopped when it looked as if she might turn and run off like a frightened deer.

“Doyle,” he said with a slight nod of his head. “Danny Doyle.”

Her face changed instantly, a frown about the eyes, a startled look of confusion. It was as if she were suddenly afraid of him. How could she be? He had never met her in his life; she couldn’t know he was wanted for murder. News of Sally Sixsmith’s death, the whole ghastly story had never reached England. And yet, there was fear in her eyes: fear and confusion. Was she a lunatic, unstable? With that thought whirling through his head her next words shocked him almost as much as he seemed to have shocked her.

“Is he mad?” she asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Who?”

“Your friend Captain Frampton? Is he. . . I thought perhaps, with the war and all . . . the papers mentioned a nursing home . . . I wondered if perhaps . . . you know . . . shell shock . . . is your friend altered in some way by the war?”

Danny Doyle stifled a laughed. The idea was ridiculous, but she was in such earnest and he had no wish to insult her. Civilians, after all, could have no idea of what it had been like. Yet, had he not just thought the same of her? How could you tell if someone were mad? He had no idea. And how much did he really know of Richard Frampton?

“We are all changed, Miss,” he said. “It may not always show, but we’re all changed.” He took another step towards her and she seemed to shrink back. “I’m sorry,” he continued. “In answer to your question, no, Captain Frampton is no more altered by the war than . . . than I am. He is not suffering from any kind of shell shock.”

Even as he said it, Danny questioned his relationship with Richard Frampton. They'd had a few drinks last night. They'd talked about the war. Like that time in Armentieres. They'd drunk too much then as well. And Richard had mentioned a visit from an aunt who was obviously long since dead. Had Richard simply been dreaming? Or did this missing aunt really exist? Or had this young woman been the seed of that particular hallucination? If Doyle believed anything then it was this: the girl had been here before, a few weeks ago, and his friend, being drunk, perhaps, had taken her for his missing aunt. The perfume. Jasmine. Frampton had said as much himself.

"I didn't come to accuse him, you understand. I simply wanted the truth." He could see the tears beginning to form in her eyes. She sniffed and turned away from him then added over her shoulder; "And you Mr Doyle, are you part of the truth also?"

She walked away towards the village leaving her final question unanswered. Only, the way she had spoken his name—as if she knew who he was—left him puzzled. It had been more of a statement. Richard must've told her about him, but she had not been at Sadec House very long, why should they talk about him. No one here in England knew about his problems back home: the death of Sally Sixsmith. Even in Australia it had been a parochial affair, barely raising a ripple among the gossip-hungry people of Perth or Fremantle. Here, his life was a secret.

He watched her walk away before he turned back towards Sadec House. Her business was none of his concern, but if Richard wanted to explain it, no doubt he would. He looked down at the tobacco in the bowl of his pipe and stuck the stem into his mouth before turning back towards the house.

"It was her, Danny," Richard said almost as soon as Doyle stepped through the door. "That girl who was just here. She's been here before. I didn't understand at first but . . . not Elizabeth, you see. Not a ghost after all."

"The same perfume, though?"

"And the eyes, Danny, green and . . . oh, I don't know."

Doyle nodded. "I passed her on the bridge. Seemed upset about something."

"She's got a letter, Danny, or part of a letter, at least. Didn't mean a damned thing to me but she seems to think it should. Says she's got some notebooks too...some soldier. Says I'm mentioned in these bloody books. Except she doesn't have the notebooks. Mother hid them or burned them or some such. Didn't make any sense to me."

Doyle lit his pipe and waited.

"Says her name's Cresswell. Doesn't mean anything to me. Her brother was killed . . . she says there was a court martial so maybe he was . . . maybe he was one of those poor buggers we shot. She says I'm responsible in some way for his death but I don't recall anyone called Cresswell."

Danny shook his head and waited for Richard to continue but it was several minutes before he spoke again. "Only sat on one court martial . . . not a pleasant task . . . chap called Carter. You don't suppose she means Carter, do you? You'd expect a girl to know her own name, wouldn't you?"

"I remember the Carter business," said Danny. "Nasty piece of work if ever there was one. Didn't he rape some young French girl at a chateau?"

"And murdered her," said Richard. "As you say a very nasty piece of work. Some Colonel from the Wiltshire's presided. I just

went along with proceedings. He was guilty as hell and evil. I don't hold with the death penalty for some things but in his case I had no qualms."

"If that was her brother then she may be better off not knowing anything."

"That's what I tried to tell her but she insisted he wasn't called Carter, his name was Alfred Cresswell."

"And the letter," Danny asked. "What did the letter say?"

"It was from some widow. Recently lost her husband. Not killed in the war, if you follow me. The letter said that this woman's husband had seen something that might be of comfort to the grieving Mrs Cresswell—it was addressed to Mrs Cresswell which is this girl's mother I assume."

Danny nodded. "Did it say what it was he'd seen?"

"It doesn't say much. Part of it had been burned." Richard rubbed his forehead as if to recall anything further about the piece of paper the girl had so nervously pushed at him. "Just says that the enclosed notebooks were her late husband's diaries from the war and directed her attention to the months of May and June 1916."

"Why those in particular?"

"That's what I said. Miss Cresswell said that was when I found her brother guilty of cowardice and had him shot. She also said that the diaries, if they really exist, and frankly, I doubt it, prove he was an innocent man. Then she went on to blame me, Miss Cresswell, that is . . . well, she started to get angry because I said I couldn't remember anything of the sort. Still thought she must mean that murdering bastard Carter. She shouted that she was just trying to get to the truth. Then she left."

"But you mentioned me somewhere along the line, didn't you? Did she ask who I was or something?"

Richard shook his head.

“But the girl . . . it was as if . . . as if she knew who I was.”

Danny sat down on one of the kitchen chairs and tried to recall exactly what Miss Cresswell had said. “She asked me if was I was part of the truth.”

“Strange thing to say.”

“Then the letter, did that say anything?”

“No, it just said that this woman, Mrs Pickering, Mrs Margaret Pickering, was enclosing her husband’s notebooks in the hope that they might bring some relief to Mrs Cresswell’s grief. No mention of you or me.”

“Very strange,” said Doyle, but his mind was rapidly following another thread now. May and June 1916. “Must’ve been dozens of men called Pickering, or Cresswell for that matter.”

“I suppose so, yes.”

“I knew a Sam Pickering once. But he was an Australian. Injured at Arras in ’17, maybe died of his injuries. I never saw him again. So it couldn’t be him, could it?”

“Doubt it,” said Richard “I didn’t read the letter too carefully, you see. Thought she must have the wrong man altogether.”

“And you thought she was your long lost aunt come back from the war at last?”

Richard’s cheeks flushed red for a moment. “The perfume . . . and the door was left open. I knew someone had been here. And the eyes . . . just like Elizabeth’s.”

But Doyle wasn’t listening anymore. He was trying to recall events from that summer, the Somme Offensive. The months of July and August 1916. *Sam Pickering. Didn’t know him well. Same battalion, different company.* But try as he might, he couldn’t picture the man’s face. *Poor bugger had probably died at Arras anyway.*

Chapter Six

Richard was reading a manuscript on English churches when the telephone rang. He thought it might be someone asking for his uncle—but those calls were few these days—or the editor at Thatchers asking for a report, or any sign of progress. But it was Danny Doyle. It was a few days since Doyle had been to Sadec House and Richard was surprised to hear his voice.

“I’ve been thinking about that Cresswell girl,” Doyle said. “Can’t get it out of my mind in fact.” He sounded anxious.

“Listen Danny, we discussed it. There’s probably nothing we can do. The girl is understandably upset. I wouldn’t want to . . .”

“She reacted when I told her my name. If you didn’t mention me why—?”

“Maybe she was afraid of you.”

“She seemed confused, rather than scared. She recognised my name, but I’ve never met the girl before. Then there’s this business of Pickering’s notebooks. I’ve been thinking about them, too. What if it was the same guy I knew? I told you I knew a private called Pickering, not well, you see, but there was something . . . round the time of the Somme . . . before I was injured . . .”

“Even if it was the chap you knew . . . it doesn’t mean anything, Danny.”

“I know, but something happened, that summer, Richard, it’s sending me crazy trying to work it all out.”

“Something happened all right, the Somme happened. We got trapped in . . .” Richard had tried to forget Jane Cresswell’s visit but now he wasn’t sure what his friend was saying. “She’s a good-looking woman, Danny, is that what’s pestering you?”

“You really don’t know the half of it, Richard. I’ll tell you all about myself sometime. No, it’s not her looks that intrigue me,

although she is a handsome creature. It's just that I sympathize with her. Like I sympathized with you the moment I read about the police and the body in the river near your house. Only in that case I was a little more . . . shall we say understanding?"

Richard snorted. "The police don't suspect me of anything, Danny. It's just that Sadec is the closest house to where the body was found . . . the newspaper didn't say anything about me."

"Didn't have to, Richard. I've seen how these things work."

"How what things work? You're not making sense."

"Can't explain now, not relevant anyway, I don't suppose. It's just that . . . well, there's something else. Firstly, I knew a guy called Pickering and you reckon that was the name of the woman who wrote the letter to Mrs Cresswell, the young lady's mother. Maybe it's nothing, but Jane Cresswell accused you of court martialling her brother . . . but you say it wasn't you. You thought maybe she meant that bastard Carter who was shot for murder, but she would know her own brother's name, wouldn't she?"

"Unless he'd enlisted under an assumed name, and he wasn't really Carter after all."

"Can't see this Miss Jane Cresswell having a brother like Carter, can you? She got the wrong man, though, she wasn't looking for you, it was your uncle who was on the board for her brother's trial."

"But Robert was a major."

"When did he get made up? Before the Somme or . . .?"

"I was a lieutenant in 1916; I got my third pip in the November. Robert . . . yes, he was still a captain then, but I don't see—."

"Captain R Frampton, must've caused some confusion at the time."

"Not really, we weren't in the same regiment."

"Do we know what regiment Cresswell was in?"

“No.” Richard had to admit that Doyle had a point. “So she wanted my uncle, I still don’t see how I can help her.”

Neither man spoke for several seconds; the empty sound of crackling along the line pulsed into the earpieces in waves. Danny continued. “But maybe we owe Miss Cresswell an explanation, if nothing else. Tell her you’re not the R Frampton she’s looking for, and maybe she’ll tell me if I’m mentioned in those bloody notebooks.”

“And if it was the same man? This Pickering, how does that help Miss Cresswell?”

“I don’t know, but it goes some way to explaining how she knew me, or knew of me.”

Another pause on the line before Danny came back with, “We have to tell her. It’s the least we can do. And it may help to convince her you’re not mad.”

“Mad? What?”

“She thinks you’re a raving lunatic. Shell shock, she said.”

“Hardly surprising, I suppose. I must’ve seemed . . . bloody hell. Did she really think? I thought she understood. I really didn’t know what she was talking about.”

“I’d like to get my hands on those notebooks, Richard, if only to satisfy my own curiosity. And maybe we can put Jane Cresswell’s mind at rest about your sanity if nothing else.”

“How can we? We don’t even know where she lives.”

Doyle was silent for moment longer then, “The letter, was there an address on the letter?”

Richard closed his eyes and tried to recall the letter Jane Cresswell and thrust at him. It had been a crumpled sheet of pale blue paper; parts of it were scorched and unreadable. The handwriting had been neat but a little childish. There was an

address at the top but that had been the sender's and he'd hardly taken notice of it. He remembered the beginning of the letter, though: *Dear Mrs Cresswell, you don't know me but I am sending you these notebooks in the hope that the information in them may bring you some comfort. They were written by my late husband while he was fighting in France. He has now passed away, for which I blame the Kaiser and his war. I direct your attention to the months of May and June 1916. It is not my intention to revive sad memories but I felt it my duty to...* Richard had barely read the second and final paragraph beneath which there had been a simple signature of Margaret Pickering, Mrs. That was all he could recall.

"There was no address," he said.

"The envelope then, there must have been address on that?"

"There was no envelope," Richard was shouting above the buzz of static on the line. "Only a single sheet of paper."

"Army records then," said Doyle. "Somewhere the army will have a record of Mrs Cresswell's whereabouts. They must send her war widow's pension somewhere."

"Danny, he was her son, not her husband. And anyway there wouldn't be a war pension if what Miss Cresswell says is true; if her brother was shot of cowardice then . . . nothing."

"But there'll be a record somewhere. What bloody regiment do you suppose? They'd know something, surely."

"Danny I'm not sure it's worth all that trouble." But Richard knew it was pointless now to argue. His friend was set on seeing Jane Cresswell again and, if possible, getting a look at the notebooks. And in a way he agreed; and a small part of him felt a flutter of sympathy for the poor girl and he wanted to tell her what little they had worked out between them, but it just wasn't much,

not much at all. But maybe he should try to meet Miss Cresswell again, if only to convince her that he wasn't crazy or shell shocked.

"All right, Danny, I'll make a few enquiries and see if I can find the Cresswells. Starting with Robert's regimental headquarters. But I'm not promising anything."

Doyle gave Richard a telephone number for the local hotel in Cambridge near where he worked, he said. They would get a message to him any time if he just rang that number. With that the two men said their goodbyes and Richard slowly hung up the earpiece. He walked to the staircase and sat on the step thinking. The thought of seeing Jane Cresswell again was not an unpleasant one.

A week later Richard drove into Cambridge to collect Doyle for what still seemed like a futile effort: to find a man who'd been dead for eight years.

The last traces of the East Cambridgeshire Infantry were housed in a small block near the town centre in Huntingdon. The archivist, a Major Timmins, long since retired from active service, listened coldly to their story, indicated a row of hard chairs and asked them to wait while he checked, and shuffled off through a blue-painted door muttering loudly to himself.

Half an hour later he returned beaming proudly. "Gentlemen," he announced with a sniff. "It seems you are in luck. Your man was a member of our Third Battalion. Long line of battle honours – the battalion that is, not your man. I've located his service record." Major Timmins opened a file and began to study it closely holding it at an angle that prevented either of them reading it with him.

It was Doyle who broke in: “Perhaps, Major, if we could take a look at the file ourselves,” he said. “We might be able to find what we’re looking for.”

The archivist reddened with annoyance; his grip on the file tightened and he pursed his lips in disapproval.

“My uncle was Major Robert Frampton,” Richard said, and the archivist finally relented and handed him the file.

“Mind you don’t leave the building with this,” he admonished. “You may read it, but I’ll have it back in, shall we say fifteen minutes?” With that, he turned on his heel and retreated to his office but left the adjoining door open.

Doyle took the thin file, moved across to a small desk beside the counter, and spread it open. They both leaned forward and began to learn what little the army had seen fit to record of the life and death of Private Alfred Cresswell.

“It probably begins at the other end,” said Richard flipping through the file to the bottom sheet. “You see each sheet is added on top of the last.”

“Typical bloody army, everything arse about,” Doyle laughed and the muffled sound of Major Timmins coughing drifted through the door.

Both men exchanged a smile and Richard located the first entry in Cresswell’s service record. It gave his personal details and date of attestation. Then followed various medical certificates and reports of initial interviews. All very concise and lacking in detail.

The fifth sheet stated that Private Cresswell had completed training at Salisbury—Danny remarked the name of the camp as being familiar from his time there—and then a movement order for the Third Battalion to France in May 1915. Another two or three pages of unhelpful military movements, billeting and a training

course in gas warfare. The next sheet was a letter of recommendation from the Colonel of the battalion putting Private Cresswell forward for a bravery award. It was dated April 1916 and some anonymous hand had scrawled across the blank space at the bottom of the page: "Recommendation Withdrawn Pending Trial".

"Pending trial," Doyle read aloud as he turned the page. Now they were coming to it.

Statement of Evidence of Sergeant George Francis Fisher: I have today committed Private Alfred Martin Cresswell on a charge of (a) refusing to obey a direct order; (b) showing cowardice in the face of the enemy and (c) causing deliberate damage to His Majesty's property, to wit, throwing away his weapon in a manner such as to destroy or permanently disable said weapon, and (d) throwing away arms in the face of the enemy.

The prisoner has been detained in the cellar of an out-building at St Graten Farm, under armed escort awaiting trial by court martial.

Signed under my own hand, this 4th Day of May 1916.

The sheet was signed by the sergeant and underneath, in a different hand the words: "Witness statements in support of these charges are attached." This final note too remained anonymous.

Doyle turned the page expecting to find such witness statements but only two sheets of paper remained in the file. The first was the finding and recommendations of the court martial. Richard's eye checked quickly at the bottom of the page for the members of the board. One was a Major from a Home Counties regiment, another was a lieutenant from a cavalry regiment, and the final member was Captain Robert Frampton.

Richard looked back to the first page and noted Private Cresswell's home address. There was nothing to tell him that the

next of kin still lived at the address given, but it was all they had to go on: Lorne Cottage, Carfenton.

The cottage lay back from the road facing a small area of green and an aged but rather beautiful village church. Richard thought cynically about the book he'd been working on for the London publishers, so many English churches described from so many angles, but this pretty little building had not been one of them.

He parked the car near the edge of the grass on the opposite side of the road and both men got out and stood looking across at the cottage. It was a low-roofed place, hardly two floors, a ground floor and a couple of upstairs rooms trapped close to the eaves with narrow dormer windows. Danny Doyle was studying the garden, ten yards of plain grey paving cut straight from the road to the front door. No hedge, hardly any garden beds, just two struggling patches of lawn on either side of the path. He thought how difficult it must be in a country with such consistent rainfall and summer sun to let a patch of grass deteriorate to this poor condition. Something in him ached to stick a fork in it, aerate and fertilize; he'd have it back to near perfection in a few weeks. His new life in Cambridge had taught him that much at least.

"How do you want to do this?" he asked.

Richard looked at him and back at the house. "We don't know how the girl will react. I obviously haven't made much of an impression on her. Crazy man, she thinks. And the mother is an unknown quantity. Let's just see what they make of us."

"If those notebooks still exist, I'd really like to get a look at them," Doyle added in a whisper as Richard knocked on the door.

The muffled sound of footsteps, then the door opened a small way and the unmistakable face of Jane Cresswell confronted them. Her mouth opened slightly and a startled look flashed in her eyes.

Richard was about to speak but the girl spoke first. "Why Captain Frampton," she smiled, but the eyes did not change. She's frightened, Richard thought and he opened his mouth to reassure her. Except he had no words to say that would reassure her.

"And Mr Doyle," she continued looking from one to the other of them.

"Miss Cresswell," Richard searched for the words. "I'm sorry about the way I . . . last time . . . we . . . there's something you should know. It's not much but it might help you to understand."

Her eyes relaxed. She nodded and she opened the door fully and invited them inside.

Richard was struck by the elegant neatness of the long hallway and the narrow walnut table by one wall. They followed the young woman along the passageway and into a sitting room; more simple quality furnishings; light damask curtains of pale brown framed the windows and were tied back by silvered ropes. A small settee and two wing-backed chairs were arranged in front of the fire. Richard felt a flush of shame at having assumed, wrongly, that Miss Cresswell's life was one of working-class austerity. The furniture in the house might be old but it had once been of some quality. And everything was clean and tidy, unlike the dusty clutter of Sadec House.

He realised with a start that Jane Cresswell was watching him and he cleared his throat. "Miss Cresswell," he said. "What Mr Doyle and I have found . . . the reason we've come to see you today . . . I really don't see that this will help you at all, but . . ."

“Anything you can tell me about my brother’s death, the circumstances, as it were, of his downfall, will help me, Captain Frampton. I am not attempting to run away from the facts, simply hoping to clarify certain points of which I am currently ignorant.”

Here in her own home—attractively dressed in a crisp blue blouse and straight skirt—she seemed more confident. Richard wished there was something they could tell her but they had so little to say.

“What the Captain was trying to say,” Danny broke in. “Trying to explain is, he’s not able to recall any court martial for your brother. You see it wasn’t Richard . . . er, Captain Frampton . . . not this Captain Frampton you want. It was his uncle, Captain Robert Frampton who sat on that court martial board.”

“That seems a little convenient for you Captain,” she addressed her reply at Richard. “Two people of the same name. But you were there were you not?”

“I served in France and Belgium, yes,” he said sharply. “But in the summer of 1916 I was still a lieutenant. My uncle was—.”

“I see.” She half turned away and dropped her gaze to the floor. In the light from the window he saw again how soft and white her skin was, how green her eyes. He shook his head sharply to banish the thoughts from his mind. After all, she was the young woman who had doubts as to his sanity following their last meeting: their last two meetings.

“Miss Cresswell,” Danny said. “When we met briefly in Stenbridge, at the bridge, and again today when you came to the door, you seemed to recognise my name . . . Doyle. Can I ask—?”

“You’re in the diaries, Corporal Doyle.” She smiled at him as if to remove any unintended sharpness to her words. “Several times.”

"I see," he said softly, looking towards Richard then back at the girl. "Then there's things I don't understand. What exactly? Would it be possible for me—for us—to see these diaries?"

Now it was Jane Cresswell's turn to frown. "Ordinarily, I would be more than pleased to go through them with you, if it would answer some of your concerns and mine," she said. "But I'm afraid I no longer have access to them myself. My mother, you see. I don't know where the books are."

"Pity," said Doyle, looking across at Richard, who was pulling his mouth to one side in thought. Was he worried that the notebooks might cast his uncle in a poor light? They might also cast him, Doyle, in a bad light. It had to be the German prisoners-of-war, he thought. He'd done nothing morally wrong that day. But the army would see it differently. He'd helped a wounded German boy. He had nothing to be ashamed of. But where did Jane Cresswell's story come into it?

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," Jane straightened and faced them with that same confidence Richard had noted earlier. "Where are my manners? Please sit and I'll make some tea. Unforgiveable. You must be tired and thirsty from your trip." She left them and went to the kitchen. As she laid the cups and saucers on a tray she gathered her thoughts: this was not the Captain Frampton she sought; the Australian was unlikely to be able to tell her anything further than the notebooks had; and she could hardly remember in her own mind, what it was exactly they had said. And now her mother had taken them and hidden them again, and she might never learn the truth.

When she returned to the sitting room, the Australian was warming his hands by the fire and Captain Frampton was staring vacantly at the carpet. The sad tableau only made her more aware

that her quest was pointless. Both men turned to help her with the tray as if she were incapable of putting a few tea things on the table. Her eyes met those of the Englishman, the handsome captain, and she was glad that he hadn't been responsible for Alfred's execution. *He's far too nice for that*, the voice in her head teased her and she blushed without knowing why.

As she bent to place the tray, she heard the scrape and turn of a key in the front door lock, then the front door opening and closing. Footsteps in the passageway. Keys being laid upon the long table by the door. At each of these sounds Jane Cresswell stiffened until she turned towards the all-consuming presence of her mother at the doorway to the parlour.

Richard saw the resemblances immediately and only then began to see the differences. Mrs Margarita Cresswell was no taller than her daughter; the same slim waist and thin arms, cased now in the black sleeves of a short jacket; the long thin hands like porcelain; the same white pallor to the skin, heightened now by identical patches of pink on the cheekbones, flushes of embarrassment in the daughter and anger in the mother. But there the similarities ended. This woman was dark-haired, and darker eyed. The whole sombre mien accentuated by the blackness of her dress; the short jacket and the skirt falling straight and black from waist to floor; the dark bonnet; and, gripped between those long thin fingers, a prayer book. Mrs Cresswell was lately returned from church. And, from the angry look in her face, the good Lord had not calmed her soul one bit.

"And these gentlemen are?"

"Mother," Jane Cresswell began, smaller now, the frightened little child, the one Richard had first glimpsed in the kitchen of Sadec House. A girl—he now knew—who was capable of changing

into a beautiful and confident young woman. He watched her now as she drew in her breath and waited.

“Well?” The older woman hissed. “What have you done this time girl?”

Danny Doyle opened his mouth to speak but thought better of it. Anything he might say could only aggravate the situation.

“Mother,” Jane Cresswell began again. Richard wanted to support her but did not know how. “This is Captain Frampton, and—”

“I knew that much child,” the mother snapped then turned on Doyle so sharply that the ribbon on the back of her bonnet flicked and clicked against the rim. “And this man is?”

“I’m Danny Doyle, Mrs Cresswell,” he answered, biting back any inclination to use the same tone on her as she had used on the girl. “It seems you may have heard of me.”

“I don’t see how I should have,” she said and spun back to the girl who once again seemed to shrink away from her mother.

“Mr Doyle is the Corporal in the notebooks,” she stammered softly.

“Pa!” The mother made to dismiss her daughter with a vicious wave of the arm. She turned the force of her gaze now on Richard. When she spoke, it was to her daughter but her eyes never left Richard’s. “And you brought them both to my house, did you?”

The girl stepped forward in spite of her fear, as if to intercede between her mother and the men.

“Mother, they are guests in our house and I think—”

“You went there, did you not? You have been again to this man and sought him out and . . . and what? Brought him here so that I might be softened by his pretty face and allow you to meddle in much you do not understand? Is that it girl? Have you defied me?”

“He was my brother,” Jane cried, bringing a further flush of colour to her cheeks. “I have a right to know what the truth is; what the notebooks say.”

“I know nothing of the notebooks,” the mother hissed again. “And as for you, you may once have had a brother but I have no son. I have never had a son.”

“Mother, how could you?”

At this Mrs Cresswell shrank a little and the lines at the corner of her mouth tightened, the shoulders slumped.

“I’m sorry Captain Frampton, Mr Doyle,” she said softly. “It seems my daughter has brought you here on some wild goose chase. Now, if you wouldn’t mind I should like you to leave.”

Jane Cresswell began to speak but Doyle cut her off.

“Mrs Cresswell,” he said. “I can understand how you feel. Many of us lost friends and relatives in the war. It was a hard time, but your daughter deserves to know the truth. If there were something I could clarify then I gladly would. But it appears, as you say, to be a wild goose chase. There is nothing Captain Frampton and I can do.”

“Yes, Mr Doyle,” the mother raised her hands to untie the strings of her bonnet and fling it onto the chair where it rolled and fell to the floor. “Many of us, as you say, lost friends and relatives in that beastly war. My husband was a sailor. He was at Jutland. He was fatally injured at Jutland just a few weeks before his own son was refusing to kill Germans in France, Mr Doyle. Yes, I mourn my husband, but I do not, I cannot mourn Alfred.” She bent and picked up the bonnet from the floor. “My brother-in-law was also in the war. He came home but he was never . . . he came home. He has been to this house only once since, Mr Doyle. He came to tell me that he would not share in my family’s shame. He was a decorated war hero, as was my husband. They answered the call.” Now she

turned to Richard and he saw for the briefest of moments, tears beginning to collect in the corners of her eyes. "There is nothing you can do to make that better, Captain Frampton. I am sorry my daughter's meddling has caused you any concern. My son was a coward, a deserter, I suppose, whatever it was, I want no part in it. This foolish girl does not need any answers. We have no right to anything she might think is the truth. I know the truth, Captain. My son was tested and found wanting."

She turned to leave the room but looked back from the doorway. "Now if you would do me the courtesy of leaving my house I would be grateful."

"Mrs Cresswell." It was Richard who spoke now but she cut him off.

"Captain Frampton, it is not for Alfred that I wear the weeds, it is for my husband. Now if you will . . ." Again, the hint of tears held back with the force of determination. Then she was gone along the passageway and up the stairs.

Richard turned to the daughter who seemed to have regained her composure. "I'm sorry," he said softly.

"No, it's just that . . ." she began to explain but could not find the words. "She was upset that I came to your house. She doesn't know I have been there again and perhaps it is better that she should not. I try not to hide things from her, you understand, it's just that, sometimes—"

"You'll be all right?"

"Oh, she'll settle down in a day or two and things will return to normal." Jane Cresswell gave a shallow laugh. "If what we have in this house since the war can be called normal." She reached out her hand to shake Richard's and then Doyle's. Richard was struck by

the softness of her fingers compared to the relative firmness of her grip.

“I’m sorry about the tea,’ she said indicating with a wave of her other hand the untouched cups and saucers and the china pot with its green patterns.

Chapter Seven

Richard saw Ian Foxley too late to take evasive action. It wasn't that he didn't like the man, he just didn't enjoy talking to him—or anyone else—these days, and Ian Foxley was a chap who liked to talk. Richard had come to Ely to pay a few bills and now planned to walk down to the pub on the river to buy a beer and something to eat, when he caught sight of the young solicitor waving from across the street.

Sighing to himself he stood patiently and waited while Foxley limped across to him.

“Just going for a spot of lunch Richard?” The younger man said breezily. “Mind if I join? They do a very good beef pie down here.”

Richard accepted the fact that he'd have to lunch with the talkative Foxley, and fell into a slow walk at the other man's side.

The pub wasn't busy and they found a corner table in the courtyard, sheltered from the wind but catching a little of the autumn sun. They placed their order and within minutes the waitress brought two plates of pie and vegetables and two beers. Foxley took a sip of his beer and wiped the line of foam from his upper lip with the back of his hand.

“How's the leg?” Richard asked before the younger man could speak.

“Slow to heal, you know. Slow to heal.”

Richard knew Ian Foxley had been in France just three weeks in the summer of 1918 when the big Allied counter-offensive finally began to move the German's back to the east. Foxley's company had been tasked with taking a village to the south of Corby and in his first contact with the enemy he'd taken a shrapnel wound to the foot.

“Not gone back to law school, then?” Richard asked.

"I did for a while," Foxley smiled weakly. "After the army invalided me out. But my heart wasn't in it. Father finally agreed to take me on as practice manager and clerk which suits me just fine." The younger man sipped his beer and began to tackle his pie with gusto. "Of course, there's only father and old White since your uncle left the partnership."

Richard didn't dislike the young Foxley, not his fault he'd missed most of the action and been injured in his first skirmish. Not his fault, either, that he lacked ambition. Some men came home from the war restless and unsettled; others, like Foxley, seemed strangely content to let life go on around them. Perhaps that was the rub: Ian Foxley held an image up to Richard that he preferred not to see.

"Glad I caught you old chap," Ian said, as they finished the meal. "Father heard about the investigation and he was wondering..."

"Investigation?"

"The police business." Foxley leaned forward in a conspiratorial way. "That awful story in the Cambridge papers. The body at Broughton Mill." Foxley pushed the final forkful of meat pie into his mouth and nodded at Richard. "Father felt that if you should need a solicitor, the firm would obviously look after things." He spoke without swallowing his food. "Gratis, naturally. Been friends for a long time my pater and your uncle."

"Very kind, I'm sure," Richard replied, with an uneasy feeling. Once again the policeman's story, as related in the paper, had led someone to think he might need help; first Danny Doyle and now the Foxleys in Ely. "There's really nothing in it. Misunderstanding," he added, but the mention of it had unnerved him again.

The conversation drifted to recent changes in the city since the war.

“Can’t say I’ve noticed much change,” said Richard, but Ian Foxley showed a rare burst of enthusiasm about the future.

“It’s a new age, Richard. People are learning to sing and dance again, and laugh. Fashions have changed, too. And women, surely you’ve noticed, hemlines, hairstyles. It’s the twenties, Richard. Things will never be the same as they were before the war.”

Richard made no reply. For him, the time before the war had been fine—why change anything? Why the need for song and dance?

“Oh, by the way,” Foxley said, as they rose to leave. “Father wanted to know what you wanted done with the military stuff. None of our business, you see; thought we might send it on to the regiment in Huntingdon. They can file and forget.”

“Military stuff?”

“Among Robert’s papers,” Foxley said turning to take his leave. “A few army files, some personal letters and so on.”

Richard was about to tell him to send them off to the battalion headquarters in Huntingdon when he had a second thought. Maybe there was something there about this Cresswell matter and that might provide an excuse to meet Jane Cresswell again. The thought of it put him in a decidedly better mood.

“No,” he said. “I’ll take it and send on anything I think the army would find useful.”

With that he fell into the same awkward gait as his companion and they made their way back up the hill to the offices of Foxley and White, Solicitors.

Richard collected the box of files and made his way back to the market square where he’d left the car. On the drive home, he thought about the policeman’s visit to Sadec House. He’d not read

the newspaper report himself, but Ian Foxley and Danny Doyle had both read it and were concerned. Whatever it said, some people now believed that he, Richard Frampton, had something to do with the death of Oliver Walters whose body had washed up at the mill? And he'd lied to the inspector about the young woman's visit to Sadec House. It wasn't important, of course, but there was no going back on it now.

He left the box of files in the corner of the garage. He'd go through them some other time; probably nothing of use to Jane Cresswell anyway. Robert had sat on her brother's court martial, but the war was over and had been for six years now.

Jane Cresswell wished, and not for the first time, that she'd been born a few years earlier. If only she'd been twenty—the age she was now—in 1916, the year her brother died in France. During the war young women just eight or ten years older than her had gone out to work in new jobs, taking the places of men in banks, offices, and, of course, in munitions. Not that she would have wanted that, munitions, with the danger of explosions and the yellowing of the skin. But office work, she felt, might have been an improvement on her present position in the shop. Not that she didn't appreciate her job, anything to get out of the house, but she couldn't help thinking that an office job would be a considerable step up the social ladder. And that would please her mother and make life at home a little more bearable. Many of those girls in the war, though, had lived away from home, at just twenty years of age; living in what people called 'digs', just like travelling salesmen. But it was the confidence of those girls that she coveted. The men might be back, the good jobs might be closed off again to the likes of her, but those older girls, women in their mid-twenties now, had gained so much.

If I'd been old enough to work in an office during the war, maybe I'd be able to understand the workings of the telephone by now; like Mrs Chandler, her friend Jenny's mother, who worked in the offices of a company on the floors above the milliner's shop.

It was to these offices that the two girls now ascended in the company lift. Jane had been up there once before but only to pay a social call on Jenny's mother. This time it was different; this time Jenny had asked her mother's permission for Jane to use the telephone in her boss's office, the one that could make "outside calls". Lunchtime and the girls themselves only had thirty minutes. The man whose desk the instrument sat on might take his break at any time and no one knew how long he'd stay away. There was always a risk that, as Jane began her telephone call, he could return and catch them. What would happen then? She didn't want to get Jenny's mother into trouble; she really had no experience of how bosses behaved. She imagined, though, from snippets of conversation she'd heard, that they were not pleasant or understanding people; in books they seemed to be men prone to stomach ulcers and gout.

Mrs Chandler was waiting for them as they left the rattling old lift and she ushered them quickly into her receptionist's area.

"He's just slipped out," she said, in a whisper. "If he meets one of his crony's he could be an hour, but more likely he'll be back with a sandwich in ten minutes, so we can't hang about."

She opened the door behind her desk and led them into the inner sanctum of her boss's office: large and neat with a light wood desk and rows of files in black boxes on the shelf behind the chair like books in the public library. She stared at the telephone on the desk—so heavy and modern; shiny-black and hard; formidable. Mrs

Chandler smiled at her. “Now, dear, what was that number we found for you?”

Jane handed her the scrap of paper with Richard Frampton’s number on it. Yesterday Jenny’s mother had found the number for a Mr R Frampton in Stenbridge and Jane remembered now how excited she’d felt; only it was no longer exciting—at least not in the same way. *Daunting, yes, that was it, daunting. Now the time has come to actually use the telephone and speak to the man.*

Jenny’s mother took the scrap of paper from her and read the number to herself. “Want me to get it for you?”

“Sorry?”

“The number? Do you want me to try for a connection?”

“Connection?” Jane felt a familiar panic in her chest and her friend Jenny began to giggle behind her back. But there could be no turning back now. Mrs Chandler had lifted the hand piece and clicked the black cradle of the telephone. Then she signalled with her hand for Jenny to watch the door while she leaned into the mouthpiece and waited. Jane had little idea what was actually happening. She’d seen telephones used, of course, in the films; they simply walked into hotel bedrooms and lifted the receiver to speak to someone halfway across the world. Or so it seemed. But this was different. This was the real thing. Mrs Chandler read out the number and waited again. Jenny hovered by the office door keeping watch. Jenny’s mother repeated the number and there followed another silence. Jane wanted to scream out for her to forget the whole thing. *This is foolish. If I wanted to speak to the Captain, I could have caught the buses and trains and gone to Stenbridge.* She pictured the little stream and the house, and somewhere in that house, upstairs in the study, she imagined a telephone was ringing. Would he be home? *It might be better if the telephone didn’t work:*

bad connection. She'd seen that somewhere in a film once. Or *Captain Frampton might not be home.*

"Hello," Mrs Chandler said. "Is that Mr Frampton?" She paused again then said, "Hold the line please; I have a Miss Cresswell for you, sir."

Jenny giggled again. It all sounded so official and Jane's chest thumped as Mrs Chandler handed her the handpiece. She held her breath for a second. *Some of those girls working in the munitions factories were only nineteen; left home for the first time.* They'd been chaperoned, she told herself, of course they had, but even so, there must've been dances and parties and such like. And how confident they'd all become. *If only I'd been born earlier.* She let out her breath in a long slow stream.

"Captain Frampton," she said, trying to sound as if she spoke on telephones all day long. "It's Jane Cresswell here." *What now?* She waited for a second listening to a noise like the crashing of waves on a beach. Then she heard his voice and it was strange, furry about the edges but most definitely recognisable.

"Ah, Miss Cresswell, what a surprise," he said, which confused her. Then he was saying something else, something about her mother.

"Yes, yes, mother's fine," she said. "I realise that you may not be interested in my brother's, er, my brother's death, Captain, but I have located the diaries, my mother you see, had hidden them in a wardrobe in my brother's . . . well, I have them with me and I thought that perhaps, Mr Doyle would be able to cast some light upon matters. He's mentioned in them, you see." She realised she was speaking too fast and the words were not coming out as she'd planned. *For heaven's sake, what must he think of you, girl?*

“Miss Cresswell,” he broke in. “You must understand that, even though I knew nothing about you brother’s death, it’s not that I have no wish to help you. Of course, I’d help if I could. As you say, Doyle may be the person you need to speak to.”

“Yes, yes,” she said, deliberately trying not to rush her words. “Only I have no idea where to contact Mr Doyle, you understand.”

The line fell silent save for the crashing of the breakers on some distant beach, and she thought that perhaps he was no longer there. Was he offended perhaps that she had rung him merely to contact his friend? *Now you’re being silly, stupid girl.* What possible offence could he take from that? He had no interest in her, how could he have?

Then he spoke again and something in her relaxed. “I’m afraid I don’t know exactly where to find Doyle either,” he said. “He works in Cambridge and he’s some kind of handyman with the council, the city, the gardens, you know.” Why hadn’t Doyle told him where he was living? “I suppose he wouldn’t be too hard to find. I could drive across to Cambridge tomorrow and ask at the city offices. Yes, yes, I could very easily do that, if it would help.”

“Oh,” she said, more to herself than to him. “I wouldn’t want to put you to any inconvenience.” She liked the sound of that; like something from a movie. *This telephone business isn’t difficult at all.* Feeling particularly proud of herself she glanced across at her friend Jenny who was standing by the office door and behind her Mrs Chandler in the passageway leading to the lift. Then she had a sudden thought, or perhaps the words were out of her mouth before she’d even considered them. ““I could perhaps meet you somewhere in Cambridge, then.” She felt her confidence waning a little. “If it were convenient, of course.” *Convenient. Inconvenient. Don’t overcook it dear.*

To her surprise his answer came as quickly as her own suggestion had. "That would be very pleasant," he said. "Perhaps we could meet at the tea rooms on the corner of St Johns, near Trinity College, do you know it? You could bring the diaries. I'd certainly like to read them myself, if that wouldn't be prying into your family affairs that is." He paused. "And I'll find Mr Doyle for you," he promised.

Her thoughts began to gush again. Cambridge. Tearooms. "That would be wonderful, Captain Frampton. Shall we say . . ." She'd have to skip from the shop on some excuse. What time would be best? Yes, she knew the tearooms he meant. How long would it all take? She didn't even know what day it was. *You'd forget your own name sometimes, child.* She reminded herself that she was doing this to learn about her brother's death. *The captain with the soft blue eyes, is that it?* She felt her cheeks burning. "Shall we say mid-day, Captain?" *They'll miss you if you don't get back on time, my girl.*

She looked up at Jenny as if to ask for an explanation of her own feelings but Mrs Chandler was coming back into the reception area flapping her arms. "Quickly, quickly," she said. "The lift is coming up now. It's bound to be him. Better hang up now."

Jane gabbled a quick repeat of the time and the place. Tea rooms on St John's Street, straight up Trumpington from the milliner's shop. She'd assured him that she knew it but in truth, all the old university buildings in that part of town confused her. "I must go now, I have to . . . someone wishes to use this telephone." *Why did you say that?* He might have assumed she was ringing from her own telephone, at home, or in her own place of work. But, in truth, her mother had no telephone in the house. None of her friends either. Even the milliner's shop where she and Jenny worked had no such device.

“Goodbye, goodbye,” she shouted as she laid the receiver back into its cradle. So that was that, then. She was to meet the captain and Mr Doyle in Cambridge. She looked up and saw the frown on Mrs Chandler’s face.

“I hope you’re not planning on doing something your mother wouldn’t approve of,” said Jenny’s mother. “I would never have allowed you to . . . I trust you won’t be a naughty girl.”

Jenny let out a giggle as the three of them left the office and Mrs Chandler composed herself behind the reception desk. There was a rattling and clanging from the lift in the passage as Mrs Chandler’s boss stepped out. The two girls straightened their backs and walked past him.

“Good afternoon, Mr Harcourt,” Jenny said chirpily.

“Miss Chandler,” he replied raising a hand to the brim of his hat. “Miss...?”

“Cresswell, Mr Harcourt,” Jane said, before her friend’s hand hustled her into the lift.

Chapter Eight

She was late. Only twenty minutes but the drizzle had settled into a light shower now and perhaps she would not come at all. He'd made his cup of tea last as long as he could but the waitress was hovering again. She thinks I've been stood up, he thought. It's not like that, he wanted to say. But what was it like?

And where was Doyle? He was late too, or more likely not coming at all.

Then she was there, standing in front of him, the sleeves of her lightweight coat and the fluffy wool of her hat shimmering with tiny drops of water. He rose from his chair. Jane Cresswell smiled, and they both spoke at once.

"Please," he stammered, moving the chair out from the table for her.

"I'm so sorry," she began. "I know we said . . . but the work you see. I'm not used to leaving the shop at lunchtime." She was talking fast but stopped and sat down abruptly with her gloved hands in her lap and her handbag on the floor by her feet.

She seemed ill at ease and Richard wanted to break in on her thoughts, as if her discomfort was his own, but he could think of nothing to say. Her face, flushed with the sudden warmth of the tearooms, had tiny patches of pink heightening the paleness of her skin. Her eyes were avoiding him. Then the lips broke slowly into a smile, a row of even white teeth. He forgot for a moment why they were there. Then he remembered: she was bringing the war with her, in the shape of some notebooks. And it wasn't him she'd come to see, it was Doyle. And Doyle was not here.

She was speaking again, slower now, softer. Apologising still for her lateness. Had she mistaken his look for annoyance? "I had no way of letting you know," she was saying. "I was serving a lady, you

see, a rather awkward and pernickety customer. I thought you wouldn't wait for me. If I was so terribly late. I thought . . .”

So, he gathered, Miss Cresswell works in a shop of some kind. He wanted to say he would have waited longer if necessary, but he just sat and smiled back at her, feeling a little silly.

A silence fell between them and again from the corner of his eye he saw the waitress hovering like a bird of prey watching for a sign, circling. They would take tea. Two young people, meeting like this, taking tea; quite natural.

“Would you like tea?” he asked, raising a hand for the bird of prey to swoop upon. “The cakes look terribly inviting—after your busy morning—your pernickety customer?” He felt that sounded as if he was mocking her and it was his turn to blush.

“Thank you, tea would be very nice.” She looked across at the cake stand on the counter but declined the offer of cake. The same puritanical control he'd seen in her mother that day.

They waited in silence while the waitress brought fresh crockery and a plain brown pot of tea. Jane pulled off her gloves and revealed her slim fingers. One of the nails, he noticed, was short, its cuticle frayed. She quickly hid it before laying out the cups in their saucers. For Richard, the torn and bitten nail only made the rest of the fingers more delicate. He would've like to tell her so but knew he never could.

After she had poured the two cups of tea, Richard watched as she took the first sip. That puckered shape of her lips, slightly too thin and pale to be beautiful, forming a kiss on the edge of her cup. Suddenly her eyelids rose and she saw that he was watching her. He almost looked away, embarrassed, but she just smiled at him. She was certainly pretty enough, he conceded, without being stunning; a little too soft and gentle for his tastes; too slight, perhaps, although

he found her slim waist constantly drawing his gaze, and the way the front of her dress pulled taut across her breasts. And her hair, still damp from the rain, escaping from under her hat; two strands poked out from her head on the left while a damp thread clung to her cheek. He wanted to reach across and flick this hair off her face but knew that he could never do that either. Then her smile extended to the eyes and he thought that they weren't like Elizabeth's after all. He shook his head. She was nothing like Elizabeth. His aunt was fuller in the bosom, darker of hair and redder of lip; the eyes, though, Jane Cresswell's eyes were soft green with flecks of brown—Elizabeth's had been darker—and the tiny crinkles at the corner when she smiled, these were not the eyes of Elizabeth Frampton come to haunt him. And yet he had to force himself to look away from them.

After what seemed like several minutes of silence, they both spoke at once.

“Did you manage to—?” she began.

“Have you brought the—?” he asked.

They both laughed and Richard sat back and waved for her to continue.

“I was simply going to ask whether you had located your friend, Mr Doyle.”

“Not exactly,” he said. “But I’ve left messages for him at several places where he is known to be working. He works for the city gardens, or some such, I may have told you.” The girl nodded and he continued. “Suppose it seems silly, my not knowing where to find him—he is, after all, my friend. It’s just that, well, I hadn’t seen him for almost ten years. Thought he’d gone home—to Australia, that is, and he had in fact. But he’s back now and working here in Cambridge.”

After her telephone call the previous day, Richard had made three calls to the council in the city and asked about Doyle. The Manager for Works recognized the name and confirmed that a Daniel Doyle, a tall Australian, he'd said, was working in one of his departments fixing fences and sheds and so on. This was what Doyle must specialise in, Richard thought.

Richard realised that he had fallen silent again and she was watching him intently across the table.

"Sorry," he stammered. "I've left messages for him and I thought he'd be here. I said he could find us here. Not ideal but the best I could do."

"He must be a very close friend," she said softly. "To look you up after the war, that is. All the way from Australia. The war I suppose. My father once said that strong bonds were forged in wartime."

"He was in the Royal Navy, your father?"

"Yes," she said, distractedly as if remembering the man. "Badly injured at Jutland. They sent him home. That is the most persistent memory of him, in my mind. Mother nursed him at home at the end. Not much hope. Should have gone back to the navy, but he would've died anyway. That was in 1916, of course. The same year...the year my brother died." She looked down at her hands and for a moment Richard thought she might start crying but she looked up again and carried on. "It's what makes her the way she is, mother. Perhaps she remembers a different man. I don't know. I was too young, of course, before the war to recall him clearly. So I'm left with a memory of this sickly invalid, half blind and unable to walk, dying in my family home."

"How old were you, when he died? Your father?"

"Thirteen," she said, blushing slightly. "My uncle served in France. It was Uncle Jack—my mother's brother, you see—he said

some things, about Alfie, about my brother. He never calls on us any longer, my uncle. And it was . . . he shouted at my mother before she even knew the truth. It was how I learned about the court martial and everything. Although, as you know, I am far from understanding the truth myself.”

The tears began to well up behind her eyes but she scrambled in her bag for a handkerchief and dabbed them bravely before they could trouble her. Richard looked away to allow her some privacy in her grief. What she had said made sense but was garbled. The uncle, he concluded, was not a nice man if what he’d said—what had been overheard by a thirteen-year-old girl—could make her cry all these years later.

“Alfred was such a kind and gentle man,” she said. “He couldn’t . . . the notebooks say something about a group of prisoners. I didn’t understand it.” She looked up at Richard and smiled bravely. “You must think me a very foolish person, Mr Frampton.”

Not for the first time Richard wanted desperately to help her, to tell her what she needed to know. Only he knew even less than she did. He knew little about the execution of Alfred Cresswell that she, herself, had not told him. The regimental records he’d read told him nothing further; they merely confirmed that his uncle had sat on the court martial board.

“I was twelve when my father died,” he said, more for the want of something to break into her private moment than from any need to reminisce about his childhood.

She looked up suddenly as if making a connection between his bereavement and the loss of her brother. “I’m sorry. One gets so involved with one’s own loss that you simply forget that everyone else has lost someone too. That beastly, beastly war.”

“Oh my parents died long before the war. He was a vicar in Barnes and mother had been a society girl before they met. Totally unsuited, but I didn’t realise it at the time. I came to live with my uncle at Sadec House. That’s Robert and my aunt, Elizabeth. They were like parents to me.”

Richard looked up and saw a flash of confusion cross her forehead and her mouth was forming a tiny ‘o’.

“Sorry,” he said.

“Elizabeth,” she said, looking down at the table to avoid his eyes. “She was your aunt?”

He nodded. Again, he saw the circles of pink on her cheeks, as if talk of his family embarrassed her.

“Did you bring the diaries?” he asked.

“The diaries? Yes, I’ve got them here.” She began to rummage again in her bag. “I wasn’t sure you’d be interested. It was Mr Doyle and perhaps your Uncle Robert named in them, you see. But we could go through them now, if you wanted to. It seems Mr Doyle may not be joining us. Probably didn’t get your message, I expect.”

She pulled out a flat parcel loosely packed in brown paper then searched further before bringing out a grey-coloured envelope. She smiled across the table him. “I haven’t had time to read them carefully myself, Captain Frampton, I was only able to retrieve them yesterday morning after my mother . . . well, we have them now.”

“But you knew about your brother’s fate, didn’t you?” Richard ventured. “Surely you knew before reading these notebooks.”

“Not really. Oh, I had some idea, like when my father died, it was months after Jutland, he’d come home injured and would probably never have lived a full life after that. Still, I never expected him to die. And my uncle, who had been at Arras, said he’d died of shame at what my brother did. I never understood that but it hurt.

What had Alfred done that was so awful” What had his death to do with my father’s? Then again, a year or so ago, they built a memorial in our village square with the names of all those who’d died. My father’s name was on it but Alfred’s wasn’t. I asked the stonemason, a man who had also been in the army, why he wasn’t carving Alfred’s name and he said ‘there’s no room for the likes of Alfred Cresswell on this obelisk, and never will be, Miss,’ his exact words. And still I didn’t know anything. Then mother received this parcel in the mail from Australia, forwarded on by the army, Alfred’s old regiment. I don’t think she even read them; just hid them from me. Said they should be burnt. No point in raking up the past, she said.”

“No memorial, no war pension and no dead man’s penny,” said Richard quietly.

“What’s that?”

“Dead man’s penny? It’s a round brass plaque given to families who lost someone in the war.” He stopped, embarrassed.

“It all seems so cruel,” she said. “Who makes these rules? Someone, somewhere—London, probably—makes up these cruel punishments for the family. What sort of person does that?”

“I take it you do not have your mother’s permission to take these books, let alone show them to Doyle or me?”

“Permission? Hardly Captain, she’d skin me alive if she even suspected I’d found them again.”

“Please call me Richard,” he said. Few enough people remembered him as Captain Frampton any longer and, in spite of any false status the rank might imply, now it only made him uncomfortable. Suddenly the war seemed so long ago, and yet reminders of it continued to haunt him.

“Very well, Richard.” She savoured the sound of his name as she spoke and felt comfortable with it. “Only you must call me Jane. Enough of this Miss Cresswell, too.” Her eyes sparkled for a moment and Richard wondered at the way she could change from tears and sadness one minute to a vibrant young woman the next.

Jane cast her eyes around the room and settled on a larger table in the corner by the wall. “Shall we ask the waitress if we could move to that table? It would give us more room.”

The waitress scowled a little but moved the tea things to the larger table without a word being spoken. Jane gathered her bag and gloves and followed. Richard made to sit opposite her.

“Oh, I thought we might sit—” she blushed. “If you sat beside me, we might work through the diaries together, don’t you think.”

Richard glanced at the waitress but she had gone back to examining her fingernails by the counter. He took the chair beside Jane, carefully arranging his jacket and legs so that no part touched her. As he raised one of the notebooks, his hand shook slightly and he rested his forearm on the table edge. A hint of flowers and the clean smell of soap and perfume emanated from her and he closed his eyes and breathed in slowly. It had been a very long time since he’d felt what he was beginning to feel again now.

It was several seconds before he was able to concentrate on the book in his hand. Jane passed him the letter that had come with the notebooks. He’d seen it before, when Jane had come to Sadec House, but she was right to show it to him again—last time he’d paid it little enough attention. It was a short note—badly burnt around the edges—from Sam Pickering’s widow in Adelaide explaining what little she knew about the notebooks. He checked it more thoroughly this time, but it told him nothing. It certainly didn’t explain Danny Doyle’s connection.

Together they went through the first two notebooks with Jane pointing out certain passages that she thought might be meaningful. They were mainly short descriptions of the front line and times spent training and resting behind the lines. Even with the benefit of his war experience, he had little idea what it was all about. Then they came to the parts where Sam Pickering mentioned Doyle. Sometimes the two men were detailed to the same working parties, with Corporal Doyle in charge; on other occasions it seemed to be Pickering wishing that Doyle was still there.

"It's almost as if Doyle were dead," Jane said quietly at one point. "In fact when I first read these books, that's what I thought."

"No," Richard replied. "Look at the date. That's not long after Pozieres. Doyle was in hospital."

"Pozieres?" She said. "I've heard that word but I'm not sure I know what it means. Is it French?"

"No, well, yes," Richard felt for words to explain Pozieres. There were none. "It's a place. A village really. On the road from Albert. We fought for it during what you probably know as the Battle of the Somme. Thiepval, too."

"I see," she said, but sounded anything but sure. "And if Doyle was in hospital, why didn't this man, Sam, why didn't he come to you...?"

"Me?" Richard almost laughed at the chaos he recalled from those weeks in the summer of 1916. "Pickering didn't know me. He was with the Australians. I might have had contact with his officers before the attack and that sort of thing, but not with Pickering himself. He wouldn't know me from—"

"But he sought out a Captain Frampton, your brother?"

"My uncle, Uncle Robert."

“Yes, sorry. And you were in the same unit . . . the same regiment, weren’t you. And my brother, Alfred?”

Richard shared some of her confusion. “Your brother was in my uncle’s regiment, the East Cambridge Infantry. Robert transferred early on in the war. He was a territorial with the local group and they were incorporated with the East Cambs shortly after the war broke out. Most of them were taken under the command of the county regiments. I got my commission from the OTC at Trinity College here in Cambridge. They were attached to universities, public schools and so on. So I ended up in the Hereward Rifles. We were in the same division as the East Cambs in the summer of 1916 so I was never far from Robert’s battalion.”

“And this Australian unit? Where were they?”

“Same story, I suppose. Attached to the same division, if not the same brigade.” Richard tried for a moment to recall exactly where the Australian battalion had been. “On our right flank on July 23rd, so probably same division.”

He saw the frown of confusion deepen on her brow and felt some sympathy for her. Since the war, he’d had little to do with civilians but what he did have convinced him that most of them knew nothing about the army and maybe even less about what really happened over there.

“So,” she said, shaking her head. “That’s why your uncle was one of the officers . . . the court martial, right?”

“Probably. Although we were all somehow in the same place during the battle, it lasted for months, you understand, the Somme. Brigades and divisions moved about throughout the war. And if a court martial were held then the army simply grabbed whatever officers they could get to sit.”

He knew that was probably meaningless to her but he couldn't explain. He wanted to help her—to unravel her puzzle, provide answers.

As he was about to speak again, she jumped up and pointed to the clock on the wall behind the waitress.

"I must go," she gasped, her eyes widening. "The shop. I said I'd not be long." She gathered the notebooks and her gloves and her bag. Richard stood up, unable to find the words he needed to make her stay.

"I think we're beginning to make sense of it," he said. "Just a little longer."

She pushed the diaries back into her bag and moved towards the door. "I don't think we ever will, Mr Frampton," she said. "Maybe we are not meant to know what happened to make my brother behave as he did."

Richard tried to stop her again but she explained rapidly that she must get back to work. If her mother ever found out she'd met with him again, and taken the notebooks . . .

"Wait," he said. "Can you get away again? Can you bring the books again? I really would like to finish them. Maybe there's something else I haven't seen. And Mr Doyle, I'll find Doyle."

Then she was back by his side and her hand rested lightly on his arm. "Two weeks on Sunday, same time, here in the cafe," she said, breathlessly. "I'll try to meet you then, with or without these." She patted the bag, turned, and was gone.

Chapter Nine

It was three days later that Richard looked down into the front garden of Sadec House and saw the inspector stooped over the shrubs in the garden bed. He watched for a moment or two then walked slowly down the stairs. In the hallway, Richard hesitated; waiting for the knock, but none came. Eventually he opened the door and saw the policeman still moving about in the garden.

“Inspector Bannister,” he called, stepping out onto the path. “Is there something I can help you with?”

“Not a keen rose grower then?”

“Rose grower?” Richard tried to keep the note of irritation from his voice. The inspector straightened up and rubbed his back with both hands.

“Deadheading, Mr Frampton, badly needed,” he said. “And you’ve got a serious case of aphids here.”

“They were my aunt’s roses, Inspector, I know very little about them.”

“Love my roses, Mr Frampton,” the inspector continued. “I should be retired and tending to them full-time by now, but, what with the war and everything. Lost a lot of good policemen in the war, as I’m sure you realise. One thing and another, you know, and I’m still in harness well past my best date.”

The inspector reached across and pinched out the head of a rose from which all the petals had fallen weeks before. “Still, it’s a privilege to be given interesting work at my stage in life, wouldn’t you agree, Sir?”

“If you’re here about the body at Broughton Mill, I’m afraid I can’t offer any more help than last time. I haven’t seen anyone suspicious, no villains or murderers for you to pursue, Inspector.”

The policeman's head came up suddenly. "Murderers, Mr Frampton? Now what put that thought in your mind then? Did I give you that impression on my last visit? No, I thought not. Really no evidence for it—not back then, anyway."

Richard watched the policeman in silence for a few seconds.

"Just wanted to check a couple of things you said, sir, if I may."

Something in the inspector's tone had changed now: more official, more menacing. Richard still didn't reply.

"I asked whether you knew the dead man, Sir. And you assured me you didn't. I also asked if you'd seen anyone or had visitors in the last week, did I not?"

"Yes . . . but."

"And again, you assured me that you had not." The inspector moved away from the rose bushes and into the middle of the path. Now he reached into the inside pocket of his jacket and took out a photograph, it was small, no bigger than the palm of his hand. "I was wondering if you wouldn't mind looking at this and telling me whether you recognise this man." He held the photograph at arm's length and allowed Richard time to study it. It showed the face of a fair-haired man and a trace of his collar; military jacket, buttoned to the throat, no visible badges of rank or regiment, just a bland, unsmiling face staring back at him. It was not a good photograph, certainly not one of those professional jobs soldiers had taken for their sweethearts and families back home.

Richard shook his head. "No, sorry, I don't recognise the man."

"No? Oh, well, it's not a very good picture I shouldn't wonder." He slipped the photograph back into his pocket and half turned away as if about to leave before turning back to face Richard. "His name was Oliver Walters." The inspector watched for any reaction but the name meant nothing to Richard and he shook his head. "Oh

well,” the policeman sighed and looked away again. “There was one other thing, though, sir, you might be able to clear up. The gentleman at the public house in the village. He said there had been someone asking at the front door. Asking directions. Young woman. Pretty little thing, he said of her, although he could hardly describe her in any detail as it was getting dark, he recalls. Young woman asking for Sadec House. Asking for a Captain Frampton. She had been seen earlier in the day on a bus from Cambridge but no one seems to know the young lady personally. So, just asking again, did she find you that evening or not, sir?”

Richard felt a cold weight in the pit of his stomach. When the inspector had called the first time—five weeks ago, now—he’d believed that the visitor had been a dream, a vision of his dead aunt and he’d lied. Now he knew that the young woman was Miss Cresswell. Could he continue to lie? Was he now to be caught out? And what possible interest could Jane Cresswell be to the inspector?

“People sometimes come to see the house, Inspector. It is an unusual design, you see. People with an interest in architecture, and so forth.” He’d decided to keep up the lie but he didn’t know why and he stopped when he realised that he might not be making his situation any better.

“I see sir, but probably not in the dark, sir.” The inspector looked down at his own feet. “So you’re still saying that you had no visitors. No pretty young ladies come calling? I should quite understand, sir. We’re both men of the world, aren’t we?”

Richard felt a flush of anger but controlled it. He could hardly tell the man that he’d been under the influence of opium so he said nothing further and the policeman looked into his face for a second or two before he turned back along the path. Richard moved closer

to the front door but the inspector had one more thing to say and he paused by the gate to say it.

“Look, Inspector, I’m sure I’d like to help you but—”

“Only she’s been back here again, hasn’t she, sir?” The policeman’s face remained inscrutable as the moist eyes scanned Richard’s face. “Your man at the Pikes saw her again a couple of days ago. What’s that, a month now following the death of Mr Walters? The publican tells me she must’ve been to see you at this house ’cause he saw her return to the village to catch a bus back to Cambridge, he reckons. Saw her speak to someone on the bridge, he says. Gentleman who was also seen to be visiting this house. Nowhere else up this lane for anyone to be going, is there, sir?”

“Inspector I really can’t—”

“I know, sir, it can be difficult to recall things in a busy life. Heaven knows I can’t hardly keep things straight myself. Only the window in the taproom of the pub, behind the bar, it looks this way, sir. And the publican definitely saw this chap—he’d just been in to buy some pipe tobacco, he recalls—stopped by the bridge and spoke to this young lady and, to the best of his recollection, it was the same young lady what called two weeks before to ask directions to this house.”

The inspector turned away as if more interested in the bushes beside the path than to any answer Richard might be about to give him.

“So now we’ve got a young lady and a gentleman—tall, heavy man, the publican says—possible South African or Australian—so, two people I can’t explain in the vicinity of the river and these two bridges, around the time of the man’s death.” He turned back to face Richard. “And you say you can’t put a name to either of them?”

“Doyle, Inspector,” Richard said, with a sigh. “Daniel Doyle, he’s Australian. I knew him during the war, you see, and he came to see me, but that was several days after you had been here yourself, and two weeks after the body was found at Broughton Mill.” Richard wondered if this information would be enough. Should he tell the policeman that the young woman was Jane Cresswell, and that she had been to see him, twice, and that neither she nor Danny Doyle had anything to do with the death of this man Walters?

“Doyle, you say,” the inspector seemed to brighten at the name. “And he is a regular visitor hereabouts is he, this Mr Doyle? Only the publican says he’d not seen him around before that day.”

“I hadn’t seen him since the war. We were not in touch. I’m sure you know how it is, Inspector. We went through the war together.”

“Can’t say as I do know, sir, I wasn’t afforded that privilege. Some of us had to carry on here. Crime didn’t just stop for four years, you know. Far from it.”

Richard detected bitterness rather than simple cynicism in the inspector’s voice. He was a civilian; what could they possibly know about the privilege of going to fight on the Western Front?

“So, this long lost friend suddenly turned up here after a man’s body is found at the Broughton Mill sluice. I take it he hadn’t been here a couple of days earlier, sir, around the time of Mr Walter’s disappearance?”

“Just the once, Inspector.”

“I see, sir, and where could I find this Mr Doyle, if I wanted to ask him a few questions? Staying local is he? Not gone back to Australia, I hope.”

“I don’t know.” Richard shook his head. “He’s working somewhere—” Richard was about to say Cambridge when something made him say “In Ely, I think. But I can’t help you there, I’m afraid.”

“Quite so, sir,” said the inspector, with that same note of menace in his voice. “If you should see him again, sir, perhaps you could ask him to contact me. Just trying to eliminate people you see.”

The inspector turned and walked back down the path. “Sorry to have troubled you, and don’t forget about those aphids, sir.” With that he was out onto the lane and had turned towards the village before glancing back once more and shouting over the offending rose bushes, “Oh, it was murder, by the way.” For the first time the inspector smiled. “Just like you said; villains and murderers, wasn’t it?” With that, he stepped out onto the laneway and turned back towards the village.

Richard closed the front door, went upstairs, and stood by the front window watching the policeman move slowly back across the bridge to the village, glancing once at the water as if to satisfy himself that there was insufficient depth for a man to drown. Richard felt again the cold shiver in his back and a chill across his face as he remembered the face of the man who’d drowned; the soldier whose photograph he’d just seen could be any one of a thousand men. Richard was certain he’d not seen the man before, and yet, how could he be sure?

And the inspector had called it murder. And with the hint of a threat in his voice when he’d said it. Murder. The newspaper, that Doyle had read must have hinted at foul play, too. Richard had lied about Jane Cresswell’s visit; was that what was troubling him now? The policeman didn’t believe him, but might suspect he was trying to protect a young woman’s reputation—or his own. Surely, Bannister didn’t think he had anything to do with this man’s death. And yet Doyle had. And Ian Foxley in Ely had said as much. And

they only had the newspaper account to judge it by. So all this could be the work of an overzealous reporter in Cambridge.

Richard watched until the inspector disappeared around the bend in the village street and then crossed to the drinks cabinet. His hands were shaking and his breath was heavy in his chest as he poured himself a generous glass of brandy. He gulped the first mouthful and waited as the warmth of it travelled through his body. He checked his watch; half-past-eleven, very early for drinking but he threw back the remaining liquid and stood and waited for the feeling of panic to pass. The inspector's visit had unnerved him and yet, he had no reason to fear the law. He hadn't killed the poor man whose body had floated into the sluice at Broughton Mill. But he *had* lied about Jane's visit. What else could he have done? He thought back to the policeman's first visit. What had been asked and what exactly had he said?

He shook his head and poured a second glass of brandy before slumping into the old leather armchair. He stared into his glass for several minutes; something else was troubling him but he couldn't think what it was. Doyle, he thought. What was he doing? And why hadn't he been in touch after he'd left messages for him?

Chapter Ten

The rain had eased to a slight drizzle by the time Angus Frobisher's train arrived back in Cambridge. The rain did not bother him: it was the chill of the air that caused his joints to ache and set off the gout in his left foot. He cursed it now as another complication he had no need of in this cold, unwelcoming country.

Three days in Yorkshire had been particularly bitter, and it wasn't even winter yet, not even the heart of autumn. But this wind seemed colder than anything back home in Australia. And the people up in Yorkshire, what a strange lot they had been. Something in their nature—and here he suspected it might be the damnable weather they suffered—made them wary, slow to trust although outwardly warm to his approaches. And why not? He'd made his deal and it would benefit them all, the woolgrowers he represented and the mill owners of Bradford. Now he could move beyond the haggling to the details of shipping from Australia and profit sharing. He'd signed the contracts, shaken hands with the chairmen of the four grandest mills in Yorkshire—probably the most productive in the world—and been driven back to the station in a Rolls Royce motorcar.

He'd been impressed with Bradford, but he was glad to be back in Cambridge if only for another week. A chance to catch up with Alistair. This was his first visit to England and most of the farmers in his consortium, most of the men he knew in the state of Western Australia, had never been here, unless, that is, they were part of Monash's famous Third Division who spent the long summer of 1916 on Salisbury Plain.

Standing under the awning at the exit to the railway station he looked forward to spending some time with his son. The university was on holidays—or whatever fancy name they gave it—but young

Alistair like many expatriate students had chosen to stay around, and Angus hoped the two of them could get away and see a bit of the country. Alistair was a bright lad, a scholarship boy, took after his late mother, and Angus Frobisher would make the effort to get along with him as best he could. It would only be a week. He owed it to his wife's memory, so he'd start by taking the lad out to dinner this evening. But first, he'd return to his hotel and soak in a hot bath; wash away the industrial grime of the last three days. Then he'd call round to the college for Alistair. The coming week might not be a pleasure but he saw it as a duty and Angus Frobisher had never been a man to shirk his duty.

Turning the collar of his coat up against the biting wind and picking up his case, he limped out into the light rain and turned towards Hills Road and his hotel. He'd barely gone two hundred yards—near the open ground of Parkers Piece—when he saw the man. Tall and heavy set among these short British folks, weathered face, fair hair blowing across his forehead. The man wore a tweed jacket and moleskin pants. Something about the stride of the man as he moved along the pavement, made Angus Frobisher think that he was a fellow Australian. Almost as soon as it crossed his mind, Angus dismissed the thought. This country might have been teeming with Australian diggers only ten years ago, but he was not likely to meet any of his countrymen here now.

It wasn't until an hour later, with the hot steam rising around him and a half-finished glass of finest whisky on the footstool beside the bath, when the recollection came to him. Even then, common sense told him it could not be so, but he had the growing feeling, as he relaxed in the hot water, that the man was not just a fellow Australian but that he knew who it was. The build of him; the way he walked. He reached for his whisky and took a long slow sip

enjoying the way the heat of it sank through him. He closed his eyes and recalled the scene from an hour before, the narrow street with the ancient stonework, a college wall hard against the pavement edge. He felt certain now, he knew the man. Yet it couldn't be. What would a man like that be doing here in Cambridge? Run off to Queensland, most people had said at the time. Off to the bush where there was no law, where no one would ever find him. And good riddance, Angus Frobisher had thought at the time. He sat up in the bath and the hot water streamed off his chest. He cursed himself for not paying much attention to the story when it happened; his late wife would have kept him informed, gossip around the town, local press reports. Even so, he remembered enough of the tale to be sure of his facts. His own family knew the Hamilton's well enough. And he'd seen the lad, too, not this Sixsmith man that she married after her parents died, but the other man, the one who came home from the war. What was his name? He'd have to ask Alistair; he'd remember. Sally Hamilton, that was her name, married a chap known locally as Bull, but he'd never come home from the war. Angus Frobisher stood up and reached for the towel. It was probably nothing, but he'd have to talk to his son about it and get the facts straight. Might be worth reporting to the local police here in Cambridge, although what they'd do with a two-year-old murder, he wasn't sure.

After the waiter had taken their order, Alistair asked how the negotiations had gone in Bradford.

"All went well," Angus muttered in reply. "Very well, I should say. The consortium will have the rights to sell to the four mills for a period of five years. Over forty-thousand bales a year; that should certainly be sufficient to establish the fine quality of our product."

The younger Frobisher nodded as he studied his menu, hoping his father was not about to begin one of his interminable lectures on Australian sheep and the machinations of the wool trade.

“There was something else I wanted to talk to you about though, Alistair.” The father tapped at the table edge with one finger. “I saw someone today and I’m not sure what to make of it.”

“In Yorkshire?”

“Here in Cambridge. You remember that murder in Waterford. I only ever saw the chap once but I’m certain it was him.”

“Sixsmith?”

“No, not the husband.” The old man’s voice rose above its customary growl as if his temper were about to flare. “The other one—the soldier.” His cheeks reddened. He’d wanted to use the word ‘lover’. “Damned sure it was him, the murderer, and not a mile from where we are now.”

“Accused,” said Alistair a little sharper than he’d intended.

“Doyle was only ever accused of killing the woman.”

“Doyle! That was it.” He stopped tapping the table and put his menu flat on top of his empty plate. “Roustabout of some kind. Mended stuff and put up sheds and such.”

Alistair nodded. He’d only been seventeen at the time and studying hard for his scholarship, but the murder of Sally Sixsmith had been big news even up in Perth where he’d been at school.

“Sally Sixsmith,” he said, half to himself.

“Yes, she was a Hamilton from Valley Farm. Your mother knew them well, we both did really. But she made a bad marriage and an even worse choice later.” He flushed red again. “This fellow Doyle comes along and slaughters her like a beef cow.”

“Doyle claimed there was a brother—Bull Sixsmith’s brother, that is—name of Bing or some such. Said it was the brother who killed Sally.”

“He’d probably say anything wouldn’t he?” The father fought to remember the details. “But wasn’t this Bing character killed in the war? Both of the Sixsmith brothers as I recall.”

“You could be right, father, Bull was certainly dead and buried, but Bing was missing presumed dead, according to the newspapers.”

“Ha! That simply meant killed but never located. Millions like that over there, blown up, buried alive.” Angus Frobisher gave a shake of his head. “No-one really believes the ‘missing’ bit. You mark my words, missing believed dead means dead. Just that.”

As the waiter returned to the table to take their order Angus Frobisher shifted his left leg awkwardly to relieve the darting pain in his great toe and cursed it silently. Neither man spoke for several minutes as the waiter exchanged the cutlery and plates to suit the fish entree they’d ordered. “Thing is, Alistair, I’m pretty sure Doyle’s the man I saw today,” he snapped. “The question is, what I am supposed to do now?”

“If you’re certain it was Doyle, then you must take it to the local police. They’ll know what to do about it.”

Angus Frobisher knew that his son was right, but he was now in so much pain he wanted nothing further to do with the matter and wished himself back home in Waterford, overseeing his sheep; home, where his own doctor might prescribe some form of pain relief for his foot. “I’ll talk to the local police tomorrow,” he said grimly.

Inspector Bannister had not slept particularly well and was more than a little irritable. It was not an unusual start to his routine to feel that way. The damned war had been over for six years, the police force should've recovered by now. So many young policemen went off to the front and either failed to return or came back incapable of ever walking the beat again. And the weather wasn't helping. Cambridge was draped in low cloud and a constant threat of drizzle. He stood for a long time warming his hands on a mug of tea and staring out of his office window at the damp roadway below. People came and went across his field of vision but he registered few of them: the shifty or the ostentatious, those in a particular rush and those with no apparent target to their journey or to their pathetic lives. However, he did notice the two men who came along the footpath rugged up to the ears as if the winter had suddenly descended upon their heads. The older man limping badly and scowling; the younger man looked like a student, except there were few enough of those in town at this time of the year. Bannister watched as they crossed the road and disappeared into the building below him.

It was almost twenty minutes later that his sergeant came to tell him that two men had something to report about a murder. The mention of serious crime brought the inspector back to life as only murder could. The body at the weir. His investigations, he had to admit, had not gone very far on that subject in the last three weeks. This might be important. He looked at the paperwork stacked in two piles on the edge of his desk and felt a sudden sense of relief at being called away from his office, if only for a few minutes.

"They said it was about murder, did they?"

“They did, sir.” His sergeant was halfway out of the door and crossing the larger office on his way to the staircase leading to the reception desk and interview room on the ground floor.

Bannister introduced himself and the older man shook his hand with a painfully firm grip. The young man merely smiled back at him as he waved for them to be seated again. He pulled over a chair for himself and sat opposite the two men, leaving the sergeant hovering by the door.

“My sergeant tells me you have information about a murder,” he began.

“My father thinks he saw the man who did it,” the student said in a voice that seemed too high pitched even for his thin frame and drawn features.

“Let’s begin at the beginning then, shall we? You’re not locals are you?”

“Crikey no,” it was the older man now, “Australia. We’re from Western Australia.” He spoke as if Western Australia should mean something but the inspector merely shrugged.

“And what brings you to Cambridge? Not exactly tourist weather this.”

“Wool, inspector. I represent a group of woolgrowers and I’m here to negotiate the sale of our wool. To the mills.”

“Mills, you say. Here in Cambridge?”

“No, no, not here. In Bradford, I’ve been up to Yorkshire talking with the mill owners there. Made a reasonable bargain even if I do say so myself.”

“Yorkshire then,” said the inspector with a sigh. “And what brings you to our town, Mr ...?”

“Frobisher, Angus Frobisher. And this is my son, Alistair. He’s here on a scholarship.”

"I see," said Bannister, waiting for the man to continue. When it was obvious that he wasn't going to, the policeman prompted him further. "And you saw something at the weir by Broughton Mill, did you? The body in the water, perhaps, or did your son say something about seeing the man who did it?"

"I don't know anything about a weir, Inspector, I simply wanted to report . . ." he turned and looked at his son as if searching for the right words.

"My father wasn't sure there was anything you could do from this end," the younger man began. "And after this length of time."

"You said that your father thought he saw the man who did it." Bannister addressed the question to Alistair Frobisher now. "Where exactly was that?"

The old man shuffled uncomfortably in his chair. "Here in Cambridge," he said. "Afraid I don't know the place very well, but I'd just left the railway station and was heading to my hotel when I saw him across the street. Can't be certain, of course. It was raining and—"

"May I ask what makes you think that this man you saw was the murderer?"

"He bludgeoned her to death, Inspector," said the younger man. "Eighteen months or more ago. Terrible crime. Our family knew the woman's family. It's a small place. We knew the chap too. That's how my father was able to recognize him."

"Let me get this straight." The inspector's mood, which only a few minutes ago had lifted, descended again with darker shadows than ever before. "You're not talking about the body in the water near Broughton Mill, are you?"

"My father is talking about a murder in Western Australia," the young man replied. "Woman called Sally Sixsmith was beaten to

death and the man they suspected of her murder is the man my father thinks he saw yesterday here in Cambridge.”

“Thinks he saw!” The inspector stood and glared at the father. “Thinks he saw a man suspected of murder thousands of miles away from here. And what did you think I could do about it?”

The father turned to his son and muttered, “I told you it was pointless, the police here have got enough to do without this. But I’m pretty certain it was him, it was Doyle I tell you.”

Inspector Bannister was making his way to the door. He knew the two Australian’s meant well, but he had one unsolved murder on his desk already and had no need of another. He was about to instruct the sergeant to take their statements when he stopped.

“Doyle, you say?” The inspector turned back to his chair but remained standing, placing both hands flat on the table. “You have some evidence that Doyle did this crime. And what was that you said about bludgeoned to death? I’m not exactly following you.” He sank back into his seat and the father and son exchanged glances. “You’d best start at the beginning. Sergeant, get me some paper and a pen, and don’t take all day about it.”

The front bar of the Charleston Arms on Park Terrace was almost empty as Inspector Roland Bannister slipped in from the cold street and shrugged off his coat. He scanned the room; a barman drying glasses behind the bar and an elderly patron hugging a pint pot of ale in the near corner beneath the grimy windows, and the smarter man with a wine glass apparently untouched on the table in front of him. The two men smiled at each other but the seated man made no move towards the bar with offers to buy the newcomer a drink. So

Bannister waved his order for a pint of beer at the barman who put down his cloth and began to draw it from the barrel.

He took it and sipped froth from the rim before turning back to greet the other man. "Rodger," he said, approaching the table with his drink, "I really don't know why you frequent such places," he added, lowering his voice so as not to offend the barman who had gone back to twisting his drying cloth and ignoring them. The old man in the opposite corner glanced across but otherwise showed no interest in them. Like the barman, he knew well enough who they were. Most old hands in the city knew Inspector Roland Bannister and Mr Rodger Manningham, editor of the local newspaper.

As he settled his thin frame onto the hard wooden seat, he wished Manningham had chosen to meet at his club, somewhere soft and comfortable. But it was Bannister himself who'd rung to arrange the meeting so perhaps Rodger Manningham was making a point in choosing this shabby old pub. They'd been at school together, both smart, observant lads who did well enough academically, but there the similarity ended. Bannister had become a police cadet and rapidly shown his aptitude for investigative work. Manningham, whose father was an academic before the war, had gone to Downing and finally washed up in Fleet Street as a crime reporter of some note. He'd served briefly in an administrative capacity with the navy during the war and come back, not to the high life of London crime reporting but to a senior position here in Cambridge where both men had been born and raised.

"How have you been keeping, Bannister?" he asked in that deep, rumbling, baritone voice that reverberated around the college chapels nightly during the annual season of Handel recitals.

"Well enough, Rodger, well enough." The greetings, though cordial, held a hint of the mutual dislike between the two men.

“And what exactly are we doing here, Bannister?”

“Interesting case. Information which may be of value to both of us.” The inspector took his pipe from his pocket and they sat for several minutes without speaking while he filled the bowl from a battered leather tobacco pouch and tamped it down with his thumb. Finally, while searching his pockets for a box of Vestas he continued: “Concerns the Walters’ murder,” he said, striking the match and puffing vigorously for a few seconds. “You still have those connections in Australia, Rodger?”

“Australia? I suppose I have.” The newspaperman knew that dealing with Roland Bannister required patience; he’d get to the point in his own good time. “Sydney, Adelaide or Perth?”

“The west, Rodger. A crime about eighteen months ago. Country town, but pretty big news in Perth I shouldn’t wonder. Woman by the name of Sally Sixsmith nee Hamilton. Bludgeoned to death in her own house. Farm property. Nasty business by all accounts.”

“And this relates to?”

Bannister puffed on his pipe so vigorously that for a moment his head was wreathed in smoke. “Man called Doyle,” he said. “Seen in Stenbridge shortly after the time of the Walters’ murder, visiting an army friend. Same man could be up for both crimes.”

“Interesting as it sounds, Bannister, I should remind you that I am no longer a circuit reporter doing the crime scenes and law courts. I am editor of one of the finest provincial newspapers in this country. Simply don’t have time to go chasing down my own stories these days.” Nonetheless, Rodger Manningham’s old antennae were twitching somewhere in his head and he knew better than to ignore them. The local press had paid considerable attention to the recent murder of Mr Oliver Walters. His own reporters assigned to the case would welcome any inside leads the inspector might throw their

way. And yes, he felt certain that his old contacts at The West Australian in Perth were still active. "What do your own sources tell you, old chap?"

The inspector shrugged. "Naturally I've put in an official request for information from the Australian police, but it probably hasn't got any further than my boss's desk yet. God knows how long it will be before I hear back. And how useful the information will be is anybody's guess. No, Rodger, I have to admit it, your people would be much more efficient and, shall we say, forthcoming with information."

"And in return, of course, my own paper will have certain privileges others may only dream of?"

"If it's within my power, naturally, Rodger." The inspector raised his glass in a form of salute to the agreement and took a long slow draft of his beer. I'll find this Doyle, he thought to himself, and when I do, I'll have him and his friend Frampton, war heroes or not.

Chapter Eleven

This time Richard didn't see the inspector coming. He was upstairs in the study, sitting with his eyes closed trying to recall what he'd read in the notebooks. Before Jane had rushed back to work he'd read a few interesting sections but only now, in the peace and quiet of Sadec House, could he sit and remember what he'd read and try to make sense of it all.

The first book covered the Australian battalion's early days and some stuff on the division's arrival in France. But it was the entries around the summer of 1916 that interested Richard—and Jane Cresswell—most. She'd pointed out a section simply dated "mid-May, 1916", the first long section in the book. "It's the first time Pickering mentions Corporal Doyle," she'd explained.

Mid-May 1916:

Got myself a cushy number this week. Detailed to take a small group of Hun prisoners back to Bertangles. Just twenty of them, and me and a corporal to see them delivered safe and sound. Danny Doyle from B Company was the corporal on this lark. He's an all right sort for an NCO and no mistake. After he looks this mob of Germans over, like they was a flock of sheep herded in for the shearing he orders me to round them up and off we trots moving west from Albert. Any time I'm moving in that direction is fine by me because it's away from the fighting. We should've made it there and back in one day but we was late setting off, so after three hours marchin' Corporal Doyle he says we'll sleep over beside the road, taking turns at watching the flock, so to speak. We was maybe fifteen miles from our support trenches and fifteen miles from the place we're taking these Germans. Very strange thing happened here though. We moved off the road and into a field to brew up and get some sleep. Doyle mooched about reconnoitring the area, maybe looking for some disused farm building

where we might shelter, but there weren't none. Only he finds some bodies over the other side of the road. Mostly Germans. Looks like a party of POW's like ours. Unarmed and all. One English soldier dead there too. Then we finds one of the Hun is not dead yet. So Doyle hoists this bugger on his back and sets off back to a farmhouse about a mile back and way over to the north of the road. Reckons these Frenchies will look after the German and send him back to prison when he's stronger. Bit daft if you ask me. But we couldn't let him mix in with our lot. Not in his condition. Doyle reckons it was the Pommy guards what shot them. Nasty business if they did, even if they was Huns. And the dead Englishman? I dunno. Maybe one of them got to him, maybe one of his own. Doyle reckons this group had left the front line the night before we did with three Pommy escorts including a sergeant. I suppose it's simple enough to lose the prisoners and destroy the paperwork. Who's going to be asking questions? Not sure whether I care too much myself. Only, like Doyle says, there's something stinking about this whole affair. I took the name of the English lad what was shot across the lane—Private Richard Higgins—but I left his identity tags with the body. Let someone else sort it out.

Doyle come back an hour later with eggs and meat and says the German chap was dealt with and the folks at the farm will see him all right. He says we should put it out of our minds, the killing. Too puzzling to be sorted by the likes of us.

Richard had sat at the table in the tea-rooms and read this entry carefully.

“How many notebooks in total?” he asked.

“Four.”

“You do realise Pickering was breaking the law? It was against King’s Regulations to keep any form of diary.”

“Can’t prosecute him now, can they?” Then she added, “I think that my brother was the third member of that escort party; there’s an entry later. Something really nasty happened and Private Higgins was shot, maybe by a German but maybe by the sergeant—he’s mentioned again, too, a few weeks later and his name’s Sergeant Fisher, George Fisher.”

“Jane, this sort of thing happened all the time. Someone with a grudge killing unarmed prisoners. I’m sure the Germans did it too.”

Not long after this Jane had rushed off taking the notebooks with her. What he’d read could hardly be connected to Jane’s brother and his execution.

Now, six days later he was still trying to make sense of it. He took a sheet of paper and unscrewed the cap of his pen to make some notes. What did he know so far? *Private Higgins*, he wrote and stared at it for several minutes. *Danny Doyle. French farmhouse. George Fisher. Sergeant.* It was some minutes before the name Fisher started to ring a faint bell in his memory. It was the name on Private Cresswell’s charge sheet! Pity he hadn’t been able to find Danny; he’d been there and maybe he could cast some light on things. *Charge sheet. Tell Jane?* Was it important, and how did it relate to her brother? He stood up, re-capped his pen and struck his fist into the palm of his hand in frustration and looked across at the drinks cabinet but decided against it.

There was a knock at the front door. He went to the stairs leaned forward to see the dark shadow in the frosted glass panel, the shape of a man’s trilby hat. Danny Doyle, he thought, responding to the messages he’d left for him.

Richard opened the door and was confronted by the back of Inspector Bannister's raincoat. As the policeman turned, Richard tried to hide his surprise. "Why, Inspector, so soon," he said, lightly, but, in truth he did not relish a further interview with Bannister at all.

"Thought I might have to come back," the inspector said, waving a hand towards the garden. "Still not done anything about those roses, I see."

"Didn't realise it was a crime, Inspector."

"Overgrown gardens and aphids on roses, sir, no, not a crime exactly—but murder is. Oh yes, murder is a crime and that's what keeps bringing me back, sir. Mind if we step inside, this wind is getting a little chill."

The last thing Richard wanted was this policeman in his house for a third time but it seemed he had no choice; the damned man had a foot over the threshold already. Richard stepped back and let him pass before closing the door behind them both.

Once upstairs the policeman walked across to the window overlooking the rear garden and stood for a moment taking in the view. Richard stepped behind the big desk and pushed the note he'd just made under a pile of typescripts.

"Shame about those two hawthorns, isn't it?" The inspector said turning back to face Richard. When Richard did not reply, he continued: "Can't see the footbridge over the canal from here then."

"Can't even see the canal, Inspector," said Richard growing irritable. "This little stretch of the river, as you know, curves round out of sight behind those bushes, which, as you say, obscure the view. Then the canal has been cut east-west in the direction of Melthorpe, but can't be seen."

“Quite so, sir. And as we agreed, the body could hardly have been dropped from the bridge here in this village: too shallow. So, as you told me before, you couldn’t know about the body unless—”

“The body?” Richard interrupted with a scowl, although he knew exactly what Bannister was talking about.

“The body of Mr Oliver Walters, sir,” the inspector replied sharply. “Found floating by the weir at Broughton Mill. Just recapping a few things, you see, sir. Mainly I’ve come about your friend Mr Daniel Doyle.” He paused and let the name hang in the air between them.

“Haven’t seen him lately, Inspector.”

“Seems you’re not the only one, Mr Frampton. Seems your friend Doyle has gone to ground somewhere. Don’t suppose you would know his current whereabouts?”

“We’re really not close, Inspector.”

“No, no, quite so, sir, as you told me last time I was here. Which might explain why his visit to Sadec House had slipped your mind, perhaps. Only, when my men went looking for Mr Doyle yesterday, over another matter, they learned that someone else had been looking for him a few days ago. Someone fitting your description, sir. Left messages with the director of works and the foreman of the gardens crew as how he’d be waiting in the tearooms on Trumpington Street. English gent, they said, raised suspicions, you see. Man like you asking after a working chap like Doyle. Want to tell me what that was all about?”

Richard was taken aback by the policeman’s question and his first thought was to lie and deny that he’d even been to Cambridge in the last week. But lying had got him nowhere on the previous occasions and now the inspector would see straight through any untruth he tried.

“All right, Inspector, I was in Cambridge a few days ago, on business, as it happens. And I felt it would be nice to catch up with an old colleague from the war. Just a cup of tea and a chat, you understand.”

“Can’t say as I do, Mr Frampton. You tell me that Mr Doyle and you are not close friends and yet he comes out here to the back of nowhere to pay you a call and then you set up a meeting at these tearooms. Bit of a contradiction, if you see my meaning, sir.”

“Not at all.” Richard turned away to avoid the inspector’s stare. “There’s a bond, your see, Inspector, between those of us who were there.”

“Yes, yes, sir, I’ve heard all about this bond between old soldiers. Quite frankly, I think it’s a lot of old rot. Some of us had to go through much the same back here, without half our staff; blackouts and Zeppelin raids and such, so I can’t understand this bond at all.”

Richard felt his anger rising at the inspector’s tone, as if the honour of those who fought had been impugned. What could this man ever hope to know about the trenches?

“You’re quite right, Inspector,” he snapped. “You can’t understand. You’ll never understand.”

“So back to my dilemma, Mr Frampton,” Bannister continued in a softer tone as if his previous comments had achieved their intended aim. “You say you were not close to this man, and yet you tell me there was a bond of some sort which, as you say, I can’t possibly understand. Would that bond stretch to hiding a murderer, Mr Frampton, that’s what I have to ask myself.”

“Murderer! You can’t seriously think that Doyle would kill someone. What possible connection could Danny Doyle have with your Mr Walters?”

“Wouldn’t be the first time, would it, Mr Frampton?”

Richard assumed he was referring to the war. "We all killed people in the war, Inspector, if that's what you're getting at. But we haven't all come home to commit murder. Your streets would be flowing with blood if every man from the Western Front went about murdering people."

"Quite so, sir." Bannister raised his eyebrows. "Only I wasn't referring to the war, was I, sir? Your friend would've told you about his spot of bother with a Mrs Sixsmith."

Richard could not prevent the look of confusion that must have crossed his face. He recovered almost immediately but not before the policeman had taken it all in.

"As I thought, sir," he said, rubbing the palms of his hands together. "Now, perhaps we can discuss how much you really know."

Richard hesitated. He considered denying everything, but he couldn't disguise the fact that hearing the name Sixsmith had been a shock. Doyle had said nothing about trouble. *Things didn't work out*, he'd said. *Decided to take myself out of the picture*. Richard began to suspect there might be more to his friend Danny Doyle than he'd previously thought.

He looked up to find the inspector studying him closely.

"Doyle mentioned this woman," he began quietly, his mind racing through the possibilities. "He'd known her before the war, and he went back to live with her after. She was, I understand, a widow."

"That right?" The inspector asked. "Don't suppose you know the husband, then. The late Mr Sixsmith."

"Me? No. Didn't have much to do with the Australians." What had Doyle said about Sixsmith? He'd been in a different battalion, different division even. Not much point in telling the inspector all that; it would mean nothing to him.

“Nasty piece of work, by all accounts,” Bannister added quietly as if prompting Richard to reveal more.

“And whose accounts would those be exactly, Inspector?”

Bannister sucked his cheeks in and thought for a moment then shrugged slightly. “Fellow who reported seeing your friend this week in Cambridge, sir. Sheep farmer and his son, although the son tells me he hasn’t seen Mr Doyle since the incident in Australia almost two years ago.” He coughed lightly, took a packet of lozenges out of his pocket, and popped one into his mouth. “The father seems fairly confident he saw him, though and we know he’s right, don’t we Mr Frampton?”

“I am not Doyle’s keeper, Inspector. Where he lives and what he does are no concern of mine.”

“Referring to his unusual lifestyle, are you Mr Frampton?”

“What the hell’s that supposed to mean?”

“Not married yourself, sir,” said the policeman calmly. “Like Mr Doyle,” he added.

“I don’t know what you’re implying there Inspector, but if it’s what I think then you’re very much mistaken and I find your remarks very offensive.”

“Now then, sir. No need for that. I’m sure it’s nothing your sort wouldn’t have seen plenty of at school. And in the army, I don’t doubt.”

“I think it’s time you left, Inspector.”

“Perhaps you’re right, sir. Only you are aware of Mr Doyle’s living arrangements, are you not?”

“I think you’ll find, Inspector, that whatever it is on your mind concerning Danny Doyle’s lifestyle or his involvement with Sally Sixsmith, you’re entirely mistaken. And I shall expect an apology on the matter when you discover the truth.”

“Mr Doyle’s lifestyle is of no interest to me, Mr Frampton. Murder, however, is. If, as my informant tells me, Doyle is responsible for the murder of Mrs Sixsmith, then he may well be responsible for the murder of Mr Oliver Walters. And that particular crime happened in my bailiwick Mr Frampton, and I intend to get to the bottom of it. And you have certainly not heard the last of this matter.”

With that the inspector turned and set off down the stairs.

“Are you telling me that Sally Sixsmith was murdered, Inspector?” He called after him as the policeman reached the front door. He turned and gave Richard a look that could only be described as amused, but, ignoring the question, he said, “And then, of course, there’s the matter of the young woman who came here one evening on or around the time when Mr Walters met his untimely end, isn’t there Mr Frampton? Do hope there aren’t any more bodies floating about in that canal.”

Richard opened his mouth to speak but no words came. The inspector was referring to Jane Cresswell and he’d denied ever meeting her. Any suggestion that she’d been here to Sadec House, now, would only cause more trouble. And what possible connection could her visit have with the murder of Oliver Walters? If the inspector thought Jane was dead too, then Richard could have set his mind at rest on that score—but not without admitting that he’d seen her. He’d seen her three times, as it happened. He composed his features slowly and stared back at the policeman without saying anything.

Bannister seemed satisfied with the reaction he’d got and smiled at him. “Goodbye, Mr Frampton. We both know there’s something you’re not telling me, but it will come out in good time.”

Chapter Twelve

This time Jane arrived first at the little café on Trumpington Street. He was only a few minutes late, but because it had been over a week, she imagined he might have forgotten their arrangement. And, as it was Sunday, perhaps he was unable to come.

Then he was there in the doorway looking for her. Nervously she raised a hand, he spotted her and smiled.

"Sorry I'm late," he said. "Thought I'd call in on a friend from the publishers and ask about Doyle."

"Is he with you? It would be good if he could take a look at the diaries, don't you think?"

Richard settled into a chair facing her and nodded for the waitress. Jane studied his face; she thought she detected signs of concern, tiny frown lines in the otherwise smooth skin around his eyes. She waited for him to speak but he looked back her and the colour in his eyes deepened.

"Well?" She ventured, after a few seconds of awkward silence. "Will Mr Doyle be joining us?"

"Doyle? No, I'm afraid he won't be here today." He seemed distracted as if there was more he wanted to say so she waited. *Men aren't like us, girl. They find it hard sometimes to say what they want to say. You have to give 'em time. They'll spit it out eventually.*

"I'm not sure where to start exactly," he muttered. "The police have been to see me," he said, looking back into her face.

"I know," she said. "I read the papers. About the body at Broughton Mill—"

He raised a hand to stop her and said, "No, I mean they've been again—a third time actually. Doyle is missing. They think I know where he is but . . . it's some story about a woman back in

Australia. They weren't too clear, but it seems a woman Doyle knew was murdered and they think it might be him, the murderer, that is."

"But that's ridiculous."

"Is it? Yes, I suppose it is. At least that's what I thought too, only, he's certainly gone missing and what with that and this other business of the body that the police are enquiring about, it all seems—"

"But it can't have anything to do with that." Jane felt his confusion. "Mr Doyle seems very nice. I'm quite sure he couldn't have anything to do with anyone's death."

"I'm not sure what the police think," Richard began. "But if they think I'm connected with that unfortunate man in the canal, and I fear that is in the inspector's mind, then they could be thinking anything, couldn't they."

Jane almost gasped out loud. This was the first time she'd heard any such suggestion. She wished she'd paid more attention to the newspaper report. Something stuck in her brain so she resorted to her usual trick of drawing in her breath and holding it as long as she could. When she finally released her breath and raised her eyes, they met his across the table.

She raised her bag with the notebooks in and hugged it to her chest. How long did she have before her mother discovered that she'd taken them? What could she hope to learn about her brother's death that wasn't already perfectly clear? And yet, something in the notebooks, something that struck their author, this Australian soldier, Sam Pickering, as suspicious, kept pushing her on. Her brother had been executed by firing squad. She could not imagine how awful that must be. He had been a coward, they'd said, or worse, a traitor. But the brother she remembered from her

childhood wasn't like that. And something in the diaries must explain it. Why else would Sam Pickering have gone to the trouble of having his wife send them all the way to England? Sam Pickering was dead now, but he'd seen something, or heard something, if only he'd made it clearer in the notebooks—but Mr Doyle might know what it was. But now he was missing. Running from the police, perhaps.

"A friend at the publishing house I work for gave me the name of the Clerk of Works," Richard said. "And his address—it's Sunday, he won't be at work today. But he drinks in the—"

"And he'll know where Mr Doyle is?"

"Perhaps. If he's willing to tell me. I thought I could call round there after we've finished here." He waved a hand loosely in the direction of the bag on her lap.

"We could go together," Jane said, a little too quickly. "Then Mr Doyle could read through the bits I'm concerned about and tell me what actually went on."

"Miss Cresswell, er, Jane, I don't mean to be negative about this, but you do realise that no one can set things straight. Your brother . . . there were a lot of men, things happened at the front. Some very good men. What I'm saying is, don't get your hopes up. Obviously, I haven't read all the notebooks but what I saw last week didn't give me any reason to believe that there was a miscarriage of justice or anything. Although, justice on the front line was a bit rough and ready. I can only assure you that my uncle was a fair man and I'm sure he would never—"

"Captain R Frampton, your uncle, helped send my brother to his death. Fair or not I must know the truth."

“Perhaps your mother knows best.” He sighed. “Maybe she’s right. You should let it drop and get on with your own life. The war’s been over for six years. We’ve all been—”

“Shall we go?” Jane stood abruptly, angry red patches flushing her cheeks. “If Mr Doyle can’t help me, and your uncle, I’m sorry, but your uncle is dead. I may never know the truth but I have to try, you see that, don’t you?”

Richard still felt the force of her words as they drove through the quiet streets of Cambridge heading south on Hills Road where, he’d been told, the man in charge of public works and municipal gardens lived. Of course, he understood how Jane felt. He’d agreed to help her again and he’d do what he could. But he still felt there was no point in it. He’d try to find Danny Doyle for her, but if Inspector Bannister and his team couldn’t find him what chance did they have?

“You think I’m foolish, don’t you?” she said, over the noise of the car’s engine and he felt her turned towards him waiting for an answer.

“Misguided, perhaps.”

“Oh, Hell!” she said. “Why does everyone insist on treating me like a little girl?”

He took his eyes off the road and looked at her. She was drawing her mouth into a circle as if about to whistle and her nostrils were flared. She was angry with him and that made him uncomfortable. He wanted to say something, anything, but he had no wish to annoy her further. He didn’t know why that mattered so much to him, but it did.

They eventually found the Clerk of Works in the public house at the corner of Bateman Street and two pints of heavy black stout

proved enough to buy the information that Doyle was living in the village of Fenley not three miles from the city.

“Police have been round asking after ‘im,” he added. “Reckon that fellow he’s with won’t be too welcoming of strangers asking questions.”

The words preyed on Richard’s mind as they drove out of town. Inspector Bannister, too, had said something about Danny Doyle’s lifestyle. Richard knew what he was suggesting but he’d paid little heed to it at the time. Only now it had come up again. The inspector was right, of course; he’d seen boys at school who were attracted to each other, and plenty of men in the army must have found solace with mates. But that was different. Those were worlds without women: boys at school, soldiers in war. Richard could see no reason for such behaviour now. And, God, it was illegal—whether the law always saw fit to prosecute or not—it was a serious offence.

They found the place easily enough; two small houses with a common front garden and shared gate. They approached the one on the left and knocked. The man who eventually opened the door was not Doyle, but a short, slim man with wiry red hair and white skin. And he didn’t look glad to see them.

Before Richard could say a word, the man said, “You’ll get no more from me,” and stepped back into the dark hallway as if to close the door. “If you want to know anything ask the police or that colleague of yours at the newspaper.”

“I’m a friend of Danny’s,” Richard said quickly, as the gap in the door narrowed. “My name’s Frampton, Richard Frampton, I don’t suppose we could have a word. Is he here?”

The door opened again and the man peered back at him with a different expression in his grey-blue eyes.

“So you’re Frampton are you?” he said, grudgingly. “And who’s this? She from the newspapers?”

Jane stepped forward. “Jane,” she said. “Jane Cresswell. I’m a friend of Danny’s too.”

“You the one with the diaries?”

“The notebooks? Yes, I’ve got them and I was hoping that Danny could help explain a few things.”

“He ain’t here,” the man looked her up and down but not in a threatening way. Satisfied, he sighed and opened the door wide for them to follow him inside. “You’d best come in off the front, never know what eyes is watching these days.”

He led them to a small sitting room and offered them tea. Richard, surprised at the change in the man’s demeanour, could only stammer his acceptance and smile quickly at Jane. The man disappeared into a small kitchen and they could hear him quietly setting out cups and making a pot of tea. Richard looked about him at the soft furnishings of the room and the remarkable domesticity of it.

“You’re lucky,” the man said as he carried the tray of tea things back into the room. “Just made this cake and there’s no-one else to eat it. My name’s Joe Baker, incidentally, I live here with Danny.”

A small bell in Richard’s head now began to chime like a cathedral on Sunday morning. He tried to conjure a picture of Doyle living here in this house, sitting on this settee with its soft cushions and colourful rugs. Danny, living here with this man. Was that all it was? If, as the inspector had suggested, they were co-habiting then they were breaking the law, which would explain the man’s initial attitude towards them. He was not a particularly good-looking man in any conventional way: too slight of frame and pale of skin to be attractive to women, Richard felt.

“Danny didn’t want the police coming round here,” the man continued. “Nor I. People talk, you understand. We both work and if things reached the wrong ears then we’d not have jobs, you see.”

Richard nodded. He understood fully now but the thought still unsettled him.

“Do you work on the council, too, Mr Baker?”

“Me? No, that’s Danny’s area. I’m a waiter. I work in the restaurant at the City Hotel. I was at sea most of my life. Met Danny on one of my Australia trips. Sailed back with us a couple of years ago. Then he went off the France on his wild goose chase, I ‘spect you know about that, and I found a job here, he came and found me when he was ready.”

Richard said nothing. It was Jane who broke the silence.

“And he’s not here, you say?”

“No Miss. The police came round asking for him one day last week. He was at work but when I told him later, he got real nervous. He can be edgy, you know, Mr Frampton. The war, I suppose. We all suffered didn’t we? Only this time it was worse than ever. Then that press man come around asking questions about some woman in Australia. Next day Danny announced he was leaving town for a week or two.”

“And you haven’t seen him since?”

“Not seen him, no.” He sounded reluctant to say more and another silence fell between them as he poured three cups of tea, adding milk and passing sugar and a small plate of cake. “He wrote me though,” he said quietly. “Said I wasn’t to let anyone know where he was staying. But I ‘spect he meant the police and the newspapers. Don’t suppose he’d mind if I told you.”

The man fell silent again and stared at the carpet. Richard thought he’d changed his mind. “You know about Miss Cresswell

and the diaries,” Richard said. “We’re concerned for him, naturally. Miss Cresswell just wants to ask about the war.”

“Danny mentioned you two,” Baker said, his voice so soft they could hardly hear him. “Said you had some diaries belonged to an old mucker of his from the war. Said he didn’t think he could help. Maybe he doesn’t want to help.” Baker smiled at Jane to soften his words.

“Perhaps he’s right, Mr Baker.” Jane’s voice was low and warm. “I may never find what I’m looking for, and if I do, then I may not like it. But I shall not stop trying and your friend Danny Doyle is my best hope.”

Baker looked at her face for a long moment after she’d stopped speaking and she held his gaze steadfastly with her own. He’s weighing us up, thought Richard; still doesn’t know whether to trust us. Thinks we’ll shop Danny to the police. Murder is a serious offence after all, whether it happens in Australia or England. So is hiding a possible murderer. But this man, Joe Baker, did not believe Danny Doyle a murderer any more than Richard did. So he told him so.

“We don’t believe Danny Doyle has killed anyone, and neither do you.”

The man sighed again and, without taking his eyes off Jane, he said quietly, “Not an easy place to get to, though, I shouldn’t think. Danny’s stopping at a smallholding off Lambworth Lane out from Norwich. Take the turn towards Downham Market and Lambworth Lane is about a mile along. Can’t say any more ‘cause I’ve never been there. But Danny says he trusts the chap what farms there, another bloody Australian.” Then he turned smartly towards Richard and his words hardened into a warning: “If you should think of handing Danny to the inspector and his men then you’ll

have me to answer to, Mr Frampton. I may seem an easy target to the likes of you—a man who lives with another man—I know what you all think. But I’ve spent most of my life at sea and I’ve seen plenty of violence and learned it too, so just think on, one word to the police about this pig farm and I’ll be looking for you, mark my words I will.”

Richard was left in no doubt that he meant every word but he had no intention telling the police where Doyle was. But now, it seemed, he had two reasons for finding Doyle: getting some answers to Jane Cresswell’s problem, and trying to get Danny himself out of the mess he’d got himself into.

Chapter Thirteen

Baker had been right about one thing, the farm was not easy to find. Jane had located Lambworth Lane on the map in Richard's car; closer to Kings Lynn than Norwich, the lane ran for about a mile to the east side of the Great Ouse, then it split into what looked like two farm tracks. The car had come to a halt on a hummock of grass as the narrow wheels slid in the ruts left from the carts.

"We'll have to walk the rest of the way," Jane said, pointing to the track on the left. "Can't be far now. Not afraid of a little mud are you?"

Richard stiffened at her words.

"I'm sorry," she said, realising her mistake. He'd probably seen mud that killed men, swallowed horses, guns, and whole villages. "It must've been dreadful."

He joined her on the wet track. She moved closer to him and slipped her gloved hand through his arm. He wasn't sure who was supporting whom but it felt very comforting.

"That's far enough!"

The words came from the clump of trees to the right of the laneway and Jane, who had been looking down at her feet to avoid the muddy cart ruts, was startled by their suddenness. She gripped Richard's arm tighter and shrank back a little. Then she saw the twin barrels of a gun moving around the bole of a tree followed by a man's arm and finally a face. It wasn't Mr Doyle, she realised, but a short, stout man in a battered hat with a wide brim pulled low over his forehead.

"We're looking for Danny Doyle," Richard said, apparently unfazed by the weapon pointed at them. "We understand—"

"And who exactly is it who's looking for 'im?"

“My name’s Frampton, Richard Frampton. I’m a friend of his.”

“And who’s this?”

Jane had never had a gun pointed at her and when she opened her mouth to speak no words came out.

“This is Jane Cresswell,” Richard said, drawing the attention back to himself.

“She a reporter?”

“No, we’re not reporters.” As Richard spoke Jane felt her confidence coming back.

“Danny mentioned you,” the man said, stepping clear of the trees. “But he never said anything—”

“I’ve come to see if Mr Doyle can help me,” Jane said. “I have some notebooks that he—”

“Ah, yes, the diaries. He did mention the diaries. Pickering’s books ain’t they? Sam Pickering?”

“Mrs Pickering sent these to my mother,” Jane lifted the bag in front of her. “Mr Doyle is mentioned in them and I wondered . . . he was helping us. I mean, he might be able to explain some things to me.”

The man lowered the gun and stepped forward. “Edmund Connell,” he said, his tone more friendly now. “You was there too?” This question was directed at Richard who merely nodded.

“I was with Danny’s mob for most of the war,” he continued. “Knew Sam Pickering well enough. Not surprised about the notebooks. Always scribbling Sam was.”

“And Danny?” Richard asked.

“Danny? Oh, yes, he’s out the back, feeding the pigs. Nice to ‘ave another pair of ‘ands and no mistake.” The man turned away from them along the track. “You’d best come inside,” he said, and led them up the track to a gap in the hedge and an overgrown path. She

could make out the roof of a low cottage now, nestling in a dip, and the smell of pigs.

“He wanted to be a teacher,” Edmund Connell said for no apparent reason. They were huddled into the small kitchen of the farmhouse, Jane and Richard sat on one side of a scrubbed wooden table while Connell and the woman moved about the hot stove making tea. Danny came in and nodded to Richard and Jane but remained standing by the door.

“From Adelaide,” Connell added before repeating, “a schoolteacher, or a writer. But he wasn’t an educated man, Sam Pickering.” Connell ruffled through the pages of the notebook. “Not born with no silver spoon like some of them aristocratic bastards, present company excepted, naturally.”

Richard felt the comment was directed at him and started to protest but Mrs Connell cut across him. “You’ll have to forgive my Edmund, Captain. He was at Gallipoli, see. Blames the English officers for everything.”

“Same as the Somme, that was,” said Connell, bitterly. “Bloody catastrophe from day one and the only ones as couldn’t see it was them aristocratic bastards who called themselves officers. Both battles should’ve been called off right away, but those jackasses couldn’t do that, could they.”

“Can’t say I call myself an aristocrat by a long way,” said Richard.

“Don’t pay him no heed, Captain.” It was Mrs Connell mediating again. “It’s the accent, see. Whenever he hears an Englishman with that accent, talking proper I suppose, it starts him off.”

Doyle looked as if he wanted to say something but in the end was silent as Jane slid the notebooks from her bag onto the kitchen table.

“Always scribblin’ in them damned books, he was.” Connell continued while his wife poured the boiling water into the teapot. “Half the battalion was Western Australian like Danny and me, but Pickering was a South Australian man. In A company though.” He reached forward and took up one of the notebooks, closely examining the cracked and faded colouring of the cover, but didn’t open it. “There you are, South Australian Education Board,” he said. “That’s Sam all right. Never thought I’d see these again and no mistake.”

Richard saw a hint of concern in Jane’s eyes. Maybe she was worried that too many people were getting involved in her quest, too many people who would be reminded of how her brother died. Perhaps she was anxious of what her mother would say if she discovered that the notebooks were not only missing from their hiding place, but were now the centre of attention in the incongruous setting of a small farm on the edge of the Fens.

She turned back to where Danny stood, his head almost brushing against the slope of the low ceiling. “Mr Doyle,” she said. “How are you?”

Doyle nodded back to her and then turned to Richard. “You found Joe Baker, then? We thought it best that I should disappear for a while. Seems that Inspector Bannister has been around asking questions. He’s heard something about Sally Sixsmith and now he’s linking me in with you and that body what was found in the canal by the weir.”

“That’s ridiculous,” said Richard, and felt Jane turn towards him. “You had nothing to do with—”

“Yeh, I know that,” Danny laughed. “Neither did I kill Sally, but they could hang me for both of them if they’ve a mind to.” He moved forward and took one of the notebooks in his fist as if to distract himself from the larger problems on his mind.

Richard looked at Jane. She was pale and frowning as if talk of killings and hangings were too much for her to comprehend. But then she reached across and touched the last notebook, reminding Richard why she had come. She had come to find out about her brother’s execution.

“All you folks seems to be knowing all about some business what’s none of mine,” said Mrs Connell, “so I shall just pour the tea and you can talk it out.”

“Always scribblin’ in those damned things, Sam was,” Edmund Connell said again. “Mind if I ‘ave a read of them things while you’re at it?” Edmund Connell flipped through the pages of one of the books. “Where does it begin, then?”

Jane took the notebook from him and replaced it with one from the table. “This is the earliest. It begins when they—that is— when you, arrived in France in 1916. The first pages don’t interest me but they may interest you. It’s about half way into this book that my brother is mentioned.”

Connell took the book and moved away from the table into a corner where the light from the window fell across his shoulder and began to read.

“I know this ain’t none of my business,” Mrs Connell said softly to Jane, “but what exactly ‘appened out there that’s so bloody important all these years later?”

Jane Cresswell’s body stiffened and she looked at the other woman calmly. “My brother was executed,” she said quietly. “Shot by firing squad in 1916. I didn’t know; I was just a young girl. My

mother thought it better that I should not know. But now I do and these notebooks are all I have to explain it.”

“And do they?”

“I’m afraid not,” Jane fought back tears, not of grief this time, but of frustration. “But they mention Mr Doyle and Captain Frampton’s uncle. I thought perhaps . . . I hoped someone could just tell me what happened.”

“And your mother? She hopin’ to find answers here too?”

“My mother? No, I fear my mother has suppressed the whole matter and wants none of this. She lives with the shame of it every day, I suppose, and these diaries, arriving like that out of the blue, have just stirred up bad memories. She keeps these notebooks hidden and doesn’t know I’ve taken them again, at least not yet.”

“Oh my word!” Edmund exclaimed as if he’d found something significant in the notebooks. “I remember that day. That damned boat over to Calais and the train. Seemed to take days to get anywhere, stoppin’ and startin’. I shall not forget the boat though.”

“Rough crossing?”

“T’was allus a rough crossin’ to France. Then they marched us up to a holding camp: the damned Bullring at Etaples. No bloody hills in the whole of Belgium and France, someone said, but the bloody army found some and made us march up ‘em. And over by Ypres, that’s where we went first off, there was some high ground what they called hills, but the German’s had dug in all over them all right.”

“I’m sure Miss Cresswell’s not interested in all that, Edmund,” interrupted Mrs Connell. “There are perhaps more delicate matters somewhere in them books.”

Jane protested that she had been interested in what Mr Connell was saying. “It’s all right,” she said. “No-one ever speaks about the

war. Not to me. It's as if . . . as if it wasn't real at all. I'm sorry." She looked down at her hands. "But now it seems very real indeed."

"Eddie's right though," said Doyle quietly. "It wasn't much fun shuffling about between the coast and the front line. You never felt safe, not truly safe, wherever they put you, unless you were back in Blighty, that is."

Jane looked up at Mrs Connell. "I've tried to picture it," she said. "The front where my brother fought—until something stopped him fighting. I don't understand companies and regiments and divisions, but your husband and Mr Doyle and Captain Frampton may be able to fill in the details—even if they can't make everything right again."

Doyle reached over, took a notebook from the table, and stood staring at the back of it for a long time.

"Hard to imagine what it must've been like before the war," said Doyle. "Some of those villages were nothing more than piles of rubble when we fought over them. But they must have been homes once, homes and farms. I can see that you might want to know about your brother," he said to Jane. "But I don't think there's anything Eddie or I can tell you, and if there was I'm not sure you'd want to hear it."

Mrs Connell put her hand on Jane's shoulder. "I'm not sure it's a good idea to be raking up the past, my dear."

Jane remained silent. She thought Mrs Connell had sounded like her mother, but perhaps she was right; she was being unfair to these men. But she'd come this far. She looked at Richard as if seeking support but he misunderstood and turned his eyes away.

She reached across, took the notebook from his hand and flipped through to find a certain passage. "I looked for all the times that my brother might have been mentioned, or Mr Doyle or you uncle," she said. "There are long gaps in the writing, several days,

weeks even, when Mr Pickering doesn't write anything at all. I thought they might be days when nothing happened but it's more likely they were times when . . . when you were all too busy fighting the war." She found the page she was looking for and pressed the spine of the notebook with her fingers. "After the time when Mr Doyle and Sam Pickering found the German prisoners and they'd been shot, there's not much until the end of July. That was the big battle, wasn't it? The start of the Somme campaign? But by then, Pickering's back in the support lines, I think, and he gets time off or something, anyway, he gets drunk and into a fight." She lay the book in front of Richard. "Here, perhaps this will mean something to you. Or perhaps Mr Doyle could explain it." She glanced at Doyle who looked up at the mention of his name. Richard took the book from her and began to read about Sam Pickering's war again:

29th July 1916: Haven't been able to write much in the last three weeks. Spent long time in front L. Went over the top in a very bad show two weeks since. Last few days in reserve were spent training for this stunt. We all knew it was on. The Germans knew we were coming. Haig has excelled himself this time. Losses up and down the line have been heavy. Several junior officers in our btn have copped it and two sergeants. Of the lads in my company we lost eight and Doyle, from B coy spent all day out in no-man's-land, injured. He'll be out of it for a while, if not forever.

1st August 1916: Wish Doyle was here now. He'd know what to do. After ten days on the offensive with terrible losses our btn was finally relieved and we fell back on a village called Hedauville. First night of freedom and I got myself blind drunk in a local cafe. Got into a scrap with some bloody Scottish soldiers and ended up in MP's

lock-up. This place was a pig-pen, quite literally, a barn with farrowing pens at one end and food storage at the other. But I only spent the one night there. When I sobered up a bit I thought I had the place to myself. It was still dark and those Scotties had made a mess of me face so I was feeling a might sorry for myself. And thirsty, fit to drink Sydney Harbour dry, I was. There must've been a full moon because light of some kind was filtering in through the planks of the shed. I could've pushed them through and been away from there if I'd been of a mind, but what good would that've done me? As it was, I was charged with drunk and disorderly and causing a fray (me? It was the other buggers started it). If I'd slipped away in the night, there was nowhere to go except back to me regiment or off to the coast. No chance of getting away and Australia's a bloody long way from here. So I settled back on some damp straw, but then heard voices. I wasn't alone. Although I had the greater part of the barn, there was someone at the other end, in the farrowing pens. I thought to shout across and make myself known to him but realised there was more than one of them and they were whispering and muttering. Too far off to hear what was being said but I thought they were arguing. Being the nosey bugger I am, I slipped across to the partition wall so I could catch what was going on. Always been a nosey bugger, I have. Only on this occasion I couldn't make out what was on. One of the voices was a man being held prisoner the other was someone visiting. And this was in the dead of night. Something fishy straight up and no mistake. One of the voices was hissing his threats at the other chap: something about his family, his sister and his mother in England.

"You leave my sister out of this Fisher," says the one who must've been the prisoner. "This is you and me."

“Or else what, Cresswell? You’ll be dead either fucking way. Only if you keep your fucking face shut and die quietly then I shall have no need of bothering Mrs Cresswell nor her daughter, shall I?”

There was shuffling in the pen and a rattle like chains and I realised that one of them, the prisoner, was chained to the wall. Whatever he was being held for it was more than just drunk and disorderly. I can write about it now but my interest was surely whetted I can tell you, so I hunched up to the rough boards on my side of the pen and listened in.

The angry, hissing voice was going on, telling the other man, Cresswell, that he should’ve gone along with it and pretended like. “Just go over the top with the rest of us and let the German’s do the rest. You’d probably be dead now anyway. But no, you got all conchy on us, didn’t you? And now they’re going to fucking shoot you anyway. Disgraced, Cresswell, that’s what you are anyway I look at it. But you even think about telling the story and I shall have to pay a visit to the Cresswell ladies in Carfenton after this is all over, won’t I?”

“What sort of bastard are you Fisher?”

“The total kind. They were just a handful of fucking German’s Cresswell. No-one’s shedding any tears for them.”

Both men were getting angry now and I could hear exactly what was being said and I’m pretty good at remembering things like that and it seemed bloody important to these two coves on the other side of the wall.

“And what about Higgins? He wasn’t German, but you killed him too.”

“You saw him. You saw how he went for me. He would’ve shot me if I hadn’t got in first. And for what? A bunch of bloody Huns.”

"It was murder, Fisher. Unarmed men. I don't care if they were Fritz's or not. And yes, Richie Higgins would've stopped you. Me too, if I'd been brave enough. I should have shot you myself while I had the chance."

The other chap says something like: "But you never had the guts did you Cresswell?"

"I had nothing to do with shooting them, and I never threw away my weapon."

"Throwing away arms in the face of the enemy, Cresswell. Serious offence. No leniency from the General for you. And it was your word against mine. They always believe the sergeant, lad."

There was a shuffling sound in the stall and what sounded like a slap. Then the visitor was over by the door leading out into the yard. The chain rattled again and the planks in the wall creaked under pressure.

"Just keep your mouth shut, Cresswell, and the ladies will be fine, you hear me?" And with that a quick flash of moonlight and the scrape of the door on the dirt before it was pushed shut and the sound of a heavy beam being slid into place.

I lay in the dark against the planks of the farrowing stall and listened to the breathing of a man not three yards away from me. I knew I had to say something but couldn't think what. I didn't understand what I'd just heard. In the end I just asked him, "What was that all about, then?" That gave the chap a bit of a shock. I heard the chain rattle again. Didn't know I was there, see.

"Who the fuck is that?"

I told him my name and added, "Australian Imperial Force," I says. "Drunk and disorderly. Again!"

"Well, you heard nothing, Aussie. Understand. Nothing."

"This chap Higgins. He a mucker of yours?"

"Fuck off and leave me alone."

"Is it right, what that chap said, they going to shoot you?"

"Done and dusted, mate. Nothing anyone can do about it now. So fuck off and forget you were ever here."

I can see now he was an angry man, but even so I took offence at his refusal to talk. Dunno why I wanted to know so badly. Just nosey, like I say. Anyway, he didn't say anything more and eventually I shuffled back to my straw. But I couldn't sleep. This had something to do with killing Germans. It happens. But this was the same lot Doyle and me come across back in May. The British soldier, Higgins, I remembered the name. Now I had two more names, Cresswell and Fisher. But I didn't know what I was going to do with them.

6th August 1916: Heard that Danny Doyle won't be back for weeks but he is going to be all right, they say. They say we're going back into the line and moving up to Pozieres and Thiepval in a day or two. I got field punishment for my scrap with the Scotties but back at the battalion, no one saw fit to inflict it on me. That's the difference between us Australians and the Brits: their lot are bastards through and through. We don't have the death penalty out here either. I know they say we're an ill-disciplined rabble, for all that. But it's the fighting that counts, surely, and we seem to do all right in that area. Afraid I didn't have much opportunity to do anything about what I'd heard. I should like to have spoken with the corporal about it. But what with my own punishment and then back into the line with the battle still going on. Thought a bit about that poor Pommy bastard, though. Felt somehow responsible. Maybe I just wanted to find out what had gone on. But it is all pretty obvious to me.

15th August 1916: Got back to the support trenches four days ago. It was a bit late to do anything about the poor bastard by then, but two days later I was running a message from battalion headquarters to brigade. Had to pass through a British battalion lines, so I took the opportunity to ask about Cresswell while I was there. Everyone knew he was going to be shot and my questions met with mixed responses. This was his regiment and they'd known him. Some of them seemed to bear a grudge, ashamed perhaps because he'd let the regiment down, but that wasn't what I thought. Like us, the Brits had lost a lot of good men that month and anyone who failed to face it could well be thought a coward. Only, from what I'd heard in the barn that night, I didn't think Cresswell's had refused anything. Except, maybe, killing unarmed German prisoners. I asked if there was anyone called Fisher and the men didn't seem so keen to talk. I couldn't tell if they were trying to protect this man, Fisher, or whether any mention of him was enough to bring on this silence. One thing was certain, though; there was something they weren't telling me. But then, there was something I knew, and I wasn't telling them, either. I'd overheard something in the pig shed and I'd seen something on the road to Etaples. The only trouble was, I didn't know what to do about it.

After I left the Pommy lines one of the lads followed me along the trench and spoke to me.

"What you heard about the Sergeant then?" he said, once we were out of earshot of the others.

"Sergeant?"

"Fisher," he said, leaning against the parapet of the rear trench and pulling out a battered packet of Woodbines. "He's been up to something, Sergeant Fisher. Got everyone jumping. Knows fucking everything, that bastard."

“Was Sergeant Fisher detailed to take some German prisoners back to Etaples sometime in May?”

He raised a finger to his lips. “Not so loud. That bastard’s got ears everywhere.” He struck a match and shielded its flame in both hands while he lit his cigarette, then blew out slowly in a straight plume of smoke before he spoke again. “Him and the condemned man, Alfie Cresswell,” he said. “Spot of trouble on the way, apparently. The other man, Richie Higgins got caught out in the open and shot. No explanation. But then Fisher isn’t one for explaining. Only Alfie weren’t the same after that. He went all sulky. Wouldn’t talk. Stopped playing cards. Used to love playing cards did Cresswell. Talked about murder. Finally he ups and refuses to fight. Sergeant Fisher was holding something over him, though.”

I asked him how the other men in the company had taken that, Cresswell’s refusing to fight.

“Not well, as you might imagine. We’ve all lost mates, especially this month, and we’ve been killing Germans all year, but there’s not a man here would call that murder.”

“And Sergeant Fisher, what did he do?”

The man drew another long pull on his cigarette and spat on the ground by his feet. “Not well pleased, our sergeant. Kept a very close eye on Alfie he did. Charged him, of course, but that was only to be expected. But Fisher did nothing to help Cresswell. Even charged him with cowardice, or some such nonsense. Not that there was much anyone could do. I heard he didn’t even try to defend himself at the trial. Two of our own officers sat on the board, the major’s dead now, but there was a Captain from the Third Battalion, you’d think he’d be sympathetic, wouldn’t you. Same brigade. Recruited from the same villages as us. I think he did what he could, but Cresswell’s still going to be shot, isn’t he?”

"This captain, who was he?"

He seemed reluctant to answer me. Asked what business it was of mine, "Not as if Cresswell was an Aussie is it?"

The man had a point and his question caught me a bit off guard. "Just something I overheard once. Probably not important. Just left me wondering."

"Don't lose any sleep over it, mate. Nothing you or I can do for Alfie Cresswell now, is there?" I turned to leave and my informant flicked his cigarette butt into the water at the bottom of the trench. He extended his hand to shake mine. "I was a mate of Alfie Cresswell but it don't do to say that sort of thing around here." With that he turned and started back along the trench to re-join his platoon. As I turned to move on he shouted back over his shoulder. "Frampton's his name . . . if you need it. Captain Frampton. Too late to save Alfie, now, though. And don't tell Fisher we ever had this conversation."

Richard finished reading and drank the last of his tea. He stood up and looked at Doyle who was reading another of the notebooks.

"You'd better read this one," he said, passing it over. "I think this is the one Pickering intended for Mrs Cresswell's attention."

Chapter Fourteen

As Danny Doyle read from the notebook about the day he and Sam Pickering had found the German prisoners-of-war, and the night Pickering had met with Private Cresswell in the farm building, the others read various parts of the other notebooks. But there was little else that would help explain Alfie Cresswell's fate—if anything further was needed.

For Richard it was like another lifetime—or another man's life, the war. He'd never forgotten anything, that wasn't the word, but he could pretend things didn't matter anymore. The ache in his shoulder constantly reminded him that he'd been there, but it could have been another man. He knew that, for other servicemen, this indifference was not possible and he wondered how Sam Pickering's words were affecting Danny Doyle and Mr Connell.

It was some time before anyone spoke.

"Brings it all back, doesn't it?" Doyle closed the book and looked up at them all.

"You remember it, Mr Doyle?" Jane asked gently, hoping that he could add some detail, some redemption, perhaps, for her dead brother.

"Not all the little pieces," he said. "Names, for instance. Higgins. That was the dead Pommy soldier. And Fisher. Don't think I ever knew his name."

"It was on the charge sheet in the archives," Richard said.

"Was it? Yes, it was. Fisher. Sounds like a charmer. I told Sam to forget all about the dead prisoners. Happened all the time. Of course, I never knew he'd been locked up with Cresswell, later. Drunk and fighting. Doesn't surprise me, though. Doesn't really explain why Higgins got himself shot. And Pickering went off asking questions weeks later, after the unit came out of the line."

“What do you think happened to Private Higgins then, Danny?” Jane asked. “And why did my brother refuse to fight?”

“I don’t know, Jane, but I think it’s plain enough from what Sam says. Your brother knew too much. The Germans didn’t shoot Higgins. They were unarmed. That left the sergeant and your brother. I think we can rule him out, so Fisher shot Higgins as well as the prisoners.” Doyle rolled the notebook in his hand. “I should’ve done something at the time, of course, but it was difficult. Easier to leave it all for someone else to find and report. We had our own prisoners to deal with. I didn’t want the injured lad mixed in with them in case he talked. That’s why I took him to the farmhouse. Maybe your brother kept quiet for fear of what Sergeant Fisher would do if he reported it. If Fisher had already shut Higgins up, and Alfie Cresswell saw it . . . then, a private’s word against a sergeant. Whatever it was, Fisher had to shut him up for good in the end. He could hardly shoot him once they were back with the battalion, in cold blood. Too risky. So he trumped up these charges. It all amounted to cowardice—that’s a hard one to fight. And Fisher added “throwing away arms in the face of the enemy” nice touch, that one. Meant any Field General Court Martial would recommend the death sentence, and the brass would probably sign off on it.”

Jane looked at Richard. “Is that what you think?”

“It’s got to be something like that. Your brother wasn’t a coward, Jane. That’s what you want to know. None of us can confirm Pickering’s story now, but it looks like Danny says. Sergeant Fisher wanted him shut up for good.” Richard looked away at the notebooks spread across the table. “Maybe Fisher planned to kill your brother himself, Jane, the next time they went into battle. No one would ever know. Only Cresswell—Alfie—refused to go over the

top, so the sergeant was forced to fabricate these charges against him.”

“But Alfie could’ve spoken up at his trial, surely. They would have to listen.”

“Charged with serious offences. The situation would’ve been stacked against him. And Fisher had already threatened him,” said Danny. “We don’t know if he’d ever carry out his threats, but he would know where your family lived. It would be in the company records. Alfie kept quiet to protect you and your mother.”

“What about the German soldier who was still alive?” Jane continued. “He must have seen everything. If he’d testify, then maybe the Home Secretary, or the army, or someone . . . we could prove that Alfie was shot by mistake. The court martial was a sham, set up by this sergeant.”

Danny’s shoulders slumped forward and he shook his head slowly. “Sorry, Jane, I never told Pickering, but the German boy didn’t make it. I carried him to a farm, like Sam says, there was an elderly French couple there. He was already dead, Jane. They said they’d bury him. They gave me some eggs and milk to take back. Good Christian burial, I suppose, but no one would ever know.”

Mrs Connell went to the kitchen door. “We’d better be finishing feeding these pigs, Eddie, or there’ll be no bacon this season.”

Mr Connell followed his wife out into the back yard. Richard looked at Jane then at Doyle before he said, awkwardly, “There’s something else, Danny. We’ve got to talk about your situation. That policeman, Inspector Bannister, came back to Sadec House again and he said you’d killed that woman back in Australia. He’d obviously been to see Joe Baker as well.”

Danny fidgeted with the notebook in his hands then looked up at them.

"I don't expect anyone to believe me," he said. "But I can explain, if you'll listen." He lay the book on the table and smoothed it out with the back of his hand. "After the war I went back to Western Australia. Took up my old business, fixing things, you know. I took up with Sally Sixsmith, too. Her husband had been killed at Ypres. Always thought Sally and I could make a go of it, but I'd changed, Richard. Something had happened during the war. I wasn't like other men—*normal* men. I could no longer . . . not with Sally, not with any woman. Not much hope for a man like that in Western Australia."

"I can't believe that Danny. Surely—"

"I didn't know anything about . . . men who love other men, sorry, Jane, but there's no other way . . . when I went into the army. Saw a bit of it, of course, and I knew there was something in me, I'd always known, I suppose. Just didn't understand. It was after we were injured, Richard. I was convalescing with a family in Oisemont. The son of the house, name of Guillaume Bouchard, he'd been wounded, too, at Verdun. He helped me about, changed my dressings, and such like. Then one day, it just happened. The family was at church. Oisemont was a sleepy little place. He came to my room and . . . well, that changed things. That's why I could never make a go of it with Sally."

"Danny, you don't have to explain. This disgusting thing between you and this Frenchman happened. There's really no need to speak of it in front of Miss Cresswell. There was a war on—"

"Richard!" Jane interrupted angrily. "Frankly, I'm more shocked at your attitude than anything. This is 1924. Things have changed. You're still living in Queen Victoria's time. Don't think to spare my feelings."

"Jane, I don't think you understand."

"I understand, if Mr Doyle finds himself as . . . as Mr Wilde was, then there's an end to it."

'Oscar Wilde was—'

"Oscar Wilde was thirty years ago, Richard. He belongs in the nineteenth century, along with your nineteenth century attitude. England has moved on."

Richard was visibly stung by Jane's words and he slumped in his chair with a sour look on his face.

"And besides, your outdated mores are not helping Mr Doyle," she said, in a gentler tone. "You saw the way Joe Baker looked. He's terrified. If this policeman—"

"Bannister threatened Joe when he came to the house. I don't think he gives a damn about two men living together, but he's got wind of something else now. And, if he needs to, he can charge us for lewd behaviour or obscenity or whatever else he likes. Joe's terrified. Hard labour. And I don't suppose prison's very pleasant for the likes of us."

"He thinks you killed Sally Sixsmith, Danny," Richard said. "And he thinks one of us killed that man in the canal."

"You were telling us about Sally," prompted Jane.

"It's true, I was accused of killing her. I'd moved in with her on the farm but things didn't work out, as I said. So I moved back to town and started sleeping in the shed where I kept my horse and cart. It was comfortable enough. It's where I lived before I joined up. But I had some stuff back at Sally's, so one day I rode over to collect, and, frankly, I wanted to make sure she was going all right, you know, it wasn't easy for her, either."

"But she knew about you."

"She knew, and she understood. Great woman, Sally. Only when I got back to her farm she was dead. And badly beaten, too. The

place had been smashed up and so had she. I think she put up a fight, but he'd bludgeoned her over the head with something heavy. Blood everywhere."

"But surely the police—"

"Not much by way of police out there," said Danny with a raw chuckle. "We had a constable, Jimmy Nunn, in town, and I rode in and reported what I'd found. Told him who I thought had done it, too."

"You had someone in mind?"

"Remember I told you once about Bull Sixsmith, Richard? He had a brother, Bing. That wasn't their real names. Both right bastards the Sixsmith boys. We were at school, Sally, Bull and Bing. Bull beat her around a bit after they were married, but he was killed at Passchendaele. No doubt about that one. But Bing was missing presumed killed. I think he came back. I think I saw him once, hanging around the woods back of Sally's place. I should've done something then, of course. Only after I'd moved back to town the bastard broke in and murdered her. I felt responsible. Thought, maybe it would've been best if I'd been killed that day at Pozières."

"But you couldn't be certain the man you saw, the man you say killed her, was Bing Sixsmith."

"Oh, I was certain. There was some money missing. The house had been trashed but nothing was taken, except Sally kept some cash in a stone jar out the back of her kitchen. It was gone. He knew about it, you see. Bing Sixsmith knew about that stone jar. I couldn't very well report it, it would've looked as if I'd taken it."

"And the constable?"

"He believed me, sort of. Like I told you about your aunt, Richard, missing presumed dead means dead. No one thinks they're coming back, especially years later. It was the local press eventually

took against me. Sensationalism. They wanted a killer, and whoever killed Sally had hightailed it out of there smartly. So I was suspect number one. I was their only suspect. I suppose they had every right to think I'd done it. Townsfolk eventually turned very nasty so the constable locked me up, for my own good. He was at school with us, too, so he knew Bing. I don't know if he believed me, but there were plenty of old soldiers roaming the outback after the war, so he probably saw something in it."

Richard shuffled uncomfortably in his seat. "But were you charged?"

"I would've been," said Doyle. "Only a matter of time. But Jimmy Nunn, the constable, came to the cell—more a shed, really, as we didn't stretch to police cells in Waterford—at night and let me out. Gave me some provisions and his own horse and told me to get away, as far away as I could. That must've caused him a fair bit of trouble, but he was a good man; fought at Gallipoli. The mood in the town was running high that night; the locals were out for my blood by then. If I'd hung around they might've lynched me. So I ran."

"No way to prove your innocence now."

"Probably not. At first I refused to go, but Jimmy didn't want my death on his hands, so I left. He reminded me that both Sixsmith boys have their names on the role of honour, and they'd soon be carving them into a stone plinth in the town square. Any man whose name appears on the memorial is a bloody hero, no matter that you and I know different. But Jimmy said the town wouldn't take my word against a dead hero, and, of course, he was right. Most folk assumed I'd gone off to Queensland—that's a long way from Waterford. But I holed up in Fremantle, the port. Even managed to get my money out of the bank—my parent's farm had sold during the war and I hadn't touched any of that. So, I wasn't short of a

quid. I remembered Guillaume Bouchard in Oisemont. No-one would be looking for me in France. So I took ship for Marseille.”

“But you didn’t stay in Oisemont?”

“I had no idea if he’d survived the war or not. As it happened, he was running his mother’s estaminet. Married with a couple of young brats in tow. Not well pleased to see me, I can tell you.”

“So you came to England.”

Danny nodded. “I’d met Joe Baker on the boat over. He was a steward. We hardly spoke but we recognised something in each other. I knew he was being paid off ship in Southampton at the end of that run and was looking for work in his old town, which was Cambridge. So I came here and found him.”

“Found me, too,” said Richard. “What exactly brought you to Sadec House that weekend?”

“I read the newspaper report and it mentioned Stenbridge. I’d seen that name on the poetry book you edited. Thought it must be you. Looked you up and found that the house near where the body was found was also the house where you lived. After my bad experience in Australia I . . . maybe I thought you’d killed someone, at least I thought you were a suspect.”

“That’s more than I did,” said Richard with a laugh. “It wasn’t until Bannister came a second time that I even thought I might be involved.”

“How did Inspector Bannister find out about the murder of Mrs Sixsmith?” Sally asked.

“Pure bloody bad luck, unfortunately. He told Joe that some sheep farmer from Australia was over here to sell his wool, staying with his son in Cambridge and one of them spotted me. Recognised me. Couldn’t wait to claim his glory, obviously. Reported to the local cops and Bannister must’ve got wind of it. When I got back to the

cottage Joe was in a terrible state, not making a lot of sense. Bannister had put the fear of god into him; four years hard labour, he'd told him. But the inspector had no idea where I was and Joe wasn't about to tell him. Bannister probably thought I'd gone to ground over Oliver Walter's murder. Presumably he knows I've been to Stenbridge by now."

Richard nodded. "He does."

"So, if I know how these things work, he's tying you and me to that death because of me being a wanted man in Australia."

Richard said nothing, but the implications of Doyle's statement rang true enough with what the inspector had said.

"There was someone else," said Doyle. "Joe wrote me a letter saying that the day after I left the cottage and came out here, another man came looking for me; a reporter. Bannister, or one of his men, must've tipped him off. Anyway, Joe said he was following up on the Australia story and did Joe know anything? He threw him out on his ear but thought he should warn me that it wasn't just the police looking for me."

Chapter Fifteen

Ten days after their meeting with Doyle at the pig farm, Jane paid another visit to Sadec House. Richard had dropped her on the outskirts of Carfenton village, with the hem of her skirt and her shoes caked in mud and the smell of pigs hanging in the air about her. Nothing much had been said on the drive home, but he'd been worried what her mother would say. They'd made no arrangement to meet again. Richard had said they'd found all they were going to find about Alfie's death. He'd agreed with Danny Doyle's version of Sam Pickering's account. So that was an end to it. But it didn't feel like an end to her. She saw now that this man Fisher, a sergeant, had contrived to have her brother executed. At least that was the way it looked. But was that to be all they'd find? And what about Doyle? The police were looking for him. He stood accused of murdering a woman back in Australia, but she could not believe it. And what about the other man who'd been killed near Sadec House? If Doyle was a murderer, could he be responsible for that death, too? And was Richard involved somehow? She'd once thought him crazy. Or perhaps he'd just been drunk, but the war did things to people, she knew that. What did she know about these two men? Other than the fact that they'd helped her over the notebooks—and she'd had to force them to do that, hadn't she?—and they had served at the front line, possibly in the same division as her brother. War heroes. What did that mean? She once thought she knew, only now she was no longer sure. Soldiers killed men in war, what was different to killing in peacetime?

Richard seemed pleased to see her on the doorstep and, once again in his presence she dismissed all thought of him as a potential killer. He was too nice, she thought. As she removed her hat and

coat she felt him watching her. Being watched usually made her uncomfortable but not this time. When she looked up he seemed distracted and she wondered again whether it was the effects of too much drinking.

“Coffee?” he asked. “Or would you prefer tea?”

“Coffee would be fine,” she said, although she rarely drank coffee, it always tasted bitter. But it seemed the more sophisticated and, for some reason she would not have been able to explain, she wanted to appear sophisticated.

Alone in the study she took in the room. What did his house tell her about him? It had a pleasant feel, and yet this was a strange room, with all its exotic bits and pieces. Even the geography of the house was odd, with this study on the first floor. Although it had nice views. Bookcases and china ornaments. Her gaze fell on the big armchair where he’d been sitting the first time she saw him; when she couldn’t get any sense out of him.

This is where he works... and where he drinks, sometimes. She shook her head. Since then, she admitted, she’d not seen him drink nor smelled alcohol on his breath. Did he carry one of those fancy silver flasks and take nips out of it when she wasn’t looking? She dismissed the thought immediately.

The smell of the coffee brought her back to the real world.

“Interesting room,” she said, taking the cup from him. “But not your childhood home?”

Richard didn’t answer for some time. Sadec was his home now, and yet, the house bore very little trace of him. These oriental knickknacks, the trappings and furniture, were his grandfather’s; anything else reflected his aunt and uncle. “No, I was raised in the vicarage at Barnes,” he said, sipping his coffee. “My grandfather

built this house. Named it after some town on the Mekong River in Indochina.”

“What was she like?”

“Aunt Elizabeth? She was very nice.” He knew this answer was inadequate but what else was he to say? That she was beautiful and he’d slept with her on his last night before going to war? The guilt that always came with the memory made him blush uncomfortably.

“No, I meant your mother.”

“Mother? I don’t think I ever really knew her. The woman I knew as a child was a country vicar’s wife, I suppose. But after he died she went off to London and the high life, parties—“

“Ah!”

“What does that mean?” He turned to look at her now.

“Nothing,” she shrugged and now it was her turn to blush. “It’s just that it explains . . .” She trailed off unable to put what she felt into words.

“Explains what?”

“I think you’re frightened of turning into your mother,” she said, trying to sound light-hearted but failing. “It’s why you never seem to enjoy life.”

“I enjoy my life, thank you very much.”

“Yes, but it’s as if you’re still living before the war, Richard. It’s positively Edwardian or even Victorian. The world has changed. I know the Twentieth Century didn’t get off to a great start for any of us, but the war’s over now, it’s the twenties. People are alive again: England is alive again. And you’re missing it.” She looked across at him but he was staring straight ahead, his fingers flat and white on the desk, and his lips pulled tight. She’d hurt him but she couldn’t stop. “Oh, Richard,” she laughed. “You’re such a fuddy-duddy.”

They sat in silence for several minutes. She toyed briefly with an apology but dismissed it when she recalled his attitude to Doyle's relationship with Joe Baker. Finally, she said: "Anyway, I have to thank you for helping me."

"There's no need," he said. "I enjoy helping you—and, anyway, I thought it was Danny Doyle we're helping now."

"It is, but I just think you'd rather be left alone . . . in that pre-war paradise where there are no homosexuals or young women like me reminding you to get on with life."

He wanted to tell her that it was better to have her talking to him like this, even though it hurt his feelings—and it did—than to think he might never see her again. But when he finally spoke it was to change the subject and he asked her how she'd managed to get away from home. "Was your mother very upset that I kept you out all day last week?"

"Upset?" Jane laughed. "That's hardly the word to describe it. She was very angry. Started shouting and ranting and wouldn't listen to what I was saying."

"But you tried to explain what you'd found out?"

"I tried, but it wasn't very much, was it? Not when you look at it in the cold light of day. She just went on screaming at me. Worse than ever before. I thought she might lose her mind. She really doesn't want all this brought out into the open again."

"And that's what she thinks we're doing is it?"

"I don't know what she thinks anymore. I've tried to talk to her but on this she's, well, she's very strange."

"But she knows you've come here again today?"

"Oh, no. Mother thinks I'm at work—and the shop thinks I'm sick at home. I really feel awful about lying to everyone, but what

else could I do?" She stopped speaking and sipped her coffee. What would she say if he asked her why she had come?

But he didn't ask and they fell silent until Richard felt embarrassed that he had nothing further to tell her.

"I think we have as much as we can expect now," he said.

He's not good at this, Jane thought. He finds it hard to sympathise with someone. It was the war, she supposed. Men like Captain Frampton had seen too much death. She put her cup on the small table, stood up and walked to the window facing the old stone bridge and the village. "This policeman who is harassing you and chasing Mr Doyle," she said. "He's not likely to be concerned with my story is he?"

"Not at all. I fear he's merely biding his time before he arrests us both. And I can't see what I can do about it."

Jane turned back into the room and looked at his face. Could he have killed Mr Walters? And what about his friend Mr Doyle? She knew nothing about them. And there were other things she didn't know: reasons why Oswald Walters was killed. How could she simply assume that Captain Frampton was innocent? The police must have reasons for their suspicions. There could be no question of taking her problem to them; her brother's death was eight years ago; Sergeant Fisher was probably dead now too. What they had—Sam Pickering's notebooks and Danny Doyle's recollections—were proof enough of her brother's innocence, and that was what she'd been looking for all along, wasn't it? But they couldn't tell her everything.

"You're sure your uncle didn't say anything about my brother's court martial to you? I don't suppose you wanted to talk about the war after it was over."

“He didn’t. In fact, until you came and told me your story I’d no idea he’d even sat on a court martial. But it wouldn’t be unusual, always a shortage of officers for those things, especially chaps with experience of battle, so to speak.”

“A pity he didn’t write it all down, like Sam Pickering, isn’t it. I’ve heard that lots of old soldiers are writing books now about their experiences.”

Richard suddenly jumped up and slapped his hand on the arm of the chair. “The files,” he said, turning to look at her as if she understood what he was talking about. “My uncle had a lot of papers here from his law practice and at the end they went to a firm in Ely. But there were some papers that they gave back to me a couple of weeks ago. I’d completely forgotten with everything else going on. I don’t suppose there’s anything of use to us, but it might be worth—”

“What sort of papers?”

“I don’t know,” Richard blushed a little. “I haven’t . . . they’re in the garage. I’ll get them.”

He set off down the stairs and Jane finished her coffee.

He came back with a cardboard box full of papers, dumped it on the low table, and smiled at her.

“I really don’t know what’s in here,” he said, taking a grey folder off the top. “The law practice who took Robert’s clients said it was army stuff. Let’s hope there’s something useful, but I don’t expect much.”

Jane took a similar folder and flipped through it before moving to the window to read it. Some old sepia photographs, a citation for a medal, a birth certificate. Personal paper of Richard’s uncle. She put everything back in the folder.

“Ah, this is army,” said Richard, taking a third folder from the box. It was pale brown in colour and battered at the corners.

She watched as Richard thumbed through its contents. Could it tell her any more about her brother’s execution? Suddenly, for the first time, she rather hoped there’d be nothing. What if they found evidence that his court-martial was justified? She closed the grey folder of family papers on her lap and stroked its cover nervously with her fingers.

“Notes for the unit diary, I shouldn’t wonder.” Richard said, reading quickly through the first page. “1917, though. Not the time we want.” He turned the pages quickly checking for any dates, pausing here and there to read a heading or a hand-written margin note. But there was nothing. He put the folder on the table and Jane put hers with it. She reached into the box to take the next folder but there were no more folders, only loose sheets of paper, and some large envelopes.

Richard took a pile of the loose papers and Jane took the first of the envelopes. As she turned it over she read the word ‘Personnel’ in blue crayon on the underside. She sat and stared at the word. “Personnel’. Could this be it? Her brother was, after all, one of those personnel. She lay both hands on the surface of the envelope and let the voice in her head call her all sorts of names while she breathed in and held her breath for as long as she could. When she looked up and let out her breath, she saw that Richard was engrossed in the pile of papers in his hand.

“Anything?” she asked.

“Mm? Well, some notes and letters from 1916. That’s closer to the time we’re looking for. Mainly troop movements, plans for training exercises and so forth. Robert was adjutant then CO of the East Cambs at that time.”

Jane opened the envelope on her lap and pulled out the papers. There were perhaps forty or fifty sheets, some typed on flimsy paper, some handwritten, and others were army forms with various different styles of writing on. Silly marks in the margins as if people had tried their pens before writing. Different inks, too. But it was some time before she could bring herself to look at the actual words on the pages.

She was staring at a list of names that meant nothing to her. Ages, addresses, and in the right-hand column against most of them the simple word 'Deceased'. And there were pages of them. An alphabetical list of men. She stared for some time at the heading on the first page: Eastern Cambridgeshire Rifles, Complement List Other Ranks. It was dated November 1916. She turned to the names beginning with 'c' and there he was: Cresswell, Alfred, aged 21, and her mother's address, and in the final column 'Deceased'. So it was as simple as that. It was some time before she could move on from his name but when she did she noted that more than half the men were dead. And most of them, she knew, lay in the dirt of the Somme and Ancre valley, a country she could not picture but one which burned with such desolation in her mind that the thought of it began to sting her eyes.

"Here's something." Richard's voice cut into her thoughts and jolted her back. "It's a note for the unit diary and someone, I think it's Robert, has written in the margin, C-in-C has refused leniency: RSM to detail FS for 0600 hours." He flipped the page over. "It's dated July 30th 1916. Do you know when . . . I don't suppose you do . . . no." He pushed the paper away and stared at the next page; Jane looked down and stared at Alfred's name on the page in her hand. The two pieces of information could only refer to the execution of her brother. She took comfort from the word 'deceased'.

At least the Battalion Complement didn't state that he been shot by his own men.

"FS?" She asked, the tears welling in her eyes.

Richard didn't answer immediately and she looked up to find him blushing again. "Firing Squad," he said softly. "What have you found?"

"It's a list of the men in your uncle's regiment. I've found Alfred. It seems that most of the men on the list were already dead." She looked back at the list as if something might bring her brother back, still trying to find an explanation. The papers in her hand were shaking and she turned them over and steadied her wrist with her free hand. "What was the name of that man who was murdered?" She said suddenly sitting forward.

"Higgins, I think."

"Higgins? No, not that man. The one who was found in the canal near here. The one the policeman is interested in."

"Oh, Walters, Oswald Walters. Why?"

"He's here," she said running her finger over the last page of names. "Oswald Walters. Look. Did you know he was in your uncle's battalion?"

"Walters? No, no I didn't know." Richard took the pages from her hand; the inspector had said he was soldier. "Coincidence?" He said, frowning.

"Not a common name is it? And why was he killed so close to Sadec House?" Jane wondered whether Inspector Bannister had made the same connection. "Was he coming here?" Or was he watching the house? The police said he was a detective of some kind. "Or on his way to see your uncle?"

"But my uncle was dead. He died back in February, remember."

"I know," Jane smiled at him. "But I came looking for him last month, didn't I? If I made that mistake then perhaps Walters did too."

Richard nodded: "Yes, I suppose it is confusing. Strangely, it was never a problem in the war. Different regiments, you see. Only why now? You came because of Sam Pickering's diaries; why did Oswald Walters come?"

He looked down at the papers in his hand. "There's something else," he said. "Only I'm not sure you're going to like it."

"Does it connect Walters to my brother?"

"No, but he must've known him. Even if they weren't in the same company they were privates in the same battalion. I can't believe his murder is connected to your brother's death after all these years."

"What have you got, then?"

"It's nothing much. Just a report of the execution, or at least my uncle's notes on it. The official version must be tucked away in the army archives somewhere. They would never let us see them. This just says he was shot at 0600 hours on 16th August 1916. Those present included the officer-in-charge of the firing squad, Lieutenant Worthington, and there was the chaplain and the M.O. Death confirmed by the Medical Officer at 0605 hours. There's no mention of . . . my uncle has written in the margin 'Lieutenant Blandings also attended at his own request'."

"What?"

"Nothing."

"No, you were going to say something. There's no mention of what?"

"It's just that sometimes a firing squad was inefficient: death was not instantaneous. The coup-de-gras had to be delivered by the

officer-in-charge. There's no mention of Lieutenant Worthington having to—"

"That's a relief, isn't it, in a way? Poor Alfred. I don't suppose he suffered. At least not at the end. Does your uncle say anything about why he was executed?"

"Why the court martial?" Richard thumbed through the papers. "There's nothing here. Shouldn't be anything really. Notes like this should have been destroyed. Or not written at all. He says that the court martial put in a plea for leniency. That would've gone right up to C-in-C level. Most death sentences were commuted to life or field punishment. That didn't happen in your brother's case so we can assume Haig or Robertson turned it down. 'For the sake of example' they used to say."

Richard looked across at Jane and saw tears on her cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "This must be very difficult for you. Are you sure you want to go on?"

Jane sniffed and took out a small, embroidered handkerchief to wipe her eyes. "I suppose I wasn't expecting it, that's all. I don't even know why I'm doing this. I needed to find out that my brother wasn't a coward, Richard, and now I know he wasn't. Sam Pickering's notebooks prove it. So why did they have to kill him?"

"I don't suppose we'll ever find out," said Richard, shuffling through the papers in the box again. "That man Fisher trumped up the charges against him." He looked up. "There's more here on 1916. More notes for the daily report. God, if the army knew Robert hadn't destroyed these papers they'd have his hide."

"Except he's dead now." Jane struggled a smile. "Maybe they'd have ours if they knew we were reading them." She saw the look on Richard's face and laughed. "Oh, Richard," she said. "You can't handle doing anything wrong, can you? Not a born sinner, are you?"

“There’s more in Robert’s handwriting. Just a note says: *Prisoner given every opportunity to speak on his own behalf but refused to defend himself.*”

“I just don’t understand it. Why would anyone do that?” But she knew now, of course, that Sergeant Fisher had threatened Alfred. But knowing it didn’t help.

“Another note: *Lt. Blandings thinks Fisher has something to do with it. I’ll bet he did. Then it looks like, Padre knows s.t. Will speak with RC after church parade on Sunday.*”

“RC? Why is that? We’re not Catholic. Why the RC padre, do you suppose? Alfred wouldn’t have converted, even . . . even under extreme pressure. We’re chapel, you see.”

“I don’t remember a Roman Catholic chaplain with the East Cambs Infantry, certainly not with Robert’s battalion. But the chaplains had to double up more often than not, bury each other’s congregations, so to speak.”

“And why would the padre know anything that your uncle didn’t?”

“Ah, that’s easy. Robert was acting CO of the battalion in the summer of 1916. So, after the court martial, he’d be a little removed from the actual events, the execution. Naturally he’d be informed all along the way, things like that didn’t happen all that often in spite of what you may think. The prisoner, the accused man, would have an officer detailed to defend him, although in truth there was very little they could say or do at the court martial itself. They were called the prisoner’s friend. I take it, in your brother’s case, that officer was Lieutenant Blandings. It said he attended the firing squad even though he didn’t have to. Not many people would do that.”

Jane leaned across to read the paper in his hand but the tears had blurred her eyes.

“Is there any mention of Worthington or Blandings on that list?” Richard said.

Jane wiped her eyes and took up the list again.

“None at all, I’m afraid.”

“Wait a minute though, this is a list of OR’s, non-commissioned officers and Other Ranks. Is there another Complement List in here?” Richard indicated the box of papers on the table and Jane began to search. It was not long before she came up with what she wanted.

“Here it is,” she said. “My God, nearly all of them are dead, too. It’s also November 1916. Let’s see. Blandings, yes, here he is, First Lieutenant Anthony Blandings, deceased. So he died sometime between July and November that year.”

“It was not a good time to be a subaltern on the Somme.”

She looked up shocked at how little she knew about what those men must have been through.

“Is there a chaplain?” Richard asked. “Although he might not be shown on the fighting strength. He might even have been from another unit attached to division.

Jane ran her finger down the page. “Here’s one,” she said. “At least I think it is: Captain (Rev) Clarimond, Rupert. Could that be him?”

“It certainly could,” said Richard. “Don’t you see? It’s not Roman Catholic, it’s Rupert Clarimond, his initials. Does it say he survived the year?”

“Doesn’t say deceased.” When Jane looked up with renewed enthusiasm and determination. “Maybe he’s still alive, let me get a pen and paper and we’ll take down the details for Clarimond and for

Oswald Walters while we're at it. Walters can't help us now but maybe there was a wife. And if Clarimond is still alive I'd certainly like to know what your uncle meant by that note. What exactly did the Reverend Rupert Clarimond know?"

Richard had no desire to go chasing around the country looking for Rupert Clarimond or any relatives of Oswald Walters, but if it would please Miss Cresswell then he'd go along with it.

The house on the Littleport Road leading out of Ely was plain and shabby. Dull red bricks and symmetrical square windows. They left the car in the narrow street and approached the unporched door as the first drops of rain began to patter, cold and heavy on Richard's bare head. He looked back at the sky across the road with its dark grey clouds threatening heavier rain as Jane knocked on the peeling green paint of the door.

There was a shuffling noise, then the sound of a small dog yapping softly in the background before the door was opened and they were faced by a short round woman who looked much older than either of them had expected. The woman peered at them with watery, myopic eyes.

"Mrs Walters?" Jane asked.

The woman stared back at them bewildered.

Jane asked again, "Mrs Oswald Walters?"

"Ah!" The face seemed to soften slightly. "Mrs Michael Walters," she said in a quiet voice thick with phlegm. "There is no Mrs Oswald Walters. And now there never will be, will there?"

"You're not Oswald's wife?" It was Richard who asked this time. And his statement was met with a sad chuckle from the throat of

Mrs Michael Walters. The chuckle was rapidly replaced by a coughing fit that eventually subsided into a breathless wheeze.

“I’m ‘is mother, dear,” the woman said. “Or I was until—”

“We were wondering if we could talk to you about your son?” said Jane. “Naturally we hate to intrude at a time such as this. And may we offer our condolences on your loss, Mrs Walters?”

“Not from the papers, are you?” Again the myopic stare and the wheezing cough.

Richard shook his head. “No, we’re not from the newspapers,” he said. “Miss Cresswell lost her brother in the war and we were wondering . . .”

The woman examined Jane closely as if assessing whether Richard’s statement could be true and then, presumably finding for the affirmative, she stepped back into the dark hallway and opened the door wider.

“Then you’d best come in,” she said, leading them through into a tiny sitting room where the overpowering smell of tobacco smoke clung in the air. “Close the door or those neighbours’ll be hearing our every word. Nosey gossips, they be.”

Mrs Walters flopped into a worn armchair beside the unlit hearth and immediately grabbed a packet of cigarettes and lit one. This precipitated a further wave of coughing. Jane moved to a narrow settee under the window and Richard perched uncomfortably on the single dining chair at the small gate-legged table.

“I suppose the police have already asked you about your son’s business. Miss Cresswell is concerned about an incident that happened in 1916 and we think it’s just possible . . .” Richard was struck again by the ridiculous notion that there could be any possible connection between Alfred Cresswell’s execution and the

murder of this woman's son; but they had come this far and he was determined to carry on.

"Police didn't ask me much at all," the woman said. "Oswald had a secretary, such as she were, and a proper office. Said it gave his practice professionalism. That's what he said. Anyway, this secretary was able to tell them the cases he was working on, most of which was news to me."

"Your son never discussed his work with you, Mrs Walters?"

"I don't say he never discussed it." Again the hacking cough. "But since the war he didn't discuss much with anybody. But it weren't 'is work what got 'im killed, I'm sure of that."

"But surely—?" Jane's tone was gentle and sympathetic and the woman turned her face to examine her again.

"You're very young my dear," she said. "Lost your brother, did you say? Difficult to lose anyone in the war. My Oswald come 'ome all right but I lost 'im to it, just the same."

Richard broke in: "You say that Oswald was not working when he was killed."

"Working, yes, but not one of his cases. Mostly straying husbands and lost folk, 'is work was. I told 'im that weren't fit work. Not a proper job. But he trained at it, sir, just like any other. And he said it gave him an opportunity to pursue his own investigations. That's what he said, and more than once he said it, too."

"And what were those investigations, Mrs Walters?"

"Not rightly sure, my dear. But they was leftovers from the war. That I do know."

"Leftovers?"

"The lad I raised was not the one who came home." The light in the old woman's eyes faded and Richard felt the sadness. How many mothers all over the world had lost that light? The woman was

speaking quietly and he had to lean forward to catch her words. "He was obsessed with hate. Not like my boy." She looked up and caught Richard's eye. "Oh, no, not hate for the Germans, no. Someone in his regiment. Obsessed. He didn't talk about the war much but he once said he'd lost two good friends. Both shot by his own people. That was what he was investigating when he got himself killed." The woman turned to Jane now and her words grew edgy. "Dangerous people. If they'd kill one of their own, they killed my Oswald, you best travel careful if you're asking the same folk the same questions."

"I'm not sure what questions I am asking," said Jane. "And I don't have anyone to ask, really. Did your son mention any names?"

"He was one of those two, wasn't he? Your brother? Killed by his own." The watery, dull eyes studied Jane's face for a long moment then her gaze fell away and she sat silent for a long time with her head lolling on his chest as if she was asleep, her breath rasping in her throat. But Richard could see her brow creasing into a frown and the lips moving without words.

"Who is it, Mrs Walters? Who killed them and who killed Oswald?"

"Oh, I don't know that, do I? But names might be in here somewhere." She tapped her forehead with a short thin finger. "Clarie was one," she said without looking up. "And Fisher. That was the one he hated. But both of them were guilty, he said."

"Clarie and Fisher? They murdered Oswald's two friends? Is that what he said?"

She shook her head. "No, he never said it. Just said they knew something. Clarie wouldn't speak up when she had the chance. Whatever that means. And Oswald said Fisher was a nasty piece of work."

“She?”

“Sorry?”

“You said Clarie was a she.”

“Well, I supposed she was. Not a lad’s name is it?”

“Could it have been a nickname, short for something?”

Clarimond, perhaps. Did Oswald ever speak about anyone by that name? Or the chaplain, did he mention the chaplain?”

The old woman shook her head slowly. “Not Clarimond, I’d’ve remembered that, wouldn’t I? But he said something about the padre. In his dream. Woke me up regular he did with his screamin’ in the night. Mostly I couldn’t tell what he was saying but sometimes he’d say Fisher’s name and sometimes he said Herbert or Alfie, things like that, and once he said, quite clear, as how the padre knows something. Said it twice. Very angry he were. But when I woke him and asked him he’d tell me nothing.”

“So Clarie might have been the padre? Clarimond?”

“You tell me,” the woman shrugged. “That policeman never asked none of this and the man from the paper, neither.” The woman stood up suddenly and walked to the door. “And I’ll not speak of it further.” With that she led them quickly back along the hallway and bundled them through the door. Her hand shook as she reached for the latch and Richard felt sorry for bringing back memories they had no right to stir up. As he stepped through the door he turned to thank her but the woman ignored him and touched Jane’s sleeve and said softly, “Sorry for your loss, my dear.” And with that she was gone and the door had closed leaving them standing in the cold rain staring out at the bleak wet scene and the car waiting in the road.

Chapter Sixteen

Authuille, France, July 1916

“What are you doing here, Fisher?”

RSM Phillips had paused by the door and watched as the sergeant closed the filing cabinet drawer. The brigade office would normally house at least three men; but the lieutenant was inspecting the mess hall, and the clerk and signaller were probably running errands.

He had no idea how long Sergeant Fisher had been rummaging about in that drawer. He must’ve waited until the office was unmanned.

“I was looking for the padre, Sergeant Major,” said Fisher, without hesitating.

“Well, I don’t think you’ll find him in there.” Phillip’s quipped. “So bugger off back to your unit before I—”

“We’ve got a chap in clink, as you know, and he is entitled to speak with the padre.”

“Cresswell, yes, I know. Anglican I take it?”

Fisher moved away from the cabinet and nodded.

“Captain Clarimond is billeted in the last house in the village. If he’s not there, I guess he’s burying someone, somewhere. So you’ll have to wait for him to turn up, won’t you?”

“Thanks, Sergeant Major,” said Fisher, making for the door. “I’ll check the officers’ billet on my way back.”

“You do that,” said the RSM, more to himself than the departing sergeant’s back. “You do that.” And he turned to examine the label on the front of the filing cabinet. *Personnel A-F*. He opened the drawer and flicked through the contents: “What were you after,

Fisher?" he muttered. But there were hundreds of files in the drawer, including Cresswell, Captain Clarimond and Fisher himself. Only Cresswell's file was not there: forwarded to division following the Field General Court Martial. Fisher was certainly aware of what was in his own file. So, had he been looking for something on the padre? The RSM laid his pace stick gently on the desk and shrugged: "One thing's certain; you're up to something, Fisher."

"Captain Clarimond?"

"Who wants him?"

"Sergeant Fisher, Third ECI."

"Do I know you?"

"Not yet, Padre, not yet," said Fisher.

The chaplain had been dozing on his straw mattress when the Sergeant disturbed him and he was not pleased at being woken.

"It's just that you may have known my brother, sir." As the sergeant had no brother he knew it was not possible. "Michael Fisher. He was a pupil at St George's School." The captain was young but Fisher knew from the file that he'd been at the school on and off over the past ten years. And the teaching staff of the school were all seminarians. "I didn't go to St George's, sir," he added. "Product of the local state system. My parents decided against sending me to your lot after what happened to Michael."

Captain Clarimond looked decidedly uncomfortable now and he swung his legs to the floor and stood up. "Not sure where this is going, Sergeant," he said.

"My brother killed himself, Reverend Clarimond. Killed himself at your school. And I think we both know why, don't we?" Fisher could see his bluff had struck home.

"What do you want, Sergeant?"

Fisher paused for a moment as the German artillery dropped a short barrage four or five miles east of the village. Brigade headquarters was beyond the range of the German big guns, but when they overshot the front line, the noise and vibration through the ground were unnerving. Clarimond rested a hand on the dirty plaster of the wall.

“We’ve got a lad in custody awaiting execution,” Fisher began. “You’ll probably be attending him shortly.”

“Commutation likely?”

“Unlikely, sir. He refused to fight. Threw down his rifle. Nothing I could do, sir.” Fisher paused again as a solitary whizz-bang fell somewhere close. “They’ll shoot him, sir.”

“I see. And you’re concerned because . . . ?”

“I’m a fair and reasonable man, Padre. I had no choice. But Cresswell blames me for his situation. He’s made up some tale about me . . . acting in a manner unbecoming a man in my position. He didn’t have the nerve to bring it up at his court martial but I don’t doubt he’ll talk to someone. My advice, Padre, if he should start on about some German prisoners, or some such, is to ignore it. You forget whatever he tells you and I can forget about the . . . problems at St George’s School, eh?”

Without waiting for a reply, Fisher turned and walked off in the direction of the German artillery fire and his unit.

Chapter Seventeen

"You'll be all right? With your mother, I mean."

"Oh, she's so angry now it hardly seems to matter anymore," Jane shrugged. "I just wish there was something I could tell her to show that Alfred didn't really die a coward. But we've not found solid evidence, have we? Nothing we could use in a court of law."

"There probably isn't any, Jane," Richard said. "Oswald Walters' mother didn't tell us much more than we already knew. I think this is the end of the line, Jane."

"Only, this isn't about my brother any longer, is it? This is about Oswald Walters' murder, and Danny, and you, and that poor woman, Sally Sixsmith. Alfie Cresswell's execution hardly seems important in the present circumstances, does it?"

They were sitting in his car on the edge of Carfenton village, the place he usually let her down. Jane collected her bag from the floor by her feet and moved to step out. Richard, seeing her preparing to leave, opened his door to go round and assist her, but she laid her hand on his arm to stop him.

"I'll be all right, Richard," she said. Then she leant over and kissed him on the cheek. "If I can't help my brother, then I can try to help Mr Doyle, can't I?" And with that she stepped from the car and walked away down the lane.

On the drive back to Sadec House, Richard thought about what she'd said. A few weeks ago he would not have connected Jane Cresswell's problem with the dead man in the canal or with Danny Doyle. Only now, strands kept crossing and re-crossing. If Danny were not in enough trouble over the death of Sally Sixsmith, then his homosexuality would be enough for Inspector Bannister to lock him up. At the very least it would be enough to pressure the hapless Joe Baker into revealing Danny's whereabouts. But Bannister had

not been to Sadec House for some time. Richard consoled himself with the prospect that the policeman's absence might mean the case had gone cold; he and Danny could be left in peace.

Opening the door of Sadec House, he noticed an envelope on the doormat. Someone had hand delivered it; pushed it through the letterbox. No stamp; no address. Just his name in pale blue ink, and in the top left-hand corner the name of the local newspaper, "The Cambridge Evening News" in Gothic print.

He went up to the study and poured himself a small glass of whisky before opening it. A single sheet of notepaper torn from a small notebook, and the writing in the same pale blue ink as the envelope.

Mr Frampton, he read, I have news concerning your friend Mr Doyle of an urgent nature. I feel sure you are aware of his whereabouts and I should very much like to discuss one or two matters with you. I shall stay overnight at The Pikes. If you receive this before noon on the 12th, please meet me there, otherwise we could meet in my office at the newspaper.

Roger Manningham.

Richard lay the letter and the envelope on the small side table and sipped his drink. Just another piece of a puzzle that made less and less sense with each passing day. What did this Manningham know that might be of interest to Danny Doyle? Probably nothing; most likely a trap to get to Doyle. An exclusive story for his damned newspaper. A story to print and useful information for the police no doubt.

He sighed deeply to himself and pinched the bridge of his nose. What were the connections? He could well ignore the reporter and his baited invitation to meet. But what about everything else? Jane

had said this was no longer about her brother; it was about Danny Doyle and a more recent murder. Could he ignore that? And why was she still pursuing these things if they didn't concern her brother? Weeks ago she had come to him for help and he would find it difficult to let her down now.

Roger Manningham, a short bald man with a neatly trimmed moustache and a trace of grey in his bushy eyebrows, was sitting alone at the window table from where he must have seen Richard's approach across the old stone bridge.

"Mr Frampton," he said, extending a hand towards Richard. "Good of you to come. Sorry about the cryptic nature of the note but did the trick, eh?" He waved Richard onto the bench opposite and asked what he would like to drink. A few minutes later he was back with a pint of mild for Richard and a second bottle of the local pale ale for himself. Richard watched the man in silence as he poured his drink, took a sip and wiped the foam from his moustaches with the back of his hand.

"What exactly do you want Mr Manningham?"

The reporter raised his eyebrows and levelled his gaze on Richard. "My," he began, "you don't mess with words, Mr Frampton, do you?"

"And I don't like the press pushing its nose into my business, either."

"No-one does, but we all read the papers, don't we?" He leaned forward and took another sip. Richard was struck by the slowness of the man's movements. "I'm an editor now, but my special area of the news is crime, Mr Frampton, although I have been known to report upon the fortunes of the Varsity rugby team should the need arise—the sports editor is a soccer man, you see, whose brain can't

cope with the complexities of rugby football. So, crime it is, Mr Frampton. And one crime in particular is filling my busy day at present. The murder of Oswald Walters.”

The pressman paused and studied Richard’s face. Richard had been expecting something like this and remained as calm as he knew how. Like a minute’s silence at a memorial service, the quiet hung between them before the reporter spoke again. “Inspector Bannister trusts me,” he said, “more than he should, perhaps, but he trusts me, nonetheless. I am in possession of a great deal of information about this case which I am obviously not yet prepared to reveal to the general public. You asked me what I wanted, Mr Frampton; I tend to work on a tit-for-tat basis, I may have information which could be useful to you and, I feel sure, you have something for me. But it will depend to some extent upon trust.”

“What makes you think I have any interest in the Walters’ murder?”

Manningham smiled at him in a patronising way. “Let me paint the picture for you, Mr Frampton. Oswald Walters’ body was found at the weir not a mile from your house. I’ve walked the canal and I agree with the inspector: he might have been knocked in anywhere between here and the weir. Probably not here due to the shallow nature of the water under the bridge. You received a visit from an old war pal, Mr Daniel Doyle, the following week. Some further evidence has come to Inspector Bannister’s notice regarding a similar crime involving Mr Doyle in Australia.”

“Doyle didn’t murder anyone.”

The reporter held up a hand and smiled again, “I’m sure you’re right,” he said softly. “But that’s not all the evidence that the good inspector has in his hands. But we’ll come to that later, shall we?”

"If the inspector has anything he can use then he should arrest Doyle and let us all hear it in a court of law."

"Not so hasty, Mr Frampton. It's not just Danny Doyle he's after, you see. He has his sights set on arresting and charging and probably hanging the pair of you."

"Preposterous!"

"As may be, but let me tell you what I know, and perhaps you will then trust me enough to fill in certain details for me. Let me say straight off, I am very good at my job, Frampton. My editor-in-chief knows this and that's why I am allowed freedom to pursue my inquiries as I see fit. Bannister knows it too, and that's why he entrusts me with information that he would not normally divulge to members of my profession."

"Such as?"

"We'll come to that in a moment, shall we? Tell me something about Doyle. I'd like to meet with him personally, but I don't suppose you'd be willing to introduce us." Again the smile. Richard sipped his drink but made no reply. Manningham continued. "He knows that Doyle was here and stayed two days. He knows that Doyle lives with another man in some form of relationship. Something the inspector could use against him. He knows that Doyle is Australian—how did you two come to be chums by the way, Mr Frampton? An Australian corporal and an English Major?"

"Captain," Richard responded. "I only made captain. My uncle was the Major Frampton; at least he was by the end of the war. And in answer to your question, Doyle and I were caught in no-man's-land during the attack on Ovillers towards the German stronghold on Thiepval Spur, part of the larger battle on the Somme, with which you are no doubt familiar. Our battalions were brigaded together and his was on my company's right flank. We, that is Doyle

and I, successfully disabled a German machinegun nest, but both copped a wound for our trouble.”

“And you saved his life?”

“It wasn’t like that.” Richard looked down at his shoes under the table. “We kept each other alive, Mr Manningham. He saved my life as much as I saved his.”

“Quite so. And now you feel you owe him a debt of honour, is that it?”

“It doesn’t work like that.”

“How does it work then, exactly? Why is Doyle back in England? Because he did go home, didn’t he?”

“None of my business.” Richard felt the colour rising under his collar and forced himself to remain calm. “Let’s say a relationship in Australia failed and he decided to try his luck over here. Plenty of Australians still here since the war.”

“Indeed. And this failed relationship, that would be the brutal murder of Mrs Sally Sixsmith at Valley Farm.”

“Doyle had nothing to do with that.”

“He told you, did he?”

Richard knew how silly it would sound if he said that his faith in Doyle was based purely on Doyle’s own denial of the murder. He opened his mouth to speak but the reporter cut him off.

“As it happens, Mr Frampton, I know that your friend didn’t kill Mrs Sixsmith. The inspector had been told by some Australian sheep farmer, that Doyle was in Cambridge and that he was a wanted man back in his home country. Like I said, Inspector Bannister knows that I am good at my job. He also knows that my contacts on Western Australia are undoubtedly better than his. He gave me this information in the belief that I would make the necessary enquiries with the Perth newspapers. And I have.”

Manningham reached under the table and pulled out a battered flat document case, rummaged inside for a moment and produced a single sheet of paper.

“It seems, Mr Frampton, that Sally was killed by her brother-in-law, Isiah Fortitude Sixsmith, also known as Bing. The man committed another violent and heinous crime against a young woman in Adelaide, some thousand miles from Perth, and was arrested and charged. As it happened, one of the arresting constables in South Australia had served in the same battalion of the Australian Imperial Force. He recognised Bing Sixsmith and made enquiries regarding any other misdemeanours in his home state and discovered that your friend Mr Doyle, before his disappearance, had maintained that Bing Sixsmith must have slain the unfortunate Sally. Eventually he confessed to both crimes and was hanged in Adelaide jail.”

“So Doyle didn’t kill Sally Sixsmith, is that what you’re saying? So, is the inspector satisfied?”

“He may well be, but I doubt it. He has not been made aware of the facts yet. I myself have only been in possession of this telegram for a little over twenty-four hours. The problem is, Mr Frampton, Inspector Bannister might still consider Doyle a prime candidate for the murder of Oswald Walters. And along with him, as I said earlier, he is considering your good self.”

“There’s nothing to connect either Danny Doyle or myself to—”

“I mentioned some other evidence which the police have in their possession,” Manningham put the paper back into the leather bag and withdrew a fold-back notebook. “Firstly, of course, there’s the young woman. Came to the village asking for Captain Frampton and was directed to your house. That was before Doyle appeared, and it was around the time that Oswald Walters was murdered.”

"I know nothing about this woman," Richard felt his denial might have been too rapid, too strong. "If she exists at all."

"Oh, she exists, Mr Frampton," the reporter continued. "I have it from the publican behind the bar."

Richard looked across at jolly, red-faced Martin Chambers who was polishing glasses and chatting with a couple of farmhands.

"Martin wouldn't talk to the press about other people's business," Richard protested.

"Quite right, but he did speak to Bannister, and when I asked him outright about the young woman his silence was very telling, Frampton, very telling indeed. In my business you get to hear what people have to say even when they say nothing." Manningham took another sip of his drink and flipped through the pages of his notebook. "Of course, she may not have come to Sadec House after all, but that would appear unusual, after going to the trouble of asking here at the pub. The important thing is, Frampton, you denied all knowledge of her existence to the inspector. He thinks you're lying and, quite frankly, so do I. Now, if this girl is some secret liaison, shall we call her your lover? Then that is your business. If so she may have no bearing on the case in hand and the police and my editor can rule her out of further enquiries. But I somehow think she is involved, don't you? She was in the area at the time of Walters' murder—"

"This is ridiculous."

"Is it? Put yourself in Bannister's position. The girl exists all right, and she came here. Walters is most certainly dead. You are most certainly concealing something for whatever reasons—"

"There's nothing further to say, Mr Manningham." Richard made to stand up but the newspaperman waved him back into his seat.

“Just one more thing, Mr Frampton,” he said. “It seems Oliver Walters kept a notebook. The police found it in the water by the canal bank, not far from the weir. Smaller than this one. More like the sort of thing the police themselves use. But then Walters was a detective of some kind, wasn’t he? A Private Detective.”

Manningham made a show of sorting through the pages of his own notebook and laid it flat on the table. “Walters book was badly damaged by the water, pages all stuck together, ink running everywhere. Only a couple of things were decipherable; one was a page that appeared to be an investigation into a pair of servant girls dipping their hands into the family money. Walters’ secretary confirms that he’d been working on such a case. But that case was over near Peterborough and need not concern us. The only other page that was readable was a list of names. At least that’s what it appears to be. I’ve copied it out as best I could, Mr Frampton, but you must realise it was a complete mess. However, the police have been able to make out certain letters.”

He turned the notebook around on the table so that Richard could see what he’d copied. It was a list but made little sense. The first word was —*sswell* and had been struck through. Below this was *F...her*, and the next word was *chaplain*. Beneath this Manningham had written *unreadable* twice and then *Hig—* and —*ton* and *Sade—*.”

“Doesn’t make any sense,” said Richard although he could almost see where things were going.

“No, it doesn’t, does it? Not at first. However, this ‘—sswell’ could be a name: a person or a place. Ring any bells there? What about this chaplain, that’s quite clear isn’t it? Although Bannister is at a loss to find any such chaplain connected here. And this, could this be a name or does it say ‘father’? Bannister thinks so, but I’m

not convinced. But it's these last two that interest me, and indeed interest the police. 'ton' might be part of name, too, don't you agree? In fact it might be part of your name, Mr Frampton. And finally this 'Sade...' that's the house, isn't it. Sadec House. Can't be too many of those in England can there?"

Both men were silent for a moment. Richard was staring at the page in the reporter's notebook and he could feel Manningham's eyes studying him closely.

"Why are you telling me this?" he asked when he was finally able to look up into Manningham's face.

"Like I said, Mr Frampton, tit-for-tat. Trust. You know what I know and we both know what the police know. As I said, Bannister doesn't know that Doyle is innocent of Sally Sixsmith's murder yet, but he will later today, I'm sure. Ideally I'd like three things: the name of the girl, the whereabouts of Mr Doyle, and whatever you learned from Oswald Walters' mother."

"How did you know—?"

"It's my job to know these things, Mr Frampton, and as I said, I'm good at my job. Now, I assume you are still not prepared to reveal the girl's name to me, nor would I expect you to tell me about Doyle's bolthole wherever it may be. But Mrs Walters sent me packing as soon as she realised I was from the press. Did she have anything useful to say?"

Richard sat and thought for some time. The reporter said nothing.

"It's Fisher," Richard said, clearing his throat.

"What is?"

"This word, Fisher, not father. Sergeant Fisher was Walter's NCO during the war. Seems Walters was obsessed with the man. He wasn't working on a real case when he was killed. He was

investigating something of his own. Trying to get something on this sergeant.”

“A private who hated his sergeant,” said Manningham, smiling. “Nothing unusual there.”

“But it was years ago. Most men have got over things like that by now. But Oswald Walters thought Fisher was responsible for the death of one of his friends, perhaps two friends. I think he was out to prove it.”

Manningham stroked his chin for a moment and stared at his notebook. “Now, that is interesting. What about this ‘chaplain?’”

Richard shook his head. That must refer to Clarimond, but he wasn’t ready to reveal too much yet. And the first word, that could be part of Cresswell. He pointed at the letters ‘Hig...’ “This is a man called Higgins. He was shot while escorting some German prisoners back to an MP camp at Bertangles. The official record will almost certainly reveal that he was shot by those Germans who were attempting to escape.”

“But Walters didn’t believe it?”

Richard shook his head. “And, for what it’s worth Mr Manningham, neither do I.”

“Not much to go on is it?” Manningham picked up his leather satchel again and reached into his pocket to pass his business card across the table. “If you should remember anything else, be sure to give me a call. You may not believe it but I’m on your side. I don’t think you or Doyle are involved in this, but you know something and you’re not telling the police. That’s a dangerous game, Mr Frampton. Bannister will hang the pair of you if he gets a chance.”

Chapter Eighteen

Jane got into the car and straightened her skirt across her knees as Richard returned to the driver's seat.

"My ruse about being sick worked well at the shop and mother had no reason to believe I was anywhere but working. So this time there were no ructions."

He'd picked her up at the Cambridge train station and they were on their way to Ely.

"So you're sick again today?" Richard said. Jane nodded and dropped her eyes to her hands and the large handbag resting on the floor at her feet.

"Well, you look very well to me," he said, with a grin.

"Thank you. Sir."

"And the diaries?"

"Back in their hiding place," she said. "I'm sure she hasn't missed them this time."

They fell silent for several minutes before Jane spoke again. "She's changed, you know, my mother. Not just since Alfred's death, that was a big change, naturally, but since the notebooks came. That's a year ago now and sometimes I think she never even read them. But that would be silly. Don't you think the temptation would be irresistible? Read them or not, she hates them and won't have me anywhere near them, nor anyone else. She would have a fit if she knew what we've been doing these last weeks. Of course, she has some idea and that's enough to upset her. She says these things only stir up bad memories, best left alone. Only—"

"Only, you don't agree." Richard looked at her briefly.

"Strange that she didn't destroy the notebooks when she could have done so. Maybe she still clings onto something of Alfred's memory, even though she's acting as if she isn't. Anyway, my

brother was charged with cowardice. But he wasn't a coward, we know that much."

"And you think, chasing the man who accused him will—"

"I understand, Richard," she said angrily. "You think I'm stupid, don't you? Only we're not doing this for Alfie anymore, are we?"

At first she'd thought visiting the bishop would be a waste of time. And what would her Wesleyan Methodist, chapel-loving mother say if she saw her now, sitting primly in the front parlour of the bishop's house sipping tea from the finest china she'd ever seen. She sat quietly, listening to the conversation between the two men. The bishop was remembering Richard's father.

"Great loss to the church," he was saying. "No imagination whatsoever, of course, but spiritual, yes, spiritual. The church could use more like him. The bishop, a large man made larger by the folds of his robes, put his cup down in its saucer with a gentleness that belied his size. "And your mother, too, poor dear woman."

Jane could tell from his tone that the bishop had not liked Richard's mother. Perhaps, she thought, he did not like women at all.

"Looking for young Clarimond, are you? He was one of my students at Cambridge, you know. Brilliant mind. Rising star. Had him marked down to become an archbishop, if you must know."

"But he didn't. Any idea why?"

"The war, old chap. Never came back to this diocese, did he?"

Neither Jane nor Richard commented on the bishop's last remark.

"Good man at the scriptures," the cleric continued. "Good at politics, too. Rat cunning they call it, don't they. Never really liked

him myself. Not a friend of yours was he? No, thought not. Ambitious to a fault.”

“But you don’t know where he is now?”

“Afraid not. Probably dead. That beastly war. He’s not with the church anyway; otherwise, he’d have his own mitre by now, as I said. Might have taken to business or politics. He was made for those, if you ask me.”

Jane and Richard were shown out of the office and handed their hats and coats by an elderly churchman who seemed to act more like a butler than a deacon. At the door, he glanced back towards the bishop’s study and spoke to Richard in a quiet voice.

“If you’re looking for Rupert Clarimond you won’t find him here; at least not in this bishop’s see, or under that name. He changed his name to Clare after the war. Rupert Clare and he was working in the poorer parts of London, last time I heard, but that was four years ago. You could try here.” The old man slipped a note into Richard’s hand. “If he’s anywhere, they should know,” he added and closed the door gently behind them.

The note was merely the name of a church dedicated to St Martin and a street in the East End of London. Richard handed it to Jane and smiled. “We could check at Kew first then carry on and see if this place still exists.”

The archivist at the Public Records Office in Kew was even less helpful than the bishop had been. He was much younger than Jane expected, perhaps still in his twenties. Robert had telephoned the day before and the young man said he’d be only too pleased to help.

“Except, I must inform you that the records of courts martial leading to death by firing squad are not in the domain where the public may access them.” He was saying in a voice that would

undoubtedly have put a person to sleep in minutes. “I can confirm, however, that the trial you mentioned did take place in July 1916 at the village of Bresle. An upstairs bedroom of the schoolmaster’s house was used for the FGCM and the sentence was carried out in La Vicogne where your uncle’s regiment were billeted later that month. I’m sorry I cannot allow access to the files pertinent to the case. Held in confidentiality for many years, you see. You must understand, we here at PRO are deeply concerned for the feelings of the grieving families.”

Pompous fool, Jane thought, *if you cared a jot about the grieving families you would let them know the truth*. She said nothing.

Richard, who must have dealt with many fools like this one in the army, thanked the man for his help, an irony totally wasted on the young archivist, and led her by the arm back out to the waiting car.

“Just as we suspected,” he said. “We’ll get nothing here. Maybe this church in London will be more rewarding.”

St Martin’s Anglican Church lay at the end of a dull grey street of sad terraced houses. A persistent drizzle lent the place an extra coat of misery. Several windows and doorways opposite the church were boarded up and litter drifted in the wind along the shallow gutters to be trapped in muddy puddles. It was hard to imagine that anyone would live around here, even less would worship at this church. Perhaps it had once been a pleasant street, but Jane doubted it.

Inside the nave, where the wind still penetrated through the gaps in the broken porch and a cluster of broken windowpanes, the church was almost as cold as the street outside. A small group of parishioners sat on one of the front pews. From their midst came the cry of a small child and the mumbled comforting tones of the vicar.

Even in the shadows, Jane could make out that the Reverend Rupert Clare, formerly Padre Clarimond of the East Anglian Brigade, was a long thin man with heavy lines on his face and dark rings around the eyes. Those same dark, sad eyes now turned to observe the two strangers approaching along the central aisle of St Martin's and the depth of his stare made Jane shiver.

"Reverend Clare?" Richard asked as the man withdrew from the huddle around the child and straightened his back. "Reverend Rupert Clare, or Clarimond?" He said the name slowly as the dull echo of his voice was taken up by the lofty vault of the church roof.

"Can I help you?"

"Quite possibly. My name is Richard Frampton, and this is Miss Jane Cresswell."

If there were anything in those names to startle the vicar of St Martin's then he certainly hid it well.

"Frampton," he said pensively, "I knew a Robert Frampton. Father? Brother, perhaps?"

"My uncle," said Richard. "He was a Captain with the East Cambridgeshires back in 1916." He let the words settle into a hollow silence for a moment before he added, "And Miss Cresswell's brother was—"

"It was a long time ago," said the vicar, his eyes moving from Richard and to Jane. "What makes you think I might remember it?"

Jane felt the cold damp air of the church on the back of her neck.

"Some things a man never forgets." Richard's words sounded sharp and angry even to her.

"My brother was shot, Reverend Clare—" she said.

"I know, I know, but it's been over eight years, my child. Nothing any of us can do now." The cleric whispered to himself and again she felt the skin on her neck twitch.

"I believe I know why, I just need your version of events."

Clare led them out through the side door by the altar and into a robing room, untidy with boxes and broken furniture. He continued through a second door into a small courtyard garden where three ill-fitting grey slabs lay like forgotten islands in a turbulent sea of overgrown grass tufts and weeds. From somewhere in his cassock he drew a packet of cigarettes, lit one, and dropped the match into the wet grass.

"I used to think," he said, "that when a man died it was the most sacred thing he did in his life—the most sacred thing in all the world—the moment of death. There were just too many sacred moments that summer, weren't there?" He looked up at Richard with his dark, sad eyes and Jane almost felt sorry for the man. But where had he been when her brother died? What did he know about it all? "I was officially with Division," he continued, "few regiments had their own chaplain. Spent a great deal of time with the ECI. But you must understand that my flock was potentially as many as twelve battalions, should have been fourteen thousand men, but by August of that year we were lucky if we had eight thousand on the active roster." He drew deeply on his cigarette and watched the curl of smoke drift up into the darkening London air. "Your brother, Miss Cresswell, died in the midst of all that."

"You were there, weren't you?"

"I was not a party to the processes of the court, if that's what you mean. But one of my duties as Brigade chaplain was to lead the condemned man from his cell to the place . . . on his final journey in this world." Again the puff of smoke blown into a cold grey sky. "To

answer the question you are asking, Miss Cresswell, that is, why should it be so, would require an insight into the minds of the members of the FGCM—perhaps your uncle, Mr Frampton, would have been a party to those machinations.”

“Well, we can’t ask him now, unfortunately. But he was a member of the board?”

“Robert Frampton? I can’t remember. He may have had no direct part in the trial itself. As I recall the CO had been killed in the early days of July. Robert, as adjutant was acting in command for the rest of the month. Don’t suppose he’d have called a Field General Court Martial without considerable pressure from Brigade or Division. Although Private Cresswell’s behaviour was remarkable even for those testing times.”

“Remarkable in what way?”

“Refused to do anything. Threw away his weapon. In the end Sergeant Fisher had no other course of action but to charge him.”

“Could this all be a case of an overzealous NCO? If Sergeant Fisher took a dislike to Cresswell—?”

“George Fisher is a fair man and an honest one. The troops loved him and respected him. There’s no reason to—”

“Did my brother give you any indication as to why—?”

“Even if I had known something as you seem to be suggesting, what would’ve been the point of making it public? There were rumours about a massacre of innocent people, civilians or unarmed prisoners. If your brother and George Fisher had been in some way responsible then it would’ve been a war crime; it would’ve been immoral—and you must understand that we did not commit atrocities, or war crimes, our actions were never immoral. We left that sort of thing to the Germans and the Russians. Anyone

reporting such behaviour from our chaps would have been very swiftly moved on to somewhere even less comfortable.”

“Few places could be less hospitable than Thiepval or Pozières in July and August 1916,” Richard muttered under his breath.

Reverend Clare merely shrugged his shoulders, dropped his cigarette onto the grey slab at his feet, and turned back towards the church. “I only know, Miss Cresswell, that it is pointless to attempt to shift the blame for your brother’s crimes onto a man like George Fisher.”

Outside on the drab street with the drizzle growing heavier, Jane felt for a moment as if she might explode with anger.

“That fool,” she said, and the sharpness of her words made Richard stop and look back at her and she felt the tears of frustration prickling in her eyes.

“Can’t let men like Clarimond get at you Jane,” he said soothingly. “He might’ve changed his name and he might be ministering to the poor and downtrodden—is that his atonement, do you think? But that man knows something. Robert said it in his notes. And remember the bishop’s words. “Rat cunning and ambition” he said. And all that nonsense about Fisher being fair and honest. Sergeant Fisher was not a nice man. Oswald Walters and Sam Pickering both indicate as much. No, Jane, the good padre may not have told us what we want to know but he has been useful, nonetheless.”

“So,” she said, sniffing back her tears. “Where do we go now?”

“Time to confront Sergeant George Fisher, I think. Still got that list of addresses from Robert’s file?”

Mrs Armstrong kept a perfectly respectable boarding house for professional gentlemen, and a small sign on the fence reassured them of that fact. This was the address that had been recorded as Sergeant Fisher's home back in November 1916, but Richard did not feel optimistic that he would be living there still.

"All my gentlemen are professional, you see," Mrs Armstrong reiterated. "George Fisher, you say? Now that's strange. Yes, Mr Fisher lived here—and came back after the war, he did. But didn't stay. Not well, he weren't. And not popular with some of the other residents, as I recall."

"Do you know where—?" Richard began.

"I only know where he went from here, into one of those care homes for old soldiers in Huntingdon, but I can't vouch for his whereabouts now, can I? May be dead for all we know."

"Why is it strange?" asked Jane. The question puzzled Richard and confused Mrs Armstrong.

"What's strange?" she said.

"When Mr Frampton asked about Mr Fisher, you said it was strange."

"Did I now? Well, I suppose it is after all these years, that's because you're not the first folk to come asking after George Fisher."

"Someone else was here? When?"

"About a month since."

"Tall thin man with dark eyes?" Jane said rapidly, and Richard knew that she was describing Rupert Clare.

"Can't say, my dear; I never seen him. My Billy spoke with a man sometime last month who was asking after Mr Fisher—he remembers Mr Fisher does my Billy. And he was one as didn't like him and no mistake."

"Can we talk to Billy, please?"

“You can talk to him, but whether he’ll make sense for you is another matter; he’s not right in the head our Billy.”

She led them inside to a narrow sitting room. Billy Armstrong was a man in his twenties with a large face and small eyes that peered back at the two of them as his mother explained slowly who they were.

“They want to ask you about the man who was looking for Mr Fisher,” she said, and the lad looked back at her then at each of them in turn but said nothing. “You remember Mr Fisher, don’t you Billy?”

“He hit me,” the lad said sharply, bringing an arm up to the side of his head as if to recall a blow.

“He never did!”

“He did ma,” the young man exclaimed. “He hit me.”

“Then you must’ve asked for it,” the mother rebuked.

“I asked him about the war,” the lad said and looked at Jane as if she might hold the explanation of why he’d been hit. “I said I didn’t like all that killing. I said it was murder, killing all them people. And he hit me.”

“It was a long time ago, Billy. Mr Fisher’s been gone these five years. And the war’s over now, Billy. He never liked the war,” Mrs Armstrong explained. “And don’t like killing to this day. It took his father, you see. He don’t understand. Even had to leave the picture hall once we did when one of those newsreels was on showing some fighting at Gallipoli; took on real bad did Billy. Doesn’t even like to see a dead rabbit now.”

“And the man who came to ask you about Mr Fisher,” said Jane softly, “can you remember him.”

Her question was met with a blank stare and she just smiled back at him.

“Was he a tall thin man with dark eyes?” she asked but still there was nothing. Mrs Armstrong shook her head and began to lead them back into the hall. As Jane was about to leave the room she turned and smiled back at the young man in the chair but he was staring at a spot on the carpet near his slippered feet. Who knew what his eyes saw or his mind recalled? Then he said very quietly, “No, not tall, short, short and no hair here on the middle of his head.”

Waterloo House lay about a mile out of Cambridge in several acres of landscaped gardens. A board outside the main gate, half hidden by brambles, informed visitors that the establishment was run jointly by the War Office and Ministry of Munitions and they must report to the reception. The grass lawns were just drying in the late afternoon sun after the morning shower and Richard parked the car on the gravelled area beside the imposing front door.

Reception turned out to be a table pushed against the wall in the corner of the entrance hall with an array of pigeonholes above it. Some of these had names printed on slips of paper; some had envelopes awaiting collection but most were empty. A man in a dark blue smock approached them as they stood in the centre of the hall.

“Good day to you, Miss, Sir,” he wiped his hands down the front of his smock. “Visiting someone in particular are we?”

Richard said they would like see an old soldier by the name of Fisher, George Fisher, and the man asked them to sign the visitor’s book that lay open on the desk.

“Interesting old house,” Jane said, looking up to examine the faded frieze at the top of the wall and the ornate, crumbling plasterwork of the ceiling.

“It is indeed, Miss. Mentioned in the Doomsday Book, the original was. Though not so much of that remains to this day. That trefoil window is believed to be sixteenth century although some say the glass is too modern for that. Possibly brought across from one of the local churches when they were renovating. Has a certain sacred appeal to it, don’t you think?”

“There,” said Richard after signing the book. “And now, if you would show us where we might find Mr Fisher.”

“He’ll be out on the back veranda, sir. Just through that door to your left. You can’t miss him, fellow in a bath chair. And don’t give him any tobacco, sir, he’s not permitted.”

With that, the blue-smocked man disappeared back through the small door to the right of the reception desk and Richard led Jane out through the double doors onto a rear veranda overlooking a sloping lawn and two rows of rhododendrons. To the left were two patients sitting up playing a game of chess on a long table set up between the two beds. On the other side of the veranda was a single bath chair with a man wrapped in blankets who appeared to be dozing. While they were still out of earshot, Richard leaned close and whispered to Jane, “Interesting finding while you were admiring the gothic windows, we’re not the first to visit our friend. Like Billy Armstrong said, there was someone else here about five weeks ago: Mr O Walters. He’d signed the book.”

“Mr Fisher?” Richard said and the man’s eyes sprang open immediately and peered back to them.

“Who are you?” he snapped.

“My name is Frampton and this is Miss Cresswell, Jane Cresswell. We’d like to ask you a few questions . . . about something that happened a long time ago.”

The man in the chair stared back at them. The corners of his mouth turned down but his moist eyes just stared without emotion. Richard was about to continue when George Fisher spoke.

“Frampton, eh? You must be his brother then.”

“Robert was my uncle,” Richard said.

“And you must be Alfred bloody Cresswell’s little sister.”

Jane blushed and Richard had the impression she wanted to say something sharp, but she said nothing.

“You know who we are then, so I think you can guess why we came.” Richard said in a steady tone. “Tell us what really happened, George. Why was Miss Cresswell’s brother executed?”

“Search me,” said Fisher looking away at the bushes beyond the lawn. “I told him. I warned him. I never wanted to charge him. All he had to do was pick up where he’d left off and get on with the fighting same as everyone else and he’d have been fine. But no, not Alfie Cresswell. I did what I could but I couldn’t save him.”

“My uncle thought the padre knew something but wasn’t telling. What do suppose that means? That would’ve been Chaplain Clarimond, wouldn’t it?”

“Search me,” Fisher said, for the second time and closed his eyes as if recalling the past or avoiding the present. Then he almost spat his words at them: “That Clarimond can rot in hell for all I care. Thinks he can redeem himself by feeding the poor in that run-down parish of his. But there’s no atonement for the likes of Rupert Clarimond.”

“And what about Oswald Walters?”

The man in the chair turned sharply at the mention of Walters’ name. “What’s he got to do with anything?”

“That’s what we hoped you would tell us,” said Richard. “You do know Walters is dead, don’t you? Murdered.”

“Good riddance. Lousy bloody soldier that one. Both of them were. Walters always poking his snout in where it didn’t belong.”

“Both of them?” Jane said. “You mean Mr Walters and my brother?”

Fisher shook his head. “Walters and Higgins. Bosom buddies they were. No, Miss Cresswell, your brother was a reasonable enough squaddie until he went mad, that is.”

Richard looked at Jane whose face was flushed and angry. “If my brother was mad, Mr Fisher, then why wasn’t he boarded as medically unfit? Why did you have to shoot him?”

“I never shot him,” shouted Fisher and his words brought curious looks from the men in the beds further down the veranda. “He refused to fight. He refused to do anything. He wasn’t mad, Miss, he was just a bloody coward.”

“And Oswald Walters,” said Richard sharply. “What has he got to do with all this?”

“Search me,” said Fisher a third time. “Maybe he knew too much about the padre’s past. Maybe that’s why he killed him.”

“Who killed him?”

“Clarimond, of course. He wouldn’t want Walters telling the whole world that he, the Reverend Rupert Clarimond, or Clare, or whatever he calls himself nowadays, was an abuser of small boys, now would he?”

“Clarimond?” said Richard.

“The very same,” said Fisher, closing his eyes again. “I turned up some information about a certain school near Cambridge. An article in the local papers; sitting in the trenches. Some upright pillars of the Anglican community in Cambridge; the church apparently had to move a few of its vicars around, take them out of boys’ schools, shall we say. No one was named, but the school was. Checked on

our chaplain Clarimond and sure enough he'd been there as a teacher before the war. So I invented a brother who'd attended the school while Clarimond was still in the seminary. This fictitious brother killed himself, Mr Frampton, or at least that's what I led Clarimond to believe. Twelve years of age, I said. I had nothing, of course. Just a fishing trip really. But Clarimond must've had a murky past, 'cos he took the bait and no mistake. He denied it at first, of course, but I knew by then I had something over that one. Why else had he ended up in the army on the front line? Deny it all he might, I knew the truth: Clarimond was an abuser. Maybe it wasn't my brother, like I said, I had no brother, but it was someone's brother."

"And you think Walters' turned up something like that on Rupert Clarimond? So Clarimond killed him?"

"Nasty piece of work that padre, Mr Frampton. Never trusted him."

"Strange," said Richard, "he speaks highly of you."

Fisher chuckled softly to himself. "I'll bet he does."

"What exactly have Higgins and Walters to do with my brother, Mr Fisher?"

"They were in the same company, that's all I know. Like I said, your brother was an all right sort of soldier, until—"

"Until he went mad, you said," Jane snapped. "Then why wasn't he discharged as medically unfit?"

"Don't you go twisting my words, girl, your brother refused to fight in a war where good men died every day. Now, if I was you I'd accept that and get on with life. No point in stirring things up. I'm sure your dear mother wouldn't want that, now would she? She'd want Alfred Cresswell's cowardice in the face of the enemy buried along with his bones, wouldn't she?"

Jane managed to contain her emotions until they were out by the car at the front of the building. "That man's a . . ."

"Yes," Richard said, without waiting for her to find an appropriate word to finish. "Only the Reverend Rupert Clare has anything good to say of him, and now I think we know why. If Fisher was blackmailing Clarimond over some misdemeanour at some school years before the war, then maybe that's why the padre wasn't telling whatever he knew."

"I need to check something in that visitor's book," Jane said and started back towards the building.

"Wait, what else can—?" But she was gone through the door. Richard followed her across the open tiled floor of the entrance hall hoping that the besmocked man would not re-appear from his room.

Jane grabbed the book and ran a finger up the page. "There's Walters," she said pointing at the name and flipping over to the previous page. Not finding what she sought she flipped to another and ran her finger up until she stopped and stabbed the page. "There she is," she said. "My mother was here." Her finger ran along to the date. "Six months ago. After she received the package of notebooks from Australia. My mother came here to confront that man out there."

"This business gets more curious," Richard said. "But there's no more we can do here this evening. Best get you back to Carfenton before that mother of yours has conniptions again." With that he turned and went back out to the car. Jane turned to follow him but a movement beyond the double doors caught her attention and she moved to the small window that looked out over the rear gardens. "That's odd," she said, but Richard was already gone and she found she was speaking to herself.

Jane turned on her heel and made for the door in a bustle of confusion.

Chapter Nineteen

The church bells from the village, mournful and distant, reminded him of his childhood. It was four days since he and Jane had been to see the Reverend Clare in London and George Fisher in his nursing home in Huntingdon. There was nothing more they could do. There was nothing further to be gained from Robert's papers. The notebooks? He hadn't read them all but he'd seen the relevant pages and so had Doyle. And, anyway, the notebooks were back in their hiding place at Jane's home now. Too risky for her to bring them again and provoke a further outburst from her mother. They'd found Clarimond and Fisher; Doyle had confirmed Sam Pickering's notes about finding the dead bodies beside the road. And Oswald Walters had turned out to be an old soldier from Robert's battalion—which put him with Jane's brother and Fisher. What else could he do?

The bellringers rang the bells down and an empty silence reigned for several minutes before the rooks in the beech trees took up their sad calls across the farm fields. Richard felt there was no longer a reason for Jane to come to Sadec House, and he wasn't sure how that made him feel. She was a strange girl; a nuisance in some ways, getting him to chase all over the country to solve a mystery that was perhaps no mystery at all. He hadn't really minded that though. It was just that she sometimes spoke her mind a little too forthrightly. Was that a bad thing? She'd called him a fuddy-duddy: Victorian. Still, he would've liked to see her again. But, as she'd pointed out herself, Oswald Walters' murder was the problem now, not Alfie Cresswell's execution. It was Inspector Bannister's problem—but it might prove to be Danny's too, or his.

After clearing the breakfast things, he took a cup of stewed tea up to the study intending to do some work on the typescripts Thatchers had sent over from Cambridge a month ago. He could forget about Jane Cresswell and Oswald Walters and all the possible connections.

The study, usually warm and familiar to him, was cold and uncomfortable now. The oriental artefacts usually so exotic and delicate, now seemed mundane and cluttered.

He'd been working for almost an hour on the loose pages in front of him, when the doorbell rang. Jane? Had she come after all, he thought, making his way downstairs to the front door.

"You don't look very pleased to see me." Doyle gave Richard a lop-sided grin.

"Danny! No, it's just that I thought . . ." Richard felt a flush of embarrassment colour his skin. "No, Danny, of course, it's good to see you. Come in."

Back in the study Danny settled himself into one of the two armchairs and scrambled through his pockets for his cigarettes. "I had a visit from a newspaperman called Manningham," he said. "You've met him, I think."

Richard nodded. "He came here about a week ago. He's the one who had the information on Sally's murder, Bing Sixsmith being caught and all that. I sent a note in the post about it. But how did he find you? I didn't tell him where you were."

"Bannister has arrested Joe Baker, the guy I live with. He's set him up on an indecency charge and is threatening him with two years hard labour if he doesn't give me up to the police. Joe's terrified. This Manningham character is covering the Oswald Walters murder and he got to talk to Joe. Joe must've trusted him, and he's desperate. He sent Manningham out to Connell's pig farm

to let me know I should get well away, Bannister's still out for my blood—and yours too.”

“But surely if Bannister knows you didn't kill Sally then he must know you didn't kill this Walters chap.”

“Poor logic Richard. At least, if you're a policeman. Bannister either doesn't believe Manningham's contacts in Australia or he's choosing to ignore the facts. He thinks he's close to solving the local murder—why should he let a few facts get in the way?”

Richard considered the injustice of this and what it might mean for him if the inspector tried to prove Doyle killed Oswald Walters. It wouldn't be hard to convince a jury that Richard knew all about it and even that they were both involved in the murder together. Bannister would get him as an accessory; they might both hang for something they didn't do but still could not explain.

“What do we know about Walters, anyway?”

“Of course, you don't know, do you? Jane and I found him in Robert's notes. He was with the Third ECI as well. We went to the address given and found Mrs Walters.”

“Same regiment as Cresswell, then.”

“Exactly,” said Richard. “But it doesn't explain anything, does it? But she told us he was obsessed with—”

For the second time that morning Richard was startled by the doorbell. Both men looked at each other, then Richard went downstairs. This time it was Jane Cresswell standing on the doorstep.

Back up in the study Richard explained why Danny had come to Sadec House then he asked, “Does your mother know you're here?”

“She said she was going to chapel as usual but she's up to something, I know she is. She still refuses to have any talk about my brother or any mention of Sam Pickering's notebooks. And I

think she's been meeting someone. I shudder to think how she'd react if she suspected we'd still been investigating. She's very angry these days. I used to think it was losing my father, or Alfred's dreadful death, but now, since these diaries have come, she's, well, I don't know . . . different."

"Well, it's great to see you again Miss Cresswell," said Danny. "Richard was about to tell me about your visit to Oswald Walter's wife."

"His mother actually," said Jane. "And there's a little more to add now. We've found the chaplain that Sam Pickering mentions. Rupert Clarimond, goes under the name of Clare these days and is working with the poor and downtrodden in the East End. Richard thinks that could be some kind of atonement for what he knows and isn't saying about Sergeant Fisher."

"And we went to see him, too," Richard added. "Let me make a fresh pot of tea and we can tell you all about it."

Richard went down to the kitchen to make a fresh pot of tea and left Jane to fill Doyle in on their trip to Mrs Oswald.

"I don't think we found anything of substance," she said. "Although we did find the padre and George Fisher."

"I think we all know what happened back in the summer of 1916, but without Fisher's co-operation I can't clear my brother's name." She paused. "I don't think Sergeant Fisher is the sort of man who would help," she continued. "And the more we do the more suspicious the police will get."

Richard had just settled back into the chair behind the desk when the doorbell rang for a third time. The three of them looked at each other in amazement.

“Who the devil—?” said Richard. “Two months ago, no-one had been to Sadec since Robert died. Now it’s like Shaftsbury Avenue on opening night.”

As soon as Jane heard the inspector’s voice she feared for Danny Doyle’s safety. She almost expected the man to burst into the room and sweep his suspect off in chains, but Inspector Bannister stepped quietly into the room and stood for a moment studying Danny and her as they sat and stared back at him.

“Ah, Mr Doyle,” the inspector said softly and without a trace of surprise. “And this young lady is . . .?”

“Jane Cresswell,” she said nervously.

“And this would be the young lady you tell me does not exist, Mr Frampton?” he said, turning to Richard then back to her.

“Cresswell, you say.” He made an elaborate gesture of removing his notebook from his jacket pocket. “C-r-e-s-s-w-e-l-l? Am I right?” Jane nodded with a frown. The Inspector continued. “It’s just that I’m investigating a murder, Miss Cresswell, perhaps you are familiar with the case. The deceased gentleman kept a notebook not unlike this one. Unfortunately, it was badly damaged by water but it seems he had made some kind of list. We’ve been able to decipher several items but several letters had me beat, but there was a sequence –s-s-w-e-l-l looks as if it might be Cresswell, wouldn’t you agree?”

Jane said nothing but Richard intervened: “Look Inspector,” he said.

“No, Mr Frampton.” The policeman’s tone was more threatening now. “You look. I’m not in possession of all the facts but I do know that you and Mr Doyle here are involved somehow and I intend to bring you both to justice. It’s what I do. Now, suppose you tell me why Oswald Walters was killed just out there by the canal, Mr Frampton, and why did he have this young lady’s name in his

notebook? A young lady you denied ever knowing.” The policeman put his own notebook back in his pocket. “The name Fisher mean anything?” He snapped suddenly and stared at each of them in turn as if waiting for an answer. “Another old soldier, George Fisher. Ever meet anyone of that name, during the war or since, perhaps?” The policeman paused; the others remained silent. “We can do this the hard way if you want. I’ll tell you what I know then I arrest the three of you. We’ll see what the court makes of your silence. Or you can help me out; tell me what you already know. Why did Oswald Walters die? Accident was it Mr Doyle? I’m confused, you see, Fisher, Cresswell, Higgins – he was another soldier killed in 1916 according to the army – all these names and all of them associated with this house, Mr Frampton. And Walters’ body found not half a mile from here. Both Doyle and this young lady were in the area at the time and now I find you all cosy in this house together. So, suppose you tell me who killed Walters and what he was doing here. Been to see you had he, Mr Frampton?”

“Me? No, inspector. I never met Oswald Walters and I can assure you that none of us killed him.”

“Sure of that are you Captain? How well do you know Mr Doyle, for instance? Strange that, a British officer and an Australian soldier being chums, wouldn’t you say?”

“Not particularly, no,” Richard replied defensively.

“Suppose you enlighten me about that, Mr Frampton. How did you two meet? And allow me to be the judge of what’s unusual or not.”

“There’s nothing unusual Inspector, as you know, we just happened to find ourselves cut off in no-man’s-land during a battle. We were both injured and shared a shell hole.”

“And both awarded gallantry medals for that action, I understand? Something about a machinegun emplacement.”

Richard was surprised that the policeman knew that much. “You seem remarkably well informed, Inspector. We—Doyle and I—just happened to be cut off forward of our own lines on a slope below a German machinegun nest. Doyle had a couple of grenades, so we threw them. Lucky shot I suppose.”

“Just like that? He handed you one of his grenades and you threw them?”

“Danny asked if I could reach the keeper from the boundary—it was a similar distance to that of a cricket pitch—and yes, we threw them.”

“But the Germans got you both, I understand.”

“Yes. My battalion was about two hundred yards to our rear and to the left. We tried to make a break around the slope but some Fritz rifleman must’ve seen the movement and picked us off.”

“And that’s where you saved Corporal Doyle’s life?”

“It wasn’t like that. If anything, Doyle saved my life. I just got us out of that shell hole after dark.”

“So, let’s say you saved each other’s lives then, shall we? So you would’ve had a special friendship after that, I expect, let’s say a very close relationship. What was it you said, Captain Frampton? A bond between old soldiers or some such, wasn’t it?”

Richard realised where this was leading: the inspector was trying to establish a relationship between them, a homosexual relationship that might be used against them in some fictional version of events leading up to Oswald Walters’ murder. “I don’t like your implication, inspector.”

“Oh there’s lots of things I don’t like Captain. Murder. Immoral behaviour. And I’m not alone in that I can assure you.”

Doyle looked angry and stood up as if to attack the policeman. Bannister, for his part, stood his ground and glared back. Richard saw that nothing would please Bannister more than a blow from Doyle.

“Touched a nerve there, did I, Mr Doyle?” said the inspector. “Do you deny that you became friends after the incident at—where was it now—Thiepval or Pozières, was it? I take it you met again, before last month, that is, when Mr Doyle came to this house. Around the time that Walters was killed.”

Neither Doyle nor Richard responded to the insinuations. Jane cleared her throat as if to speak but in the event it was Inspector Bannister who spoke again. “Certain things still worry me about this case—that is, the murder of Mr Walters.” He looked at each of them in turn. “You might well wonder why I haven’t arrested you yet. Don’t misunderstand me, I’m still convinced that one of you killed him. My money’s firmly on you, Mr Doyle. I’m just not sure why the three of you have been running around asking questions.” He paused and looked at them. “So I got to asking myself, how would a guilty person behave in all this? If I’d murdered someone I hardly think I’d be trotting about interrogating the dead man’s mother for instance. Oh, yes, Mr Frampton we know all about your visit to Mrs Walters. And I take it the young woman with you was Miss Cresswell? The same young woman whose visit to Sadec House in September you denied. Some things seem to be the actions of an innocent man, others those of a guilty one. Do you follow me?”

“Look, Inspector, I don’t know where you’re going with all this, but I can assure you that Miss Cresswell is perfectly innocent.”

“As you say, sir. Just two things trouble me there: why deny her existence when we first met and, perhaps most intriguingly, why is the name Cresswell in Oswald Walters’ notebook? s-s-w-e-l-l,

couldn't be anyone else, could it? And why had Mr Walters struck a line through that name? Why would you do that?"

"Because it was of no importance, perhaps?"

"Or because it had already been dealt with more likely. Now, about this other name, Higgins, perhaps you can tell me how these names are connected: Higgins, Cresswell and Walters?"

"All three were privates in the Third Battalion, E.C.I."

"Quite so, quite so." The inspector pulled a pipe from his pocket and toyed with it for a moment. "Your uncle's regiment, I understand?"

"Look Inspector, if you already know all this—"

"Oh, I know all this, Mr Frampton. I know all this and a little more. What I don't know is, how much of it you know, and which of you killed Oswald Walters."

Danny broke in. "Do you also know about George Fisher, Inspector? He was a sergeant in the same regiment and an unpopular man by all accounts."

"Nothing unusual about a sergeant who upset a few Tommies under his control is there, Mr Doyle? And Mrs Walters did mention Oswald's obsession with Sergeant Fisher."

"We think Fisher killed Oswald Walters," said Jane softly and added a muffled, "perhaps."

"And why would he do that, Miss Cresswell? As a detective I do like to have a motive for a crime."

"Because something happened between this sergeant and my brother and Private Higgins. It probably led to my brother and Higgins being killed back in 1916. Fisher probably knew too much about people or events, and Mr Walters found out so Fisher killed him."

“Probably this; probably that. Hardly a substantial case would you say? If, as you say, Fisher killed Walters, I’d need some proof—I know that you visited him, did you not? Mind telling me what you discovered at the Waterloo Nursing Home.”

“Well, first of all, Sergeant Fisher wasn’t bed-ridden or confined to a bath chair, as he may have pretended. He’s quite able to get up and move about and the nursing home is only a few miles the other side of Melthorpe. Not far from Broughton Mill, Inspector.”

“Why don’t you ask Fisher, Inspector, instead of wasting your time here?” Richard asked, emboldened by Jane’s speech.

“George Fisher wasn’t in any mood for talking to me or anyone else, Mr Frampton. George Fisher is dead, you see—only, perhaps you knew that already. Now, if we may assume that Fisher was murdered by the same person who killed Oswald Walters, then it brings me right back here to Sadec House and you three. Do you follow me now, Captain Frampton?”

“Fisher’s dead!” Danny Doyle sat forward and looked at Richard. “This can only be the work of one man. We’ve been reading this all wrong, Richard. It has to be Clarimond. Who else can it be?”

“Clarimond? You didn’t meet him, Danny. He just doesn’t strike me as a murderer. What about you, Jane?”

“I’m not sure that I know what a murderer would look like. I just wanted an explanation for Alfred’s death. What’s happening, Richard?”

The inspector remained silent and fiddled with his pipe. Then he sighed: “I think this has gone far enough,” he began. “I’ve got my men out looking for Reverend Clarimond as we speak. We have a good idea who he is. George Fisher was killed yesterday evening and I’ve spent most of the night out at the Waterloo Nursing Home. A man of few possessions, Mr Fisher was, mercifully. But we did find

some papers pertaining to Clarimond. It's quite possible that Fisher was blackmailing this cleric. If so—"

"Clare," said Jane. The inspector looked at her quizzically. "He's using the name Clare now and he works out of St Martin's church in London's East End."

"Thank you, Miss. Most helpful. Now it's clear you three know as much as me and I don't need to remind you that you're in serious trouble. Two men dead and their deaths are somehow connected to you, Miss Cresswell. If Fisher was blackmailing Clarimond, or Clare, then he might well have been blackmailing any of you—or all three, for all I know. You've all been running around the countryside asking questions: Mrs Walters, George Fisher and now Clarimond. So what's the connection here? What am I missing?"

"Sam Pickering said the padre knew something," blurted Jane. "And Captain Frampton's papers say the same thing."

The inspector said nothing but his eyebrows went up slightly as he turned to Richard.

"My uncle," Richard explained. "He was a captain in 1916. I was still a lieutenant then. I think I explained that the first time you—"

"Indeed you did, sir. And who exactly is Sam Pickering?"

Jane began to explain about the notebooks but her explanation was cut short by the shrill ringing of the telephone on Richard's desk. Bannister seemed to be the only person in the room not startled by it.

"Expecting a call, sir?" he said. Richard did not reply but reached across and lifted the receiver to his ear but before he could speak the person on the other end of the line spoke first. Richard held the handpiece in front of him and looked at it strangely.

"It's for you, Inspector." He passed the telephone over to the policeman.

“Yes, Jones,” he said curtly as the other three watched him curiously. “Yes...yes...yes...no, better leave alone for now. Good.” And with that he replaced the handset on its cradle. “Now Miss Cresswell, you were about to tell me about Sam Pickering and some notebooks from Australia, I believe.” As he spoke, Bannister walked across to the window, looked down into the front garden, and stood watching the stone bridge and the lane from the village.

Jane began to explain how her mother had received a parcel of some diaries and a letter and what they contained. At one point, she was obliged to mention that her brother had been executed for cowardice in the face of the enemy and that Sam Pickering had overheard something, something involving Sergeant Fisher, which might have helped her brother but he’d been unable to use it. “He also said that the padre knew something but wasn’t telling,” she added.

Bannister repeated the sentence, “The padre knew something but wasn’t telling. That would be our Reverend Clarimond, I suppose.”

“Yes,” said Richard leaning forward on the desk. “Rupert Clarimond was brigade Anglican chaplain on the Somme.”

“Know him did you, sir?” Richard shook his head and the inspector continued. “But you believe that this padre knew something.”

“As brigade chaplain he would most likely have visited the condemned man in prison and been present at the execution. Usually three officers attended these things, the officer in charge of the firing squad, a representative of the Provost Martial and the chaplain.”

“Rupert Clarimond, now calling himself Rupert Clare, of St Martin’s Church. Tell me, Mr Frampton, why does a man change his name?”

“Perhaps he was fed up with being called—”

“No, I don’t think that’s it, do you? In my experience folks only change their names to get away from their past. I wouldn’t be surprised if you hadn’t considered doing the same thing, Mr Doyle, after the body of Mrs Sixsmith was discovered and you were forced to leave town in a hurry and all.”

“No, Inspector, I never did. You see I knew I was innocent no matter what the local gossips invented—and I might remind you that I was the one who discovered Sally’s body.”

“Is that so? I wasn’t aware of the details, but, as you say, you have been proved innocent of that particular crime.” The inspector who had turned to face Danny now twisted his head back to the window and smiled slightly to himself as if convinced that the fresh evidence from Western Australia did not prove anything in the case of Oswald Walters.

A few moments later the doorbell rang again. Although surprised, Richard assumed this must be the policeman who’d telephoned the inspector earlier. The inspector smiled as if confirming Richard’s suspicions, but then he looked at Jane and asked if she would be good enough to pop down and answer the door. Jane looked at Richard questioningly but when no one else spoke she rose from her chair and crossed to the door leading to the stairs. Richard assumed that Bannister had sent Jane so that he could address the two of them alone, but instead of speaking to them, Bannister flapped a hand for them to remain seated while he crossed to the small landing and listened as Jane opened the front door.

Jane's exclamation could be heard by the three men upstairs. "Mother!" she shouted. "What are you—?"

"Thought I'd find you here, you little trollop. Now where's that Captain Frampton?"

Mrs Cresswell barged past her daughter and moved up the stairs; by the time she entered the room Richard was on his feet and addressing the inspector: "What sort of game are you playing now?" He demanded as Mrs Cresswell pushed into the room and looked from him to Doyle.

"Ah! I might've known," she gasped. "Both of you. Still persisting with this silly nonsense. Well, it's over."

From behind her came Jane's plea: "Mother! You have no business—"

"No business, you say, my daughter cavorting in the company of two strangers. It's not decent, my girl. And as for you two, I thought I warned you once not to stick your noses in where they don't belong. My son is dead. He was shot. There's an end to it. Now, Jane's leaving with me this instant and I hope to hear no more of it. But if I suspect either of you have been up to no good with this innocent child, then you've not heard the last of me. Now Jane." Mrs Cresswell spun on her heel and saw Inspector Bannister for the first time. She took a step back and a hand came up to spread across her bosom. "Oh!" she said, her voice quieter now. "Another one. And who, pray tell, have we here?"

"Good morning Mrs Cresswell," the inspector said. "My name is Bannister. Detective Inspector Bannister. I work for the Cambridge police." Mrs Cresswell's face, half concealed by the wide brim of her plain black hat, blanched slightly and the lower jaw slackened, but she composed herself quickly and snapped at the inspector, "Well, I don't know what sort of crime you're investigating here involving

these two men but I can assure you it has nothing whatsoever to do with my daughter or me. So, if you'll excuse us. Come along, Jane."

"What I can say, Mrs Cresswell," Bannister spoke slowly and deliberately his tone firmer now. "Your daughter has got herself mixed up in some very serious crime. So, if you'll just take a seat, and you too Miss, and perhaps you'd be good enough to continue telling us about these so-called diaries." Richard had heard that same menace in Bannister's voice once before and felt some satisfaction in seeing this dragon of a mother put in her place if only for a moment, he also felt a compulsion to defend the daughter.

Mrs Cresswell turned the force of her anger from Inspector Bannister to her daughter. "Jane, do you mean to tell me you are persisting with this nonsense. Alfred would not thank you for this. What happened back in 1916 is best forgotten. Now, enough!" She turned to face the policeman, "Now, Inspector, if you will permit me, I'm taking my daughter home, whatever she has been telling you is of no matter to the police."

"Sit down, Mrs Cresswell." The Inspector's voice was calm and cold and invited no further argument. "Thank you," he added curtly as Jane's mother finally acquiesced to his command. "Now, Miss Cresswell, you were explaining about how this Australian soldier wrote about meeting your brother one night in prison. Knew him did you, Mr Doyle?"

"Sam Pickering? Yes, I knew him."

"So you'd be familiar with the things he wrote like meeting Miss Cresswell's brother. And why was Pickering in prison?"

"Drunk and disorderly, Inspector. It's not important, He got into a brawl or something I expect, the important thing is whatever he heard during the night.

"I see," said Bannister. "And what exactly was that?"

Doyle, Richard and Jane looked at each other but it was Jane who finally answered the question. "We don't know," she said. "It seems Fisher visited my brother during the night, and he threatened Alfred to keep quiet about something."

"All very vague," said Bannister with a hint of impatience in his voice. "What was this something your brother was being asked to conceal exactly?"

Richard took up the explanation: "It appears Alfred Cresswell and Private Higgins may have witnessed the killing of unarmed German prisoners. They were murdered by Sergeant Fisher. Higgins didn't survive – we believe he was also shot by Fisher."

"And your evidence to support this belief?"

"Sam Pickering and I discovered the bodies of the German lads," said Doyle. "And that of Private Higgins."

The inspector pursed his lips and thought for a moment. "All sounds like a crime to me, but it was a long time ago. And no proof of any of it. And not my patch. Military police matter if you ask me. But no crime is ever closed until it's solved and someone is brought to justice." The inspector fumbled in his pocket and brought out his pipe again, examined the blackened bowl intently for a few seconds. "But Fisher's crime is not my case, Mr Frampton. I'll hand that over to the boys in London, war crimes, maybe. No, I'm more concerned with here and now, and who killed Oswald Walters and George Fisher." The inspector poked a wad of tobacco into his pipe. "And my money's still on someone in this room."

Mrs Cresswell started to rise from her seat. "I really can't see that this has anything to do with my daughter or me. You can't keep us here, Inspector."

“Sit down, please. I won’t detain you any longer than I need to but Miss Cresswell may have some information of relevance to my case, whether you know it or not.”

Mrs Cresswell sank back into her chair with a defiant uplift of her chin and the look of anger, or frustration perhaps, in her eyes.

“George Fisher had very few possessions when we searched his room at the nursing home, but among them was a folder of notes and press cuttings about various people but mainly this man Rupert Clare or Clarimond, the army padre you say knew something but wasn’t telling. As you say, Miss Cresswell, St Martin’s in the East End. My men have gone to London to locate this man even as we speak. Sunday lunchtime, shouldn’t be too difficult to find.”

“This folder, Inspector,” Doyle began struggling to get his thoughts in order.

“Ah, yes, Mr Doyle, you three may have kept a good deal of information from the police, which is, in itself, an offence, but we’ll deal with that in due course.” Bannister looked down at the four of them; Jane looked at Richard while her mother stared at her own feet with such a stony glare on her face that Richard thought for a moment she was no longer listening. Doyle was about to speak again when the Inspector cut across him.

“We think the other people in Fisher’s folder are long dead, but it certainly looks as if they all had something to hide and Fisher, somehow, had discovered what it was.”

“You think he was blackmailing them?”

“Quite possibly, Miss Cresswell. Quite possibly.”

“There’s your motive then, Inspector,” snapped Mrs Cresswell looking up sharply. “So presumably this Clarimond character is your killer.”

"I'll do the detective work, if you don't mind, madam," said Bannister. "Now, if I may recap on what you three might've discovered in the last five weeks. Norfolk police tell me that you've been staying at a pig farm near Downham Market, Mr Doyle. Anything else I should know?"

"Miss Cresswell and I visited George Fisher at the Waterloo Nursing Home last week," said Richard.

"Yes, so I understand. George Fisher's death was discovered early evening yesterday. Since then, of course, my men have been very busy with their investigations. Not difficult to make the connection with Oswald Walters: both men were in the same battalion for most of the war and Walters' notebook had Fisher's name in it. He'd been to see him though, as far as we can tell. Not many people had, so it's not surprising that the staff remember those who did visit. And then there's the visitor's book, but one hardly expects a murderer to sign themselves in, eh?"

At that point the phone rang again, only this time the Inspector stepped across to the desk and answered it himself. "Yes," he said. "Good work Roberts. Well, if that's the case you'd better. No, not the station. Come here to Sadec House will you? We'll do it all here. Jones is in the village, he'll direct you to the house." He put the receiver down and moved back to the window. "Well," he said after a moment of silence. "That was my sergeant; he's found the elusive Padre Clarimond. I've told him to come here, Mr Frampton. So perhaps now we'll see what the chaplain knew, if he's willing to tell it yet."

Chapter Twenty

Inspector Bannister continued to question the three of them while Jane's mother made her feelings known by the sour look on her face and the impatient way she 'tutted' every time her family name came up.

"How exactly did you get Mrs Walters' details?"

"We found Walters' name on the unit roll for my uncle's regiment. His home address at enlistment was also listed."

"And you didn't think to inform the police that you were in possession of official military papers, or to hand them over to the rightful authorities, I suppose?"

Richard shook his head.

"Thought they might contain something which might incriminate you or your friend Mr Doyle?"

"Doyle, in case you've forgotten, was with the Australians, Inspector; different regiment, different brigade, for much of the war, different division."

"I understand, Mr Frampton, and yet, the two of you, it seems, went into battle together on," he consulted his notebook, "on 15th July or thereabouts?"

"The Australians were on my battalion's right flank, Inspector; it's as simple as that."

"So, have we established that neither Mr Doyle nor this Pickering chap met with Walters or your uncle?"

Doyle answered, "Speaking personally, I never met Captain Robert Frampton, but you'll simply have to take my word for it."

"And Private Walters?"

"Never."

"I see." The inspector pushed the stem of his unlit pipe between his teeth. "And Pickering, could he have known them?"

"I don't see that any of this is relevant, Inspector," said Richard. "Surely if you have evidence that Fisher was blackmailing Rupert Clarimond, then that's all you need."

"As I say, sir, we'll shortly be able to ask the gentleman himself whether or not he was being blackmailed. Only I don't think George Fisher was a blackmailer, not in the traditional sense anyway. Funny man. Few possessions and very little money; seemed not to care for it much. No, George Fisher simply enjoyed pulling strings, manipulating affairs and people. Looks as if he used information, held it over them. A man might hold a fair bit of power in that way. Don't you agree, Mr Frampton?"

"I can see that some knowledge could be powerful in the wrong hands, but I fail to see—"

"Just trying to establish certain connections, Mr Frampton. What about your uncle? On good terms were you sir?"

"Perfectly good terms, thank you."

"And during the war, sir? Nothing your uncle might've said or done?"

"Robert Frampton was a respected solicitor before and after the war. He had been a part-time officer with the local yeomanry and his war service was exemplary." Richard felt the anger rising in his throat.

"Quite so, sir. And your aunt?"

"Elizabeth? I don't understand."

"Respectable solicitor's wife before the war and went off to drive ambulances in France, I understand."

"She was at Ypres and on the Somme. In fact, she was killed in the German offensive of 1918. I really don't think—"

“Missing presumed dead, yes sir, I know. Nasty business war, wouldn’t you say?” The inspector paced back to the window and looked down at the lane.

“Look Inspector, if Sergeant Fisher’s papers contained anything about my uncle or aunt then perhaps you should share it with us.”

“No, no, nothing like that, sir, but then I don’t suppose George Fisher kept all the papers on people after all this time. Only what might prove useful to him. No, there’s no mention of your uncle or aunt. I was just looking for some connection, as I said.”

“Looking for any motive I might’ve had for killing him, you mean. I would’ve thought the connection between Fisher and Clarimond would be enough for you.”

Inspector Bannister ignored this remark and continued with his line of thought. “A little while ago I asked whether Sam Pickering might’ve met Captain Frampton, Captain Robert Frampton, that is.” He turned from the window and looked at each of them in turn. Mrs Cresswell continued to stare at the carpet.

“The notebooks mention that Sam went looking for Captain Frampton or someone who could prevent Alfred Cresswell’s execution,” said Doyle. “Unfortunately Sam never said if he got to speak to anyone. And if he did he was certainly too late. He was running a message from the Australian battalion to Brigade, so any deviation to another regiment’s headquarters would’ve had to be pretty quick. He spoke to another soldier, a Tommy in the support trench, could’ve been Oswald Walters.”

“Why did Pickering feel the need to speak to Captain Frampton then? That’s what I don’t understand.” Bannister dipped his pipe into the soft leather tobacco pouch and re-filled the bowl.

“We don’t know exactly,” said Jane. “Sam Pickering heard my brother speaking to someone during the night; almost certainly

Fisher. His notes also say that the padre knew something, and Captain Frampton's notes after the court martial say much the same thing. Whatever happened, Robert Frampton and Rupert Clarimond failed to save my brother."

"I can see I shall have to examine all those notes at some time, but that's most helpful Miss Cresswell. Now, if I could ascertain your whereabouts last evening, let's say from around four in the afternoon until eight o'clock." He paused and tamped down the tobacco with his thumb before looking down at Jane whose skin flushed pale pink.

"I was at home, Inspector. Where else might I be?"

Bannister cast a meaningful look at Richard and his eyes seemed to squint a little. "And you, sir?"

"I was here."

"Alone, Mr Frampton?" the inspector searched the pockets of his jacket before producing a box of Vestas which he rattled twice.

"Don't suppose there's anyone can corroborate that?"

"My housekeeper does not come in Saturdays, so I was alone, yes. But I suspect you have a man posted nearby who would doubtless corroborate my statement."

Inspector Bannister smiled. "Indeed he does, sir. Indeed he does. Which puzzles me somewhat for I naturally assumed you and Doyle here must've paid George Fisher a visit." He turned his gaze in Doyle's direction. "And you, sir? If you were not here and not at your place of residence in Cambridge, I take you were at the pig farm near Downham Market."

"Quite right, Inspector, and Mr and Mrs Connell can vouch for my presence over the last three weeks."

At that point the doorbell rang again, only this time they were all expecting it. Only Mrs Cresswell jumped nervously.

Rupert Clarimond stood in the centre of the room and looked at the four people sitting around then he turned to the inspector and the second policeman who had followed him up the stairs and now stood silently beside the door. Jane thought he looked larger than he had at the church in Stepney a week ago. He certainly appeared more concerned, anxious and the way his eyes moved about the room it was clear that he recognised her and Richard from that previous meeting but not her mother or the inspector. It seemed to Jane that Clarimond was trying hard not to ask the questions that lay just behind those dark eyes.

Bannister broke the short silence, "I think you know Miss Cresswell and Mr Frampton," he began, all trace of menace gone now, as if he were simply introducing a newcomer to a dinner party. "This is Daniel Doyle, and the lady here is Mrs Cresswell, that is, Miss Cresswell's mother." He then turned to the other policeman and asked, "Anything else in yet, Roberts?"

The policeman crossed to the window to stand beside his boss. The two of them muttered a few words before Bannister turned back to face the gathering of five people, each of whom, with the exception of Jane's mother, seemed to be his main suspects in the double murder case he was investigating.

"We've been discussing the murders of Oswald Walters and George Fisher," he said directly to Rupert Clarimond. The clergyman began to protest but the inspector raised a hand to stop him. "My name is Bannister, Detective Inspector Bannister, Mr Clarimond."

"Clare," the other man exclaimed. "It's Clare now, has been since the war."

“So I understand, Reverend,” said Bannister, with a hint of impatience. “Now, sir, these good people were just telling me where they were last evening; perhaps you’d be kind enough . . .?”

“I already told your sergeant. I was at home all afternoon preparing my sermon for this morning. At around five p.m. I went to the parish hall to supervise arrangements for the feeding of the poor—we have a soup kitchen, you see, every Saturday, for those less fortunate, the homeless and so on.”

“No doubt there are others who can confirm that, sir?”

“Certainly. Members of the parish council, volunteers, Lady Wentworth-Collins was there as usual when his Lordship is in London; a patron of our humble charity, you understand.”

“I see, sir. Thank you for your co-operation.” The inspector clenched his teeth around the stem of his pipe. Jane felt that Fisher must have been murdered by Mr Clare, and Inspector Bannister must see that too. Clarimond had been the brigade chaplain when Alfred had been executed; this man, according to Sam Pickering and Robert Frampton, knew something and wasn’t talking. To think a man of the cloth might stoop to murder would normally have been impossible for her, but in spite of everything she’d grown up to believe, she could not find it in herself to like this man; it might be incomprehensible, but she found him untrustworthy. As her gaze moved from the clergyman back to the inspector, she was shocked to see that Bannister was observing the three of them with a satisfied look; that meant he had his murderers already and, whatever the Reverend Clare might bring to the enquiry, the inspector still believed Richard or Danny had killed those two men. Could she convince him of her own innocence, if she had to? She could readily eliminate herself in her own mind but would that be enough to convince the inspector? And again the thought struck her

that she couldn't really know anything about Richard, even less, Doyle. Before Clarimond's arrival, Bannister had said that the murderer was in the room. He might be bluffing, of course, but she couldn't be sure. Captain Frampton and Mr Doyle had been keen to help her find the truth about her brother's court martial and execution. Would they have been so enthusiastic if they'd been hiding the murder of Mr Walters, and now the killing of George Fisher? Yet everything was connected to her brother's death, and to her. And how keen to help her had they actually been? Reluctant at first, she recalled. They'd sent her home. Tried to put her off. It was her enthusiasm that had dragged them into this. And what if Mr Doyle really had killed that poor woman in Australia? He'd convincingly explained it as a mistake, but what if he'd been lying, what if both of them had been lying to her all along? How much had she simply trusted them? That first visit, this very room, he'd been drunk, or under the influence of some noxious drug—not absinthe, surely, she would've smelled it. But there had been a strange smell: burnt grass, she recalled. *How could you have been so stupid? How would you know what absinthe smells like, anyway? Or opium?* Might that explain Oswald Walters' grizzly end not a mile from this house? A depraved man in a drug-induced stupor? *This man you've been travelling all over the country with probably killed Walters and you didn't even know it.* Nonsense, oh hush! *They all knew each other girl, don't you see? The Australian, Captain Frampton, the sergeant, Oswald Walters, your own brother! They all knew each other!* And now two more of them are dead. *And who shot Private Higgins?* Sergeant Fisher did. *You don't know that. You only believe what Richard and Danny told you, whatever they said about the German prisoners-of-war.* Oh, I don't know.

Jane let out a long breath and looked up to find them all watching her; her hands had bunched into a fist and she was beating the arm of her chair. Her mother rose from her seat and faced the inspector. But it was Bannister who spoke first.

“Just a moment, Mrs Cresswell,” he said, raising a hand towards her. “We’ve heard where all these people claim to have been last evening, would you mind telling me where you were?”

“Me? Surely Inspector, you can’t possibly imagine that I had anything to do with this.”

“I keep going back to Oswald Walters’ notebook, you see. Unfortunately badly damaged by water, I admit, but it’s still clearly a list of names and places. Fisher’s name, the reverend’s name, and this house, Sadec, that’s there, and the names of the two privates, Higgins and Cresswell. It’s probable that Higgins was shot by Fisher, Mr Frampton tells us, and your son, Alfred, was shot for refusing to kill Germans in a time of war. But only one name had been struck out in Walters’ notebook: yours, Mrs Cresswell. Higgins it seems had no surviving family, but Alfred Cresswell had yourself and your daughter. We understand that Oswald Walters was obsessed with his old sergeant: a hatred that persisted for eight years. I am assuming Walters was close to Higgins and your son. Friendships born in the trenches, I believe, are forged of strong material, isn’t that so, Mr Frampton?”

“For some men, yes. Others refused to let anyone get close because losing a friend can be very painful.”

“Exactly! Losing a close friend in the heat of battle, losing someone to the German guns, quite devastating, I shouldn’t wonder. How much worse, then, if you thought they’d been killed by your own company sergeant?”

“George Fisher was a nasty little man,” interjected Mrs Cresswell angrily. “But my son was shot after a court martial led by this man’s uncle.”

“That must be very difficult to bear, Mrs Cresswell.”

“The shame, Inspector. No one can understand how it feels. All those honourable deaths and my family stained by the memory of Alfred, shot by his own side.”

“Quite so, none of us can imagine how it felt. Was that what you were hoping to save your daughter from, the disgrace?”

“He’s dead. Best left well alone. Best forgotten. But first comes Sam Pickering’s diaries, I cursed that man and his damned wife for sending them all the way from Australia. What possible good did they think it would do?”

“And then Oswald Walters came to see you, didn’t he?”

“I don’t—”

“Yours was the only name struck out. Oswald Walters was intending to visit Sadec House to speak to Captain Frampton—the late Robert Frampton, who, as we know died last year. But he never made it, did he? Then, no doubt, he’d have gone looking for the Reverend Clare. You see, Mrs Cresswell, all these men are connected to your son’s death. Only you didn’t want history stirred up again, did you?” Jane watched her mother sink back into her chair, deflated. “And the notebooks, you hid them away. Why didn’t you destroy them while you had the chance?”

“I don’t know. God knows I should’ve done! I never thought Jane would find them and start all this nonsense with these two men.”

“But she did and she learned that her brother had been executed by firing squad. You’d never told her, had you? Her brother was never coming home, that’s all she knew, isn’t that right, Miss Cresswell?”

Jane slumped back in her chair and nodded. The sergeant shuffled back to the window. "May I have a word, sir?" he said as the inspector moved with him out of earshot. They spoke softly while Jane watched anxiously. The inspector's face gave nothing away as he listened. Jane heard the name 'Fisher' and 'nursing home' but could not make out what was being said. Finally, Inspector Bannister nodded and re-joined the circle but remained standing.

"My sergeant has been checking the visitor's book at the Waterloo Nursing Home, and, as we know it shows Mr Frampton and Miss Cresswell were there on the twenty-seventh. He's had to go back a few months before he found the first person to call on George Fisher. Not, as you might expect, Oswald Walters, but it was you wasn't it Reverend Clare? Mind if I ask you why you were visiting an old soldier from the Western Front after all this time?"

"Perfectly innocent explanation," Clare responded. "My work brings me into contact with many ex-servicemen who have fallen on hard times since the war. My visit to Sergeant Fisher was purely pastoral care."

"Really! Would you say that Fisher had fallen on hard times then? The Waterloo is a private establishment and the fees are quite considerable. Not many ex-sergeants in there, nor junior officers either, unless they have some source of income, family connections and so forth. Fisher came from a small back-to-back in a mining town up north. His parents are both deceased. No private income there, vicar. He did all right out of the war, though, wouldn't you say? I put to you that George Fisher made it his business to pry into other people's lives and used that information as a source of power. I said as much earlier, that is hardly what I would call blackmail yet I'm blessed if I can come up with a better word. Not long after the armistice Fisher came home to England but his health was ruined

and he needed some form of permanent care. The Waterloo specializes in such cases, but, as I say, at a cost. Fisher had been squeezing people for favours and privileges during the war—I suspect you were one of them, Mr Clare. But I expect his continued importuning since the war has caused some, shall we say, inconvenience. Fisher's papers give the details of eight people whom we believe were supporting him, paying his fees at the nursing home. Only several of them, we now know, have since died. That must've increased the burden on any survivors like yourself, sir. Perhaps the burden of support became intolerable and you became desperate for a way out. You paid him a visit, begged him to leave you alone, but he wouldn't. Am I right, Mr Clare?"

"It's all supposition, Inspector. And if you remember I was in the company of very reliable and respectable people when George Fisher was killed."

"So you say. So you say. We shall be checking your story, naturally." The detective moved his gaze from Rupert Clare to Jane and then to her mother. Jane felt pleased that, like herself, the inspector still suspected the newcomer; it meant that his original statement that the murderer must be among the three of them, was an error he was now prepared to correct. "Now, Mrs Cresswell, just recapping," he said. "I asked a while ago where you were last evening; I don't recall hearing an answer." For a moment Jane's heart sank again but then she thought that, of course, the police had to be seen to cover every angle, ask every question, before making an arrest.

"This is preposterous." Mrs Cresswell was on her feet again but Bannister waved her down once more. "I was at home, of course."

"And Miss Cresswell can confirm that, can she?"

Jane felt a flash of confusion: "But mother," she exclaimed. *Don't do anything silly, girl. Don't meddle in matters that don't concern you.* But mother was not at home all evening. *Of course she was, child, didn't she just say so?* Jane cast her mind back to the previous day. Perhaps she was confusing her days. Had Richard driven her home yesterday? No, he'd dropped her at the end of the street to avoid upsetting her mother, but that was days ago. But her mother had not been home yesterday, all evening. *She was going to the village shop.* Or the railway station, thought Jane. Jane had gone to her room and fallen asleep on the bed. She could not be certain when it was that her mother had returned. *Fallen into conversation with someone at the shop, or called in to check the flower arrangements in the chapel.*

Jane looked at Richard and she could see that his mind was calm: he could neither confirm nor deny the truth of it. She looked at her mother who was studying the carpet at her feet.

"Where did you go, mother?"

"What?"

"Where did you go? I saw you leave the house at about half-past-three . . ."

"We needed a few things from the shop, my dear. Surely your mother can do her shopping without being cross-examined by her own daughter."

But it was late, Jane thought. *How could you know, child, you were asleep.*

"Your mother left the house at approximately half-past-three and when did she return?"

"I don't know." Jane had heard the front door close sometime later but could not be sure when. But it had been dark.

“Well, how long would it normally take your mother to go the shop in the village?”

Jane shook her head. “She rarely uses the shop in Carfenton anymore, not since—”

“That woman!” Mrs Cresswell’s voice was raised now. “I won’t give her the time of day. Her with her two sons dead in the war. Heroes she calls them; that’s just to spite me and rub in our shame.”

“And yet, now you say that you went to this shop, yesterday”

Honour thy mother and thy father. Something sinister was forming in Jane’s mind now: something deeply troubling. The inspector was speaking again.

“My sergeant informs me that a figure was seen leaving the grounds of the Waterloo Nursing Home sometime around six. The witness is not sure but they think it was a lady: a lady in black clothes. I note that it is your custom to wear black, Mrs Cresswell.”

“And there’s many other than me as do the same since that damned war.”

“Quite so, quite so.” Bannister closed his eyes for a moment as if picking out the fleeting image of a woman moving through the shadows, by the rhododendrons, perhaps, moving towards the gates of the nursing home. “But it was you, wasn’t it, Mrs Cresswell. We have your daughter’s concern that you were not home all evening; and we have this witness.”

“Witness, be damned! You said yourself they weren’t even sure if it was a man or a woman in the dark. Impossible!”

“Dark?”

“Sorry, Inspector?”

“Dark. You said it was dark, Mrs Cresswell. I never said it was dark.”

“Of course it was . . . must’ve been, you’ve got me all confused now, don’t you see?”

Jane ran through the memories of the last few weeks. *This can’t be happening. Tell him, girl. Your mother was at home.* The first time I came here to this house, mother was out that day too, the day Oswald Walters was killed. Jane shook her head; the inspector was speaking again, his tone no longer friendly.

“Cresswell was in Walters’ notebook and it was the only name crossed off. What does that tell us, Mrs Cresswell? He’d been to see you hadn’t he? And he was on his way to see someone in this house—only Robert Frampton was no longer alive. Did you know that your daughter was coming here that day, Mrs Cresswell and what had Walters told you?”

Mrs Cresswell was on her feet again and Jane could see the lines in her neck standing out as they always did when she could no longer hold her temper.

“Walters was threatening to drag the whole affair into the open again. I couldn’t allow that. I had Sam Pickering’s account, such as it was—someone knew something, all very vague. But Oswald Walters didn’t know about the notebooks and I wasn’t going to tell him. Only Jane had found them, I know that, and if Jane’s got a bee in her bonnet, I know her, Inspector. She left the house that day and I could only guess what she was up to. She was going to find Robert Frampton—and so was Mr Walters. If they met, she might tell Walters what she knew from Pickering’s notebooks; perhaps Captain Frampton would corroborate or fill in the gaps. I had no idea whether Walters had been here or was coming here. Jane caught the bus from Carfenton to Cambridge and then a bus to Stenbridge. I had to intercept her, take her home. Perhaps Oswald Walters had given up and gone home, too, after I’d sent him off with

a warning not to meddle in my family's business. Maybe it would all just go away on its own. But I had to stop Jane coming here."

Mrs Cresswell's face seemed to darken and her eyes stared at the wall as if seeing nothing and her voice lost its hard edge. "Jane had seen an advertisement in the county magazine for a solicitor in Ely with an address here in this village. I saw the magazine in her room with a pencil ring around the name and the address, Sadec House, unusual name, you see. I knew then that she must've read the notebooks that bloody Australian sent to us, and I knew where she was going when she left the house that day. I'm local born and bred so I knew this village from when I was a girl and I knew that it could be reached through Melthorpe and over the iron footbridge by the mill; we used to come for picnics before the war. I was coming to stop Jane before she spoke to this Captain Frampton, stop it before it went any further. Only, it wasn't Jane I stopped, was it? I ran into Walters on the towpath by the weir. I warned him again not to interfere, but he refused, said it was his business, too. Said my son and this Higgins chap had been his best mates in the war and that Fisher was to blame. He'd already told me all this when he came to my house only now he said he intended to pursue Fisher to the limits of his ability; intended to have him tried for murder, and there was nothing I could do to stop him. I couldn't face it all coming out in court, have people pointing because my son, of all those thousands who went away, my son had refused to fight."

"That's right, Mrs Cresswell," the vicar snapped. "You're right to be ashamed of you son. Other men died in their thousands. Brave men who never asked to die, didn't want to die, but they fought on. It was left to me to bury them, to say the words over the open grave about their heroism and bravery. But not your son, Mrs Cresswell. I was at the execution, too, one of over three-hundred that we shot for

various offences. And, yes, I spoke with him shortly after his arrest. He told me what Fisher had done. But it made no difference, Madam; he refused to go back to the front line, refused to kill Germans. He was unpatriotic.”

“Men like my Alfred were there because of idiots like you. And you,” She pointed at Richard as she spat the words out. “But the stain of cowardice has to be borne by someone and that someone is me, Captain Frampton. Was I wrong to try to protect my daughter from that? I might’ve been too late to stop her meeting you, but I could prevent her from ever hearing Oswald Walters’ story in open court. I didn’t mean to kill him. I don’t know what happened really. I picked something up, a rock or something, and I just hit him. He toppled back into the canal and I ran back past Broughton Mill. I never thought it would come to this; never thought that you and your friend Doyle would continue to pander to my Jane’s wishes, to help her to learn what I desperately wanted to protect her from.”

Richard leaned forward in his seat and spoke calmly. “Jane is a woman now, Mrs Cresswell. She has a right to know.”

Jane felt the tears spring into her eyes. “Mother! What on Earth have you done?”

“I did it for you, child.”

“And George Fisher?” Inspector Bannister asked. “You went to the Waterloo Nursing Home yesterday, did you not? It was you, wasn’t it?”

“Fisher was an evil man. Without his actions all this, back in the war, none of this need have happened. He had no right to live. He’d killed those German boys, well, I can’t say I would shed any tears over that, but Oswald Walters said he’d killed Higgins and that so upset my Alfred that he couldn’t go on. He was no coward, Mr Clare, quite the opposite, but it will be as a coward that he’s remembered.”

“Mrs Cresswell,” The Inspector’s tone was heavy now. “I’m arresting you for the murders of Oswald Walters and George Fisher...”

“Mother!” Jane stood up and felt the blood drain from her head, the words in the room and those in her head spun and twisted in the air before her and she felt herself sinking, as if through water.

Chapter Twenty-One

17th August 2006

They'd all arrived by midday, those who were coming, which was everyone except Margaret who was filming in Australia. She'd pretended to be asleep when the first of them came into the sitting room—it was what they expected of her—but she'd seen the cars pull up in front of the magnolias from the front window. And, anyway, she liked to close her eyes and just sit during the day; it made remembering easier. Mostly it was her childhood she recalled these days—not much worth remembering since 1979 anyway, was there?

“Come see, Alfie, come see.” It was a swarm of tiny fish in the lake all moving together: left, right, up, down. Shimmering, shivering in the sunlight. How do they know to move as one: turning, swooping together? How easy it must be to exist like that, one of a larger group. Then she noticed an identical little chap on his own, moving from rock to rock in the same darting motions. How difficult to be you, little fish, she thought, out on your own, independent. How frightening. How wonderful.

“Come see, Alfie, come see,” she'd called but her brother had been throwing stones into the water further down the path and hadn't heard her.

Then the flowers. Ridiculous, enormous bunches, filling the room. And balloons. A cake of course with so many candles and the usual jokes about the fire brigade. Everyone talking at once. The photographs. Not as exciting as two years ago which had been treated as a significant milestone for some reason. Nevertheless, this one, she knew, would be her last. She couldn't tell them though.

The inevitable protests: “Don’t be silly, grandma, you’ve got years left yet.” “A hundred-and-two is nothing these days. There’s a woman in Peru or somewhere, who’s . . .”

Most of them hadn’t known the story until the BBC had made that documentary on Anthony’s genealogy. Anthony was her only great-grandchild and certainly the end of that particular Frampton line and the end, too, of the Cresswell genes. They’d finish here.

Anthony had always been her favourite. He’d come to see her before the television people, to explain what was to happen, what questions they would ask. He told her about his own relationship then, so she knew months before the rest of the world, that he lived with a man fifteen years his senior, and had done since his university days.

“Are you awfully disapproving of me, gran?” he’d asked.

“Not disapproving at all. You have my blessing. I can tell you one thing, though. Your great-grandfather would not have approved. I could never get him to budge on that.” She’d smiled and patted his hand. “Strange, really, his best friend had been gay, after all. Poor Danny. Killed in the blitz, you know. Lovely man. Australian.”

“They’ll want to know about . . . Alfred’s death and . . . about your mother. The murders. I can refuse, of course, to make the programme, but it will all come out in the gutter press one way or another.”

“No” she said softly. “Better tell it like it was.”

All that had been six years ago when she’d only been 96. Less tired then, she thought.

Now she wondered, after all the champagne corks had popped and the candles had been extinguished, who would be the one to break the latest news to her. In the event, it was Anthony, which was fitting, as he was the newsreader in the family after all.

“Some wonderful news yesterday, Gran,” he said, and the room fell unexpectedly quiet as if he were to give another speech. “The Minister of Defence has granted posthumous pardons to 306 of the men.” Anthony leaned down and smiled at her. “And Alfred’s one of them.” He added softly.

“I know,” she said. She’d meant to pretend she hadn’t heard, for their sakes, but in the event she said, “I know.”

“You know!” he laughed. “How do you know?”

“The internet, Anthony. Wonderful thing. You should get one, dear.”

They all laughed at that. At 102 years of age, any little joke was worth a laugh.

“Great-grandma, you never fail to surprise me,” he said, kissing her lightly on the forehead.

“Watch this space, my boy, watch this space.”

Exegesis

Characterisation and Ideology in Recent Crime Fiction set in the First World War

Chapter One: Introduction

And so the infantry of the A.I.F. laid aside their armour and became, what remains of them, just the sort of fellows you know—or so they seem. (Leonard Mann: *Flesh in Armour* 349)

He had long been indifferent to which side won; he wished only that one or the other would do so decisively while he was still alive. (Elizabeth Speller: *The Return of Captain John Emmett* 3-4).

As a boy I read adventure stories and science fiction. If I read detective stories at that time, I was usually disappointed. I don't remember war books—either fact or fiction—entering my childhood home.

Later, as a young man, I waded through the plethora of Second World War standards: Pape's *Boldness Be My Friend*; Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*; Brickhill's *Reach for the Sky*; Braddon's *Naked Island*. But still, apart from spy-thrillers such as John Le Carré and Len Deighton, I read few crime novels. And yet, as Worthington stresses (ix) crime fiction remains the most popular genre with readers .

I first came across the hybrid genre of war and crime in English translations of the Second World War novels of the German author H H Kirst (*Officer Factory* and *Night of the Generals*). And then the mixture of mystery and First World War in Robert Goddard's *In Pale Battalions*.

Not surprisingly, as the world passes the centenary of the First World War, books, films and television shows are appearing in ever-increasing numbers: histories, novels, newspaper articles, memoirs, and letters (see for instance Carlyon; Carthew; W. Davis; Lindsay; Lynch; McLachlan; Pedersen; Stanley; Moran; Nicholson). Added to these in the last twenty years has been a steady flow of hybrid fiction in which a crime is somehow associated with the Western Front in the Great War. And it is these to which I address this thesis.

Authors working today have a knowledge of the effects of the Great War and the century which followed it: the ramifications of the Russian Revolution, revivals of Marxist-Leninist ideologies; the resentment of the German people at the punitive measures contained in the Versailles Treaty; the resultant (and perhaps, inevitable) Second World War; the rise and fall of truly evil leaders like Stalin, Hitler and Pol Pot; the increasing influence in mid-century of the Soviet Union and the United States; the division and eventual re-unification of Germany (and Vietnam); the Cold War and its outbreaks of hostility in Korea, Vietnam and Malaya. How much of this history today's novelists know—and how deeply they know it—will vary, but the truth is, these events and many more, have happened since the armistice of 1918, and authors writing today will almost certainly be aware of them and influenced by them. They have, too, an image of the First World War bequeathed to them by

authors of the original canon: the horror of the trenches; the futility of war; the inefficiency of the military strategies; the incompetence of the leaders (military and civilian). Whatever the ideology is today concerning armed conflict (something we may or may not be aware of and which will vary temporally and geographically) it has been influenced by attitudes to war expressed in fictional novels and film. One example is our present-day reaction to the injustices of the First World War: the inequality in the conditions suffered by those at the front (common, working-class soldiers and aristocratic young officers alike), and those at home or safely installed in comfortable chateaux well behind the fighting; and the injustice inherent in the treatment of shell-shocked soldiers.

There is an ever-growing body of academic study on the theory of crime/detective fiction. Critical and scholarly work on First World War literature is also easily located even if much of it is directed at the generally accepted canon such as Sassoon, Graves, Hemingway and Remarque¹. However, with the exception of Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy and Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong*, less research has been published on recent Great War fiction, and I have located very little academic study directed at the sub-genre of war and crime combined in the same fictional product.

All wars—and the First World War stands as an exemplar—disrupt the fabric of society: in the First World War in particular, populations were decimated; survivors deeply traumatized; the aristocratic structures of Europe were irreparably undermined;

¹ Appendix A to this thesis is an annotated bibliography of some twenty works generally considered in the classic canon of World War I literature.

national borders were redrawn across Europe, Africa and the Middle-East; Kaiser Wilhelm was forced into exile; in clichéd terms, the world would never be the same again.

What then are the unique elements and problems associated with writing the hybrid genre combining crime and the First World War? One significant difficulty in discussing murder in such a setting is that of making one death significant among so many, and any fictional work involving the investigation or outcomes of such a death (by criminal means) will need to either ignore the paradox or address it.

Unless you were a policeman, the need to reveal and avenge murder was reduced almost to a philosophical enquiry after the losses of the last years. (Elizabeth Speller: *The Return of Captain John Emmett* 205).

Military law also allows for crimes and punishments that are not found in civilian life: unjust courts martial and brutal field punishments, prosecution for cowardice or desertion, for instance (*Manual of Military Law*). Some recent fiction has fore-grounded such wartime incidents and highlighted the injustices. This presents a second major deviation from the classical crime novel, how to make a crime such as cowardice appear more heinous than even murder.

Another dilemma facing the author in such a situation is characterising the investigator as sympathetic or hostile to these regulations while maintaining an authority position. In classical crime fiction the detective figure solves the problem and, by putting the world back in order, makes everything safe again. Such an outcome is rarely possible in crime novels set during war.

This thesis will demonstrate, through the use of a novel and exegesis, that representations of ideologically inscribed attitudes to war are significant in this genre. In order to do this in the exegesis I

shall look for connections between characterisation in recent fiction and sentiments such as heroism, patriotism or disillusionment. While I do not consider these sentiments as synonymous with anti-war or pro-war ideologies, for the purposes of my study they are reliable signposts. My own creative writing explores the accepted narrative strategies of characterisation with special relation to ideologies inscribed in these same sentiments, and may deviate from them in order to break stereotypes.

My intention in this thesis is to examine a range of novels containing a crime in which the First World War or its aftermath play some part (even though the nature of the crime or the telling of it may not qualify as crime fiction *sensu strictu*). Applying these strict parameters means that the novels available for study are few. However, because of the upheaval caused by the war and the acceleration of technology and social change, this small collection of novels covers a highly significant historical period. It is also worth noting that most of the novels listed in Table 1 of Chapter 4 of this thesis were published in the twenty-first century, indicative, perhaps, of the growing popularity and topicality of this hybrid form.

As my interest is in the area of creative writing, I have chosen to study narrative strategies of characterisation for evidence of ideological inscription, particularly attitudes to war and, to a lesser extent, to class. These attitudes to war and class may be intentionally inserted into the text or not—my concern is with the mechanics of the insertion rather than the intentions of the author. However, during the course of my own reading I was always aware of the temporal position of the author, Sassoon and Mann, say, writing during or immediately after the war, compared to Speller or Boyne, for instance, writing in the twenty-first century. Nor has it been necessary to stray too far into the philosophical aspects of

reader-response theory, hermeneutics or phenomenology, other than to accept that today's readers and authors bring to the Great War novel a wealth of pre-conceptions and prejudices about war (and about crime, law and order, and injustice).

Chapters 2 and 3 of this exegesis provide some relevant background. In Chapter 2 I discuss narrative strategies of characterisation, ideology and the methodology used for my analysis of the hybrid novels. In Chapter 3 I discuss aspects of writing war and writing crime and the hybrid form. Chapter 4 of this exegesis reports the results of a close reading of several hybrid novels and provides examples of characterisation, ideology and attitudes to war. Finally, in Chapter 5, I summarise the thesis, proffer some suggestions for further research and draw conclusions regarding my original research question: What narrative strategies of characterisation might be utilised to represent the detective figure as a bearer of ideological significance in crime novels set in the First World War?

Chapter Two: Characterisation, Ideology and Method

Introduction:

This examination of ideologies, referenced by attitudes to war and class in crime novels set in or around the First World War, begins with a review of literature on narrative strategies of characterisation and ideology. This theoretical background leads into a methodology for analysing a selection of such novels, which will be used in Chapter Four.

Although ideologies discussed in chapter 4 may relate to class, I am more interested in anti-war or pro-war sentiments represented in fictional characters as disillusionment, disenchantment or disinterest, contrasted with heroism, patriotism, nationalism and militarism.

Characterisation

Character *n.* 1. Distinguishing qualities or characteristics; moral strength; reputation. ("Essential Oxford English Dictionary")

A storyworld participant i.e., an individual or specified group occurring in a drama or work of narrative fiction (Margolin, *Character* 25)

Semantically the reader first encounters a character as an individual within the fictional space and time recognised by a referent, usually a name or pronoun. At this stage, little or nothing is known about the character but the reader may establish a minimal identity: male/female, young/old. If the character re-enters

the storyworld further details will be added and a richer image established; it may also be necessary for the reader to amend certain earlier impressions. Cognitively the picture is developed from information in the text, the reader's own knowledge, and an awareness of the genre and literary conventions, until the reader is able to assign the character to a category (husband, suspect, soldier, and so on), with appraisable attributes (trustworthy, unreliable, cruel, kind). Characterisation in the novel, then, progresses from the mimetic to the thematic or functional by the addition of dimensions or functions (Margolin "Character" 52-55; Phelan 9; Garvey 63, 67). "The distinction between the mimetic and thematic components of character is a distinction between characters as individuals and characters as representative entities" (Phelan 13). The thematic component is created "in order to show us something about the segment of the population to which the created member belongs" (14). Another way in which James Phelan differentiates mimetic from thematic is to ask whether a component contributes to our reading of the character as a "possible person" or as "a vehicle for carrying ideas" (59).

The author of "clue-puzzle" detective fiction may lay false or misleading character traits or mental processes within a text deliberately to force a de-categorisation in the denouement when the chief suspect is shown to be innocent and the seemingly innocent person is revealed as guilty (see almost any Agatha Christie story).

In *Aspects of the Novel* E M Forster devoted two lectures to the topic of 'people'. In the first he concentrates on biographical details of fictional characters: "The main facts of human life are five: birth, food, sleep, love, and death" (Forster 55). In the second, he divides fictional characters into "flat" and "round". Flat characters are those which can be summed up in one sentence, or, as H Porter Abbott

says, “characters who have no hidden complexity” (Abbott 126). Uri Margolin feels that it depends upon “the number and variety of mental features attributed to a character” (Margolin “Character” 54). According to Forster, English literature abounds in flat characters: “Dickens’ people are nearly all flat” (78-9). This would imply that flat characters are not necessarily poorly written, nor should an author attempt to eradicate them from his/her work, unless they are ill placed and should be complex characters. John Scaggs feels it is Hercules Poirot’s flatness as a character that makes him memorable (36).

An example of thematic characterisation is Vladimir Propp’s famous list of the roles or types found in folk tales, such as hero, villain, helper. Abbott lists others including nerd, hypocrite, flirt, or wimp, but adds: “...putting someone in a box like this is one of the ways the author gains rhetorical force ...” (131). Categorising can carry essential ideological messages.

Characterisation in Practice

Although much of this detail on characterisation may be assumed knowledge for readers and writers alike, I shall provide a brief review here because much of it correlates with the following section on ideology and both then form a significant part of the methodology discussed at the end of this chapter.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan sees a network of character-traits: character-indicators are implied in the text by direct definition or indirect presentation. Direct Definition includes the use of specific nouns or adjectives about a character in the text and will be discussed later in this chapter (Rimmon-Kenan 60). Indirect presentations allow the reader to piece together a portrait of the character from their actions, speech, external appearance and

context (61-67). Janet Burroway (74, 122-24) adds thoughts to this list². Margolin considers the physical and verbal actions or behaviour of a character as the dynamic elements, and the appearance and setting as static elements (Margolin "Character" 56).

Characterisation by appearance: Readers frequently judge characters in novels by the author's description of their appearance: bright red fingernails; matted hair, dishevelled suit, muddy shoes; are all visual prompts; the smell of eau de cologne or sweat are olfactory and the timbre of the voice, tone of authority or submission, provide auditory clues. The way a character moves, although part of the action (discussed below) may also leave a particular impression with the reader. All such details can function as bearers of ideology. The reader may, for instance, make certain assumptions about a character's socio-political standing based upon whether they dress like a tramp or a wealthy businessperson.

Rimmon-Kenan differentiates between those external appearances that are within the character's control and those that are beyond it (65). An intelligent reader might be expected to interpret the former as being part of the make-up of that character but I suspect that we all sometimes interpret physical features (hair colour, height, girth and so on) as contributing to our overall comprehension of the *nature* of the character.

² As Burroway uses similar differentiation to Rimmon-Kenan but reverses the meaning of "direct" and "indirect", I shall use Rimmon-Kenan's understanding and proceed as if the two authors are in agreement, which they otherwise are.

Characterisation by Speech: Speech in fiction may be direct speech where the dialogue is quoted as the character speaks it; summary, when the narrator (or another character) explain what has been spoken without direct quotation; or indirect speech, when the narrative reports what was said without quoting verbatim (Rimmon-Kenan 63 et seq). Each of these may be used by an author for characterisation: direct speech, for instance, is frequently used to represent class by the use of dialect or vernacular or jargon, or by what is said and when. What is not said may be equally important, especially in genres like crime fiction that seek to hide the truth from the reader.

What is said is important for plot progression and characterisation, how it is said, and how it is understood is also important. Some authors tell the reader how a message is relayed by using adverbial speech tags which may also contribute to characterisation.

Characterisation by Action: Rimmon-Kenan differentiates between actions that occur once (non-routine) and those that are habitual. Habitual acts “tend to reveal the character’s unchanging or static aspects...” (61). While both may be used to construct a fictional character, “one-time actions tend to evoke the dynamic aspect of the character, often playing a part in a turning point in the narrative” (61). One-time actions reveal qualitative traits while habitual actions suggest a constancy of character. She further differentiates actions into (a) acts of commission, performed by the character; (b) acts of omission, things not done when they might have been done; and (c) a contemplated act or “unrealized plan or intention” (61-62).

Margolin ("Doer and the Deed") examining the logical manner in which readers form an impression of a character (206), finds that

actions (including speech) are one of the main sources for reader-inference about a character's psychological traits (208). However, in fictional narrative the reader may not always possess the required data to formulate a full and accurate picture of the character.

Characterisation by Thought: Narrative strategies for characterisation by thought are similar to those for speech discussed above (direct, indirect or summary), however, in terms of indicators of ideology, aims and ambitions, what a character thinks may reveal much more than what he or she says. The caveats regarding reliability, of course, still need to be considered: unreliable characters (or narrators) have unreliable thoughts.

Characterisation by External Environment: A character's surroundings may perform as "trait-connoting metonymies" (Rimmon-Kenan 66). This is most relevant when a character exercises some degree of choice in the composition of the environment in which they are described. Connotations of wealth and success might result from descriptive detail of their opulent home or expansive office or workplace. These same settings might also connote a degree of corruption or ill-gotten gains. Conversely, a seedy domicile in the most hostile inner-city suburb might connote a street-wise survivor, villain or hero.

Rimmon-Kenan adds a further distinction between analogous characterisation and those metonymic forms discussed above (appearance, environment), seeing it as "a purely textual link, independent of story-causality" (67). The examples she gives are analogous names (I would illustrate this with Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five* who behaves in many ways like Bunyan's Pilgrim); analogous landscape as distinct from the chosen

or inflicted, man-made environments discussed above, is not related to story-causality because nature is outside the control of the character. It can, however, re-enforce character traits in the mind of the reader. My example here would be Sebastian Faulks' use of the Somme and Ancre valleys before and during the war: a contrast of the peaceful French countryside, innocence and naivety reflected in the characters, against the battle-scarred, desolation of the later chapters (*Birdsong*).

In Chapter 4 of this thesis I discuss the use of the brass plaque of the detective agency used (by P D James and Jacqueline Winspear) to illustrate the trappings of office and, therefore, as characterisation.

Characterisation by the reactions of others: Rosemary Rowe points out that it is possible to characterise a fictional person by the way others react to them or by the way others are altered when the character is not present. (Rowe)

Direct Definition of character may be by "authorial interpretation" or "interpretation by another character" (Burroway 123). Rimmon-Kenan suggests the naming of a character's qualities directly only counts as characterisation "if it proceeds from the most authoritative voice in the text" (60). I feel, however, that characterisation, even by an unreliable source, is still a valid method of characterisation if the reader, aware of the irony, is able to form or develop an image of the fictional person. Truly, though, an unreliable reporter will produce an unreliable reconstruction that may be revised in the light of later information, as is frequently the case in detective fiction.

Problems in Characterisation:

For fictional characters to be fully rounded they should be complex, conflicted, yet remain plausible. It is possible to add complexity to a character by showing conflicting aspects of the person through conflicting methods of characterisation. Burroway gives this strategy some thought (125-6) and demonstrates how appearance might belie thoughts, or speech might reveal greater internal tensions than actions or vice versa. An example from the hybrid novels under review in this thesis is an officer in Charles Todd's *An Impartial Witness*, for instance, who has an expression of long-suffering on his face but the nervous clenching of his hands leads us to suspect something else (211).

Margolin also notes that the character “may have deliberately lied, withheld information, or made statements without corresponding knowledge or beliefs” (Doer and the Deed, 216) thus annulling all reader-inferences arrived at by using the false statements.

Susan Lanser writes of the “manipulative potential of point of view” (Lanser 16) and sees point of view as the aspect of narrative which “conditions and codetermines the reader’s response to the text (16)”, while John Goode says the narrator is “precisely what articulates the relationship of the text to ideology itself” (Goode 218). My own project, concentrating on Narrative Strategies of Characterisation—rather than point of view— seeks to locate those same responses and articulations. Lanser adds, “it is possible that every choice of a narrative technique can reveal and embody ideology” (18). She continues, partly paraphrasing Goode, “[t]his is especially plausible if we understand ideology to concern the form as well as the “content” of a text, if we recognize that ideology is not something “trapped secretly ‘inside’ the text,” but something that

“motivates and shapes the representation” and determines “what we are allowed to see” (Lanser 18 and Goode 218).

Amanda Boulter discusses characters as the subjects of fiction and suggests three ways of presenting them: “as *autonomous subjects*; as *fragmented subjectivities*; or as empty vessels *subject to the vagaries of society or the author*” (Boulter 136 italics in original). The writer “does not need to tell the reader every single detail of the character’s biography...” but should focus on the “particular details, the subtle nuances that make a character unique” (139). Chapter 4 of this exegesis will include examples of this.

Rimmon-Kenan concludes her discussion of characterisation with two important points. Firstly she notes “a character indicator does not always suggest one trait to the exclusion of others; it may imply the co-presence of several traits, or cause the reader to hesitate among various labels” (70). Secondly, it is not sufficient merely to enumerate the means of characterisation when it might be more useful “to establish which type of characterisation predominates in a given text or for a given character” (70) relating back from these findings to the “thematic concerns of the work” and analysing interactions between different narrative strategies employed.

War brings great change to the structure of society and to individuals. Many of the detective stories reviewed in Chapter 4 of this exegesis are set in the decade following the Great War. A time of massive upheaval mainly due to the war itself. Characters in these settings are frequently complex, traumatised, confused by their new place in the community, their post-war role or lack of it. All these factors contribute to conflicting ideologies and attitudes, either anti-war or pro-war, which form the basis of this thesis. This thesis

concentrates on the fictional character as a bearer of ideological significance rather than the author, as to do otherwise would be to stray into the realms of author intention. How these attitudes are represented in crime fiction will be discussed further in chapters 3 and 4 but firstly I shall look briefly at the theory of ideology relevant to my thesis.

Ideology and the Text

A literary text is related to GI [General Ideology] not only by how it deploys language but by the particular language it deploys. Language, that most innocent and spontaneous of common currencies, is in reality a terrain scarred, fissured and divided by the cataclysms of political history, strewn with the relics of imperialist, nationalist, regionalist and class combat. Terry Eagleton: *Criticism & Ideology* (54).

Terry Eagleton places literature within the formation 'Aesthetic Ideology' (AI) and locates this within 'General Ideology' (GI) along with authorial, ethical and religious regions of GI. Insertion of ideology into a text may be accomplished by either Aesthetic Ideology or Authorial Ideology – "the effect of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion into the General Ideology ... over-determined by a series of distinct factors: social class, sex, nationality, religion, geographical region and so on" (58).

It is unnecessary here to trace the entire historical development of the concept of ideology, although, before proceeding further, I shall discuss the development of the term and how it is relevant to my research.

Raymond Williams (*Keywords*) traces the meaning of the word ideology from the 18th Century rationalist Destutt de Tracy for whom it meant a philosophy of mind (Williams *Keywords* 153-57).

According to Louis Althusser, ideology was a theory of ideas. Marx

had previously developed this into a “system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of man or a social group” (Althusser *Essays* 32).

In his essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an investigation”, Althusser expands on Marx’s infrastructure-superstructure metaphor with regard to ideology. Influenced by the early structuralist theory, Althusser saw ideology as having “material existence” bound to institutions such as broadcasting and the press, rather than the traditional view of beliefs and ideas. In Althusser’s words “[Ideology] is a structure essential to the historical life of societies” (Althusser *For Marx* 232). This led him to categorise these institutions as ideological state apparatuses (ISA’s)—religion, family, education, law, politics, trade unions, communications and cultural ISA’s. He differentiated between these and the repressive state apparatuses (RSA) which, in the final resort, function by violence (or simply the latent threat of violence) and are the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, and the prisons (*Essays* 16-17). Althusser was further concerned with the way these ideologies address the individual (or the subject), the manner of interpellation or hailing by which we are all subjects of and subject to an over-riding vision of society and our place in it. My concern in this exegesis is the manner in which fictional works (under the umbrella of cultural ISAs) address us (as readers or viewers) so as to inculcate society’s norms, particularly attitudes to class and war in Britain and Australia around the time of the First World War and still observable today. The ideologies contained in a text may be those which are dominant in our own environment, or were dominant at the time of writing, or at the time being written of, or they may be

resistant to such dominant ideologies (while still being ideologies themselves).

Antonio Gramsci's contribution to the debate is the concept of hegemony as the means by which one social order or group maintains its level of control over other orders or groups. This will usually be a dominant group retaining its claims over a subordinate one. The hegemonic process explains the way subordinate groups are co-opted, possibly by extending to that group certain of its needs and expectations; in Mike Cormack's terms, "the dominant class gives a little in order to retain a lot" (Cormack 15).

Lennard J Davis, in discussing "resistance" in and to novels, says that "Ways of seeing the world, ideological world views, are intimately related to the psychic apparatus, and in turn such ideological views serve as defenses against harsh social and political realities" (L. J. Davis 15).

Davis (15) cites Raymond Williams (*Marxism and Literature* 55) for the three categories of general use for the term "ideology":

1. the belief system of a particular class or group;
2. a system of illusory beliefs—false ideas or false consciousness—which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;
3. the general process of the production of meanings and ideas [Davis calls this: "a semiological system or system of signs which produces meaning or ideas in society"].

Davis then forms his own "best definition of ideology" as "public ideas wedded to collective and personal defenses" (Davis 15).

More practically, Arthur Berger defines ideology as "any system of logically coherent and widely applicable socio-political beliefs" (Berger 42). While Cormack summarises ideology in part as having the task of "an unconscious stabilizer and justifier of the status

quo" (16). Obviously if the status quo favours the ruling class in a society then the dominant ideology will favour that class.

It would be possible to classify pro-war or anti-war stances as meta-ideologies³ and the attitudes and sentiments such as heroism, patriotism and disillusionment, signified by the characters in the text, as ideologies (of lesser rank than the meta-ideologies). However, as these attitudes and sentiments can be detected in fictional narratives as ideological references, I prefer to use the terms "ideology" and "attitudes" or "sentiments". This does not preclude all of these being treated as ideologies in their own way, but simply differentiates them as components of (or contributors to) the pro-war or anti-war ideology. For example, disillusionment might be detected in the speech or thought of a storyworld character and this contributes to the anti-war ideology that over-arches the novel.

Ideology in written work has been the subject of extensive study: for instance Hawkes and Thompson both discuss the development of ideology; Umberto Eco examined it in thirteen of Ian Fleming's novels ; Cormack studied John Fowles' *The Maggot* ; Christiana Gregoriou analysed social, linguistic and generic deviance in recent American crime fiction ; while Erin Elizabeth Hill-Parks looked at the formation of ideologies through two major modern war films; and John Fiske studied ideology in cultural products such as Madonna, the beach or gaming arcades..

³ Rehn defines meta-ideology as "an ideology of ideologies, a set of mental constructs established to protect and support other mental constructs". A. Rehn, "Speaking Out: On Meta-Ideology and Moralization: A Prolegomena to a Critique of Management Studies," Organization 15.4 (2008).

Evelyn Cobley points out that “Attention to formal strategies permits us to recognise that all texts are constructions or fictions (there is no real event) at the same time that all fictions are displaced reflections of experience (every event is multiple and ideologically implicated)” (Cobley 16).

Elizabeth Hill-Parks notes that film, because it is widely seen and carefully constructed, is a prime vehicle for transmission of ideology (13). Although the novel is the work of fewer people than film, it can also fulfil these criteria (carefully constructed and widely disseminated) in the cause of ideology.

While the fictional novel cannot be considered the source of all reliable information about the real world—and I am concerned here with historical fiction as an example—many people add to their knowledge of a particular era, say World War One, from the details they glean in novels. Davis feels that one could argue:

[A]n unmediated view of the world is impossible, so what difference would it make if we get that view from the novel or the newspaper or hearsay? This objection begs the question because the issue is precisely that different organisations of information carry with them different forms of meaning. Fictional narrative is defined by the fact that its referent is not the world but a particular sub-organization of the world pulled together under the rubric of the imaginary (5).

This comparison between the actual events and the fictional is taken up by James Phelan who discusses two forms of tension arising between the author and the reader. Cognitive tension is produced by the defamiliarization of the real world in the fictional

world we enter⁴. He believes that this cognitive tension “functions to propel us forward in the narrative” (Phelan 29), and in “narratives with a strong mimetic component” it “orients us toward the acquisition of information that will influence our judgement, expectations, desires and attitudes about characters and the instabilities they face” (29). “In narratives like the classic detective story, where the mimetic component is restricted, cognitive tension can be the primary source of the progression⁵” (29). The second form of tension discussed by Phelan is ethical tension, which “induces readers to form judgements, set up expectations, develop desires, adopt attitudes, and so on” (30). As my research later examines attitudes—especially those concerning war—as signifiers of ideology in crime novels, the interplay between these tensions will be studied as narrative strategies of characterisation.

Although Cormack discusses the broader category of “cultural products” (film, television, and sports commentary and fiction) his methodology is useful for examining texts such as those under discussion in this thesis. For this purpose, he suggests five “categories of analysis”: Content, Structure, Absence, Style and Mode of Address (28). As I shall employ a modified version of his scheme in my own methodology for examining the examples of crime-war fiction in Chapter 4 of this exegesis, it will be helpful here to look at all five of his categories in more detail.

Content: Cormack selects four elements of content in particular: “judgements, vocabulary, characters and actions” (28).

⁴ In Phelan’s first example of this tension, Orwell’s *1984*, the gap between real and fictional is greater than most novels.

⁵ Phelan uses the word ‘progression’ to indicate ‘plot’.

My thesis foregrounds character and, as discussed in the section on characterisation above, judgements, vocabulary and actions will be examined as narrative strategies, but there is considerable overlap between these arbitrary elements as when the nature (or ideology) of a fictional character is revealed by their dialogue (including judgement and vocabulary).

Structure: The meaning of a piece of text is affected by its position in the document: beginning, middle or end, or its relationship to other pieces of text.

Umberto Eco's structuralist approach to the James Bond novels of Ian Fleming defines a number of binary oppositions between the characters. The positive of each pair is invariably attached to the 'good' characters (in this case Bond and M), while the negative opposition is attached to the 'evil' characters. (Eco 147 et seq). As Pyrhönen says: "This organization [the structure of interlocking binary oppositions controlling the relations between characters] has obvious significance for the ideological implications of the narrative" (Pyrhönen 24). Analysing ideologies in characterisation in the hybrid novels examined in this thesis, I encountered several such oppositions: disillusionment vs glorification; nationalism/patriotism vs pacifism; elitism vs egalitarianism; the individual vs the group.

Absence: Something may be missing from the text because the author wishes to avoid it or postpone our awareness of it. Missing items are difficult objects to study but it is sometimes necessary to ask whether any character (or type of character) is absent: women, young people, aristocrats and so on. Other important absences to look for might include aspects of the character's history or lifestyle, which the author has, for one reason or another, withheld.

Style: Although several of the hybrid novels in my research share a common structure and overlapping content, they frequently

differ in the literary style employed in their construction or “the ways in which content is made to cohere” (Cormack 32). Daisley, in *Traitor*, for instance, chooses to use very little punctuation and no quotations marks, altering the reader’s impressions by blurring the border between dialogue and action. Sébastien Japrisot’s *A Very Long Engagement* is partially epistolary, allowing insight into the thoughts of the letter-writer and the narrator.

Of relevance to war writing, Clare Rhoden (63) and Paul Fussell (311) discuss categorising texts into three styles (after Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* and Aristotle’s *Poetics*): the high mimetic (epic, myth, romance or tragedy) in which the hero is more powerful than the reader (presumably by possession of superhuman abilities); the low mimetic in which the hero’s power is equal to the reader’s (presumably both hero and reader have human frailties); and the ironic in which the heroes are “characters with human abilities, trapped in situations they cannot transcend” (Rhoden *Futility* 63). In the predominantly disillusionment novels under review in this thesis, the characters tend to fall into one or other of the latter categories.

Mode of Address: This category relates to the way the text interpellates the reader. Although not as obvious in written texts as it might be in film or broadcasting, in genres such as war or crime fiction, the reader may find themselves being addressed as a member of a specific group where assumptions are being made about them because they are readers of a certain genre of literature.

Ideology and the Reader

Having discussed ideology as a theory how can I identify ideological formations in fictional prose texts and what are their effects? How does ideology work? And how do people react to it? Cormack points

out that we can “answer the interpellation in different ways, even to the extent of outright rejection” (20). Nevertheless, because the dominant ideology will frequently play a maintenance role and hostile reaction to it will be rare, “the strongest effect is likely to be that of reinforcement rather than conversion” (20).

In his examination of the sociology of religion and ideology, Kenneth Thompson suggests two ways ideology can work: social cement or social control (Thompson; Chapters 2 and 3). The former binds society, the latter has “a coercive effect... emphasizing its function of policing the class formations of the social structure” (Cormack 20). Cormack sees these not as alternatives but as aspects of the ideological effect whose “importance will vary with changing circumstance” (21), and he feels that the social control aspect is only ever partially successful.

It is worth asking, then—in the context of this exegesis—how readers would react and how certain characters in the storyworld would react to an ideological point covertly or overtly inserted into a text. Frank Parkin suggests three possibilities: we may simply accept the dominant account; or accept a subordinate ideology; or find a radical alternative ideology (Parkin 81-82). Opposition to the dominant ideology may arise from differences in class, gender, occupation, age or ethnic group (Cormack 21). As my thesis addresses narrative strategies of characterisation and ideological references with regard to attitudes to war (and class), it is useful to introduce a possible connection at this juncture. A character in the storyworld might represent one or more of Parkin’s responses. In my novel “Watershed”, for example, Rev Rupert Clarimond defends the ideological position that executions for cowardice are justified despite any extenuating circumstances. Elton’s character, Insp Kingsley, openly sees war as stupid at a time when (at least publicly)

the dominant ideology in Britain was more likely to have been one of patriotic fervour and pro-war sentiment. The predominant narrative strategy in both these cases is the words of the characters themselves, thereby coupling full responsibility for the attitudes to the character.

By way of summarising and bringing these theoretical musings on ideology into relevance for my thesis: an author creates a cultural product—in this case a fictional crime novel—from signs which will be decoded by the reader using conventionally accepted rules. The author will embed into the text his or her ideologies (or fictional ideologies), and the reader will interpret them in the light of his or her own ideologies. The text, in addressing the reader as its assumed audience, acts to interpellate the reader. The reader in accepting the role assigned by the text allows himself or herself to be positioned—that is, they are subjectified as a certain type of person, the consumer of a certain type of text, and in so doing they acquiesce in some part in the ideology initially embedded in the cultural product. By the light of this theory (which is only one possible way of viewing the exchange between author and reader), allowing themselves to be positioned as the subject of an ideological address still permits the reader personal choice and space to resist the particular ideological formation on offer. Such resistance or struggle will itself be directed by the reader's own ideology, which is a result of previous interpellations. And so, in an eternal circle of address and acceptance we grow into (and are maintained as) mature members of a society—or readers. In a hybrid genre, such as war and crime, the reader might be expected to respond as a consumer of either genre at various stages of the text: if the dominant ideologies of both contributing genres are compatible—such as the re-establishment and maintenance of good order in

society—this will present little difficulty. However, if confronted by the disrupting ideology (represented, say, by an anti-war sentiment) and an establishment ideology (represented by, say, a calming resolution of the crime) the reader may face a cognitive dissonance or disjunction and the circle of address and acceptance may fail to complete. To my mind, this is one of the most interesting and satisfying aspects of hybridity.

Methodology for Close Reading of Crime-War Novels

My thesis examines narrative strategies of characterisation, and looks to identify prejudices and beliefs concerning the war reflected as sentiments such as disillusionment or heroism or class-consciousness. In Chapter 4, characters in the hybrid novels will be examined in relation to such judgements and beliefs held by them and about them. The methodology for this analysis will be drawn from the above theory supplemented by a short paper from John Lye at Brock University.

Lye has provided a list of questions to ask of a text when analysing for ideologies or detecting ideological references. These include addressing assumptions made in the text which may distort something or someone; and looking for binaries, power relations and absences (Lye). Lye also suggests asking whether any cultural assumptions are shaping experiences or evaluations and if these may cover up “inconvenient facts”.

The five-category method of Mike Cormack in examining cultural products for ideologies, described in the previous section and supplemented by Lye’s questions and the work of the other theorists discussed, will form the basis for a reading template to be applied to the novels selected for examination in Chapter 4 of this exegesis.

Firstly, what narrative strategies can be detected in the construction of the character? Are there assumptions or beliefs concealed in (or revealed by) the content, structure, style? What trait or attribute is revealed (by connotation or denotation)? Does the character, revealed by this author-statement, represent an individual or a group or class? What values are encapsulated in the character traits or attributes detected? Do these values reflect an attitude to class or war of significance for my study? What is said? By whom is it said? How is it said? Who or what is missing? Is the reader being positioned and if so, in what way?

Issues with the methodology: With any critical analysis of narrative (such as this thesis) there is a constant risk that the isolated passages of text (characterisation, plot twists, temporal shifts, setting etc.) may be extrapolated to illuminate a particular point the critic may wish to indicate. In fact, that is often their very purpose. By risk, I would include the possibility that the analysis has misrepresented the whole narrative from the evidence of a small portion of it; and that the overt component of the text is misinterpreted to explain or create a covert component that may not exist. Selecting one component of a fictional work is arbitrary and assumes the work to be heterogeneous so that a single component can be unravelled for study. This flaw is further compounded by extrapolation of a representation (of a character, say) to support or explain a theory that the work is actually expounding one central theme. Phelan warns about the possibility of decontextualizing (“any one character, or incident, or narrative comment”) to support any one of “countless messages” (169).

With this in mind, and confining my analysis to the research question asked in Chapter 1, in this exegesis and the creative

component, “Watershed” I have attempted to show a connection between characterisation in fiction and ideological references revealing attitudes to war and class. I also hope that, although this project examines only hybrid novels within the limited definition I have suggested for crime-war fiction, aspects of this methodology would prove useful in examining other hybrid forms such as detective or war mixed with fantasy, science fiction or romance.

Chapter Three: Writing Crime, War and the Hybrid Form

Introduction

In order to contextualise the hybrid genre, this chapter provides a brief history of crime writing and the terms commonly used to describe it. It then examines war writing before discussing the hybrid form.

These two chapters, therefore, furnish the theoretical background for a close reading and analysis of several hybrid novels that follow in Chapter Four.

Crime Writing

W H Auden admitted that, for him, “reading detective stories is an addiction like tobacco or alcohol” (Auden 15). Edmund Wilson, on the other hand, found detective stories disappointing; he critiqued several books and found nothing to redeem the genre. However, he admits he is probably “reading for the wrong thing: that I ought not to be expecting good writing, characterization, human interest or even atmosphere” (E. Wilson 37). My own thoughts on crime fiction fall somewhere between Auden and Wilson: easily bored by the formulaic nature of many detective novels, I still feel it is possible to find “good writing” and characterisation offering interesting opportunities for analysis.

While John Scaggs (7-13) takes the history of crime and mystery back to the biblical, classical or Elizabethan texts and historical records like the *Newgate Calendar*, most commentators usually select the nineteenth century and Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin stories as the great antecedents of the detective story. Poe leads

directly to Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle and on to Agatha Christie and Dorothy L Sayers, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Between the wars, fictional crime further divided into classical detective novels—also known as the “Golden Age”—and the “hard-boiled” novels. The classical model is most frequently associated with Agatha Christie and Dorothy L Sayers and the hard-boiled or noir American private-eye novels with writers like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Since the Second World War, crime fiction writing has exploded into newer forms, including psychological, forensic, suspense, thriller and the postmodern. The history of the genre is discussed in Peter Messent (3-50); Heather Worthington (ix-72); John Scaggs (7-32) and P D James, while both Stephen Knight (*Form and Ideology*) and Dennis Porter, using form and content, look for ideologies in detective fiction ranging from the pre-Dickensian (like Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*) to Dupin, Holmes, Sam Spade, and Simenon. Knight has since looked at more recent fiction and newer sub-genres (*Crime Fiction*).

It is useful here to discuss the confusion of terms, as the nomenclature supporting the typology is frequently unhelpful. At the most simplistic level—and one I find most useful—crime fiction can be used as an overall term to encompass any fiction in which a crime occurs: and detective fiction, those texts which involve a detective. Some commentators reserve the term crime fiction for novels in which the crime or the criminal are central, others call this format “noir” or transgressor fiction (Messen 26). Knight uses the term crime fiction as synonymous with detective fiction while Porter even admits spy thrillers into the same generic heading (Porter 4-5) although he insists that the principal action is the solving of a crime by an investigator of some kind.

It is perhaps unnecessary to differentiate between the various sub-genres of crime fiction: spy, thriller, detection, suspense, mystery, psychological, forensic, private eye, police-procedural, clue-puzzle, whodunit, and hard-boiled where the nomenclature is almost self-explanatory. However, several caveats remain: clue-puzzle and whodunit are usually synonymous with classical “golden-age” fiction; hard-boiled is likely to be found under American crime, private-eye or “tough-guy”. A greater problem arises with the terms “crime” and “detective”: Julian Symons found, in the early criticism of detective fiction, the recurring idea that detective novels had “little room for any depth of character or any flourish of style” (Symons 10). But he later asks, “How can one weigh the puzzle interest of the detective story against the interest in characterization that marks the crime novel, especially when the detective story often contains some characterization and the crime novel often contains a puzzle?” (21). He also states: “Historians of the detective story have been insistent that it is a unique literary form, distinct from the crime or mystery story, not to be confused with the police novel, and even more clearly separate from the many varieties of thriller” (10). Finally, he lists differences between what he considers the detective story and the crime novel: the former is based on deception; has a detective; the crime may be bizarre; clues are essential; and the detective is the only one characterised in detail; setting is mostly before the crime, and the social attitude is conservative. In contrast, the crime novel, according to Symons, is based on psychology; frequently has no detective or clues; several people are characterised, and the social attitude is sometimes radical or questioning of the law (173-175). Franco Moretti also feels that the characters in detective fiction are inert and never grow

(137) but I particularly like Jacque Barzun's requirements for detective fiction:

It is not enough that one of the characters in the story should be called a detective – nor is it necessary. What is required is that the main interest of the story should consist in finding out, from circumstances largely physical, the true order and meaning of events that have been part disclosed and part concealed. (Barzun 144)

Carl Malmgren is more specific in saying that the crime novel plot violates “a basic convention of mystery and detective fiction: it tells the story from the point of view of the perpetrator [. . .]” (Malmgren 160). Todorov has an extensive essay on different “kinds” of detective fiction but, as it still leaves us with the problem of novels which do not fit, is of little help in defining the terms (Todorov). Porter, who feels that multiplying “superficial differences” between categories is a nuisance, chooses the broader definition (4), while Tony Hilfer generally agrees with Symons (Hilfer 2, 155). But Symons admits that such classifications are more confusing than helpful (10) and I would agree. For my purposes, like several other commentators (see Cole, Knight, Scaggs and Porter for instance), I use “crime fiction” as a blanket term which includes “detective fiction” but reserve the name “noir” or transgressor sub-genre for those which concentrate on the crime or the criminal.

None of the hybrid novels in my survey could be classified as “transgressor” by these criteria. Most would be “detective fiction”. However, if the division between crime and detective fiction is made on the degree of characterisation, as suggested by Symons and Moretti above, then I hope to demonstrate in Chapter 4 that some of the hybrids belie this and contain extensive character development.

Crime novels of all types are capable of carrying ideological references and this may be one reason for their popularity as objects of academic study:

I see crime fiction as a genre that can be used for conservative ends, to protect and sustain the dominant social order, but it can also (often paradoxically, at one and the same time) work in a more radical and challenging way. (Messent 12)

And: “[. . .] we should remember the way detective fiction so often pulls in contrary directions” (Messent 93). Andrew Pepper says that the genre—especially the hard-boiled novel— “is shot through with an uneasy mixture of contradictory ideological inflections or, rather, is coded to both resist and re-inscribe the dominant cultural discourses” (Pepper 211).

Moretti says: “Detective fiction is a hymn to culture’s coercive abilities: which prove more effective than pure and simple institutional repression” (Moretti 143). Most scholars note that detective fiction—more so the Classical British tradition—is conservative: maintaining the status quo, protecting the dominant social order, although recent transgressor fiction resists this. The typology here allows a certain ideological processing: Messent notes that classical detective fiction, mainly a British phenomenon, “is limited in terms of its spatial and class environments” with “usually little attempt to portray a full social panorama [. . .]” (31). The ‘hard-boiled novels, on the other hand, mainly American, are more appropriate to “a society that seemed out of joint; when anxieties about crime, capitalism, and the conditions of urban life were increasingly and urgently pressing” (35). He believes that the hard-boiled form of detective novel is “more likely to release ‘explosive cultural material’—those that raise direct and challenging questions about the values of the dominant social order and our status both

as individuals and community members within it—than its classical equivalent” (21-23). However, he admits that a number of classical detective novels do address the issues of their period (24). Crime fiction since the Second World War has expanded the range of ideological references from the socio-political ideologies into race, gender and sexual orientation, and has blurred the line between many of the categories talked about above.

If, as Porter suggests, we consider the detective genre as a discourse that limits “the kind of issues that may be discussed within it”, the British and American variants can still accommodate a range of ideologies within the differing cultural norms of these countries (Porter 127). Cole, for instance, believes that “American writers have never been bound by class stereotypes based on the rich man/ poor man relationship” (132), although I would note that when Philip Marlowe walks into “the Sternwood place” even through his cynical interior monologue we are shown an impressive lifestyle contrasting with his own (Chandler 1-2). Extreme class references are found less frequently in today’s crime fiction, although several of the hybrid novels in my survey—because of the period in which they are set rather than when they were written—deliberately retain many of the class values of those inter-war novels. The upper-class/working-class binary that might have appeared normal within the unnoticed dominant ideology of the early twentieth century, is certainly detectable by today’s readers with twenty-first century sensibilities. The characters in the hybrid novels studied in this thesis come mainly from middle-class or working-class strata. Other ideologies and prejudices, such as age, race, religion and sexual

orientation occur less frequently in the hybrid genre⁶ and most characters may be read as white, Anglo-Saxon and heterosexual. Most of the novels reviewed in Chapter 4 echo the English inter-war “clue-puzzle” format, which was similarly selective and conservative concerning these topics.

As my thesis looks at characters in the hybrid novel, and as characterisation was covered in some detail in the previous chapter, I shall simply add some background on the character in crime fiction generally at this point. Malmgren, treating crime fiction as quest narrative, uses a functional approach to detective fiction and identifies six basic elements. Applying his structure to the hybrid novels, the detective (*Subject*) is approached by a *Sender* (usually a damsel-in-distress) to find a truth (*Object*); the Sender frequently becomes the *Helper*, the quest is hindered by the *Opponent*, but the truth is finally presented to the *Receiver* who may also be the sender or helper.

Cole points out that while the fictional detective obviously needs some strengths, we readers also enjoy their weaknesses. Crime fiction abounds in drug-taking, alcohol abuse, failed marriages, and for every investigator driving a fast car there is another driving a clapped out wreck. “Because the crime genre relies on truth-seeking and hubris, it requires characters who, while confident about taking a stand against evils, are also fraught with personal uncertainty” (Cole 123). She also says that in the novels of Dorothy L Sayers and

⁶ Race does not appear to be a significant issue in the hybrid novels and is not addressed in this thesis. However, it cannot be denied that war narratives frequently demonise the enemy along racist lines. The war component of the hybrid novel will therefore have the potential for racism.

Agatha Christie class acts to reduce anxiety and the investigators are protecting “England’s class system and keeping the country manor houses safe” (131). Auden, too, feels it is the detective’s job to “restore the state of grace in which the aesthetic and ethical are as one” (Auden 21). In other words, the detective upholds the dominant ideology.

Faults and virtues in a character’s private life can be narrative strategies used by the author. Messent contrasts the professionalism and persistence of Sue Grafton’s female detective, Kinsey Millhone, compared to her personal life and finds that there is a class division involved with the world-view of this character. “So Millhone, with her ‘blue-collar roots’ (Grafton 4) reacts against . . . various other privileges money and social position brings” (Messent 94). Porter also makes a salient point on class ideology and the policemen in detective fiction not being gentlemen “and therefore could not be heroes” (156-7). However male protagonists in many crime-war hybrid novels carry heroic status by virtue of having served at the front while their post-war status is sustained by assisting someone else (usually a young woman) in resolving a crime. Although several hybrids have self-confident young women in leading roles (such as Maisie Dobbs and Bess Crawford), others do support the ideological position of men helping and protecting women. In the next chapter of this thesis, I look at several fictional detectives from the hybrid novels for similar contrasts relating to class and attitudes to war.

Alyce von Rothkirch, in her detailed study of fictional villains from the early twentieth-century, points out that since the 1920s the detective has become the more popular character in the imagination of the reader and as the target of the critic. She posits several reasons for the rise in popularity of the investigator over the

perpetrator: advances in science and its relevance to forensics and criminology; Darwin's Theory of Evolution; the advent of a detective police force and its concomitant introduction of police memoirs (Rothkirch 1042). Her classifications of criminals as "born", "habitual", "professional" or "occasional" (1045), are all terms we might use of fictional detectives: Maisie Dobbs (Winspear *Maisie Dobbs*) is a professional, as are the policemen in Elton's and Perry's novels (Perry *No Graves as Yet*; Perry *Shoulder the Sky*; Perry *Angels in the Gloom*; Perry *At Some Disputed Barricade*; Perry *We Shall Not Sleep*); Father Anselm (Brodrick) and Laurence Bartram (Speller) are occasional detectives; Bess Crawford is habitual (Todd *Duty*). Another adjective I would add for many of the amateur investigators in the hybrid novels is "reluctant".

Although Knight (*Form and Ideology*) primarily discusses ideology in the *form* of the detective novel, he recognizes the "selection of content detail is also a primary and controlling way of establishing ideology" (5); examples he uses include the setting, the crime, and the character of the criminal and the investigator. Similarly, where I have chosen to analyse characters in some detail, I am aware that this is not the only way—or even the predominant way—to represent world-views or ideologies in fiction.

Cole takes the nature of the detective on an evolutionary path from the cheerful character in British classical (golden-age) fiction, such as Poirot or Lord Peter Whimsey, crossing the Atlantic to become the cynical, world-weary private eye of the hard-boiled genre, and back to England in the morose loners such as Le Carre's George Smiley, Colin Dexter's Morse, or Linda La Plante's Jane Tennyson, (representing the new breed of female investigators). "In the 1970's and 1980's women appropriated one of crime genre's most potent symbols, the hard-bitten, wisecracking private

detective, regendering him into a lippy, confident female private eye” (Cole 136). Several of the hybrid novels in my survey have female investigators or co-investigators but none could be described as “hard-bitten” or “lippy”.

Writing War

“You fought in the Great War?” A journalist from the *Guardian* asked me in a long interview to coincide with the presentation of the prize.

“I didn’t think it was all that great,” I pointed out. “In fact, if memory serves, it was bloody awful.”

“Yes, of course,” said the journalist, laughing uncomfortably. “Only you’ve never written about it, have you?”

“Haven’t I?”

(John Boyne: *The Absolutist* 298)

For the most part, the literature of the First World War divides chronologically into two distinct blocks: memoir or fiction written by returned servicemen between 1918 and the early 1930s; and recent (mostly fiction) novels written since 1980⁷. The dearth of Great War literature in the intervening period could be explained by the rise of nationalism in the 1930s, the Second World War, the Cold War, and any other outbreaks of mass violence across the globe, but it is not my intention to speculate on this here.

The earlier autobiographical novels and memoirs are frequently categorised as the classic canon of Great War literature and because much of the recent fiction owes a debt to the prose and poetry of

⁷ This is not to say that the interim period produced no suitable war literature. Examples include John Harris’ *Covenant With Death* published in 1961. And Derek Robinson’s *Goshawk Squadron* (1971).

this canon, it is, therefore, tangentially relevant to this thesis, and I discuss some of the important prose works in Appendix A.

Several studies have examined the form and ideology of the war narrative. Margot Norris looks at Modernity and World War 1 and critiques two texts of the classic canon (Hemingway and Remarque). She states, “because war is a world unmaking event, a reality-deconstructing and defamiliarizing activity, one of the challenges of war writing is how to make its inherent epistemological disorientation, its sense of experienced ‘unreality’, real” (Norris 24). This could be an even greater problem when mixed with crime and detective fiction where the author is striving for verisimilitude to satisfy consumers of both genres.

Evelyn Cobley feels that “because modes of representation are bearers of ideological significance, it is possible to learn much about attitudes to the war from a text’s formal strategies” (Cobley 15) which encapsulates much of what my thesis is attempting. Cobley concentrates on these “narrative strategies (form) as carriers of ideological meaning” (3) and the reader’s often “unacknowledged absorption of the ideological inscriptions these modes of representation continue to carry” (16). She is particularly concerned, however, with the presence of contradictory ideologies—complicity with the war opposed to apparently anti-war sentiment—which frequently conflict in the same text, and her approach (through form) is to reveal these ambiguities. I am hopeful that a similar approach through narrative strategies in this thesis will reveal contrary inscriptions in the hybrid novels I shall study in Chapter 4. My own novel “Watershed” opens with a description of an attack during the prolonged Battle of the Somme. The actions of the protagonists in this setting represent the heroic and pro-war stance.

The overall tone of the novel, however, layered as it is behind a detective story, reflects an anti-war stance.

Ideologies represented as attitudes to war in fiction often form binary oppositions: nationalistic/patriotic fervour on the one hand and disillusionment/anti-war sentiment on the other. While such a dichotomy over-simplifies the situation and most binaries can be expressed as a spectrum rather than polar opposites, in a new century where the face of war has changed since the static battles of World War 1, attitudes to war—and the ideologies embedded within them—have ebbed and flowed with the political moment. As Rhoden and Cobley both observe, today's preferred reading is anti-war (which, as Rhoden discusses, puts some Australian World War 1 narratives out of the canon) (Rhoden *Futility*). Authors working today in the historical fiction of World War 1 cannot avoid being influenced by all that has transpired since: World War 2; saturation bombing in Europe and Asia; nuclear armament; the Cold War; Vietnam; the war on terror. It is hardly surprising that such attitudes are ambivalent—the need to stamp out evil⁸ wherever it occurs weighed against the paradox of meeting violence with violence; the nature of the just war, and so on. However, these ambivalences are not a new phenomenon. Attitudes to war have changed—and continue to change—over the last hundred years and this thesis will consider some of those attitudes and how today's authors represent them.

⁸ Without entering a philosophical dissertation we can still ask whether the concept has changed in the hundred years since the war. In spite of increasing fundamentalist religion and secularism, I suspect readers of crime fiction or war fiction today still perceive evil much as it was seen then.

Robin Gerster found “two distinct and characteristic sets of responses” in the novels of World War 1: “European debunking and Australian big-noting” (Gerster 12). He is not saying that the Australians were not heroic, but that they should, perhaps, have left the description of their exploits to others. A similar bifurcation might be found in the writing before 1916 and that after. Christina Spittel notes a similar opposition between Australian valour and German monstrosity in Australian novels written during the war which is less distinct in post-war writing (Spittel 128); a gradual change from the “patriotic melodramas” concerning home-front problems and the “fictional worlds of the battlefields” written by the returning servicemen (123). Graeme Turner, examining national identities in fiction, feels that there is: “an historical and ideological nexus between modes of characterisation in fiction on the one hand and the ideology of the self articulated in the culture which produces that fiction on the other” (Turner 90). It is not my intention in this thesis to pursue the Australian/European divide⁹, or the early temporal variations, but rather to unpack the various attitudes to war found in the present-day hybrid crime-war novels. Similarly, nationalistic feelings and patriotism have not been fully addressed in Chapter Four, except where such ideologies manifest as attitudes concerning the war itself.

For authors in the accepted ‘canon’ of First War literature the General Ideology (in Eagleton’s terms) dominant in Britain and Continental Europe seems to be anti-war: a strong desire to be over it, to leave it firmly in its historical place; a reasonable ideology for

⁹ This has been well covered by Rhoden in several publications and by Gerster.

nations recovering from great trauma. It was the decade of the roaring 20s and those who had survived the war doubtless had little stomach to be reminded of its horrors.

Cobley takes a deconstructive strategy to reveal ideological implications in war writing but restricts her examples to those authors who were there during the First World War: men who had witnessed its horrors. We can assume they (and women like Vera Brittain) wrote from some impulse to tell the world how it was, get it down on record, the great battles and the trivial tasks. Cobley suggests they may have distrusted the official record and wished to correct any distortion or propaganda (6). Censorship, too, as Gerster reminds us, suppressed any mention of the horror or sickness of war (24). As these first-hand accounts certainly contain much of the true picture of the war, they—and the official histories they sought to supplement or resist—are all we have now, and it is interesting to attempt a connection between the classical canon and today's fiction: Sassoon, for instance, begins *Sherston's Progress* with his arrival at Craiglockhart, Dr W H R Rivers' hospital for shell shocked officers, and Barker begins *Regeneration* with the same event.

Clare Rhoden distinguishes between heroic, patriotic or nationalistic ideologies and disillusionment (Rhoden "What's Missing?"; Rhoden "Innovation Meets Tradition"). She found that Australians valued "mateship, self-reliance, ingenuity and irreverence" (*Futility* 18, 19 and 26). Other differences include attitudes to leadership and the role of women. Politically, she equates the "modern cultural disillusionment" reading with the pacifist left and the "continuity view" with the traditional right (*Futility* 44-5). This bears directly upon my thesis that attitudes to war are ideological and can be signified by fictional characters.

There is, however, a complication in using the terms heroic or patriotic in this thesis, as they are not synonymous with a pro-war stance. As Rhoden points out, there are many historical narratives of the First World War supporting bravery and successful action without being directly pro-war in nature. Christopher Teitjens, in Ford's *Parade's End*, for instance behaves bravely (and stoically) although the war tests him and his spiteful wife conspires to thwart his aim of being a good man. Sassoon, too, although openly protesting against the war (in life and in Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy*) was decorated for valour and returned voluntarily to the front. Yuval N Harari examines attitudes to war from the perspective of soldiers' self-perception in military memoirs (Harari) by comparing writings from several historical conflicts. Copley, too, makes the distinction between these opposing views but points out the paradox that: "Both realistic and more experimental depictions of life at the front have deservedly been read and praised as anti-war protests; they can, at the same time, be seen as the source of a certain ideological complicity with the war" (Copley 17). Scenes describing the horrors of trench warfare attempt to approach the historical reality as closely as possible. However, much of what is being described is a foregrounding of what Eagleton calls the "pseudo-real"¹⁰, the result of a representation signifying one view of the war established in the years immediately following the war and perpetuated through historiography and fiction in the century since.

¹⁰ Eagleton uses the example of Dickens' London portrayed in *Bleak House* as "the product of a representational process which signifies, not 'Victorian England' as such, but certain of Victorian England's ways of signifying itself" (77).

Charles Edmunds is firmly against the disillusionment writers (naming Sassoon and Graves in particular); claiming that, had the allied troops actually suffered from it the war could not have been won. He also takes issue with writers who were not there or did not share the frontline experience. (Preface to the 1964 Icon edition 14-19). Of his own memoir he writes in 1921: “in this story of the war there will be no disenchantment” (Edmonds 21).

In spite of Edmund’s assurances of a pro-war fighting force, Arthur Marwick describes a state of unrest among Britain’s working class from 1917: exacerbated by high prices, poor housing, conscription, the revolution in Russia, restrictions in employment and lack of mobility, and the repressive authority measures (Marwick 218-26). Most of these factors affected the troops as well and continued to do so long after the armistice.

Rhoden found some “middle-ground” in the writings of the First War, and sees attempts to divide them into disillusioned or heroic as reductionist (Rhoden “What’s Missing?” 30) However, she feels that British First World War fiction, from its beginning, tended towards disillusionment, and finds, even in today’s writing, the same contrast: Sebastian Faulks’ *Birdsong* and Pat Barker’s *Regeneration* against Jackie French’s *A Rose for the Anzac Boys* or Graeme Hague’s *And in the Morning* (Rhoden “Innovation Meets Tradition” 119). Copley feels that “[r]eaders tend to look for antiwar sentiments” (Copley 5), and the novelist’s “formal choices are never ideologically innocent, they must be taken into account in discussions of narratives about historical crises of consciousness like the First World War” (16). Crime writers using the Western Front as a setting, then, frequently have certain characters display antiwar sentiments and I shall look at some of these in the following chapter.

A close relation of disillusionment is estrangement and Paul Fussell has noted that front-line troops felt estranged from the general staff and from everyone back in England, and fictional works on the war frequently imply such a rift between combatants and non-combatants (Fussell 86). I call this the ideology of those who were there and know versus those who were not and can never know, which is a recurring trope in recent war novels. In my own novel, *Watershed*, I use the police inspector to represent those who were not there—although several other characters (like the Cresswells, of course) were also non-combatant. This trope has three possible readings: we, as readers, are complicit in the ideological inscription if we privilege the version of history proffered by a fictional character who was there (in spite of the fact that the modern author was not there); those who were not there cannot remember it (that is, they can only rely on the myth of it); and finally, it is a very strong pro-war sentiment¹¹.

Like several observers, David Reynolds (who looks at the global ramifications of the war) feels it has become “a literary war, detached from its moorings in historical events” (Reynolds xv). Without wishing to explore a historicist reading, I’m not sure that most recent fiction drifts too far from the history, but what we know of the war, the yardstick by which I judge the verisimilitude and veracity in recent fiction, is itself dependent upon war poets, fallible historians and pliable novelists in the past.

¹¹ Shakespeare recognised this well enough when he gave Henry V the words of his St Crispin’s Day speech: “And gentlemen in England, now a-bed, Shall think themselves accursed they were not here...” Henry V, Act 4, Scene iii.

Fussell also points out the literariness of the Great War (and I remember, myself, being struck by the list of writers I found mentioned in Robert Graves' memoir: Sassoon, Blunden, Masfield, Thomas Hardy, T E Lawrence, Bertram Russell, Walter de la Mare, W H Davies, T S Eliot, the Sitwells, Arnold Bennett and John Buchan). Fussell also sees the Great War as ironic, in that nothing was as anticipated. His analysis supports the disillusionment argument but his work has been attacked by military historians like Robin Prior, Trevor Wilson and Hugh Strachan as anachronistic and based on a limited canon of elite writers (Harari). Prior and Wilson, with some justification, criticise Fussell of writing history from literary sources, neglecting the home front, the war at sea and the middle-east, blaming British officers for the suffering of their own troops, and concentrating on disenchanted sources. According to them, Fussell ignores Manning's *Her Privates We* because "it is about comradeship and endurance, and long spells out of the line" (Prior and Wilson 68).

What we know today about the Great War comes to us from a variety of sources; history, literature, film and poetry and is greatly influenced by the accepted canon. While the number of books about the war written in English between, say, 1914 and 1936, sometimes seems infinite (which, of course, it is not), the mystical canon comprises only a small portion of the whole. Paradoxically this calls for a definition of the canon of World War 1 literature: a catalogue, which, tautologically defines itself— those works, admitted to the list are those works recognised by authors and critics along the way as being *permitted* to be admitted to the list. A brief summary of some of the more recent collections of critical essays on the subject reveal the following names: Most scholars readily include Graves, Sassoon, Dos Passos, Ford Maddox Ford, Mottram, Blunden,

Hemingway and Vera Brittain. While John Laird and Claire Rhoden¹² add Australians such as Frederic Manning, Leonard Mann, Frank Dalby Davison, Ion Idriess and J P McKinney to the list. Spittel discusses important Australian women writers like Mabel Balcombe Brookes. Parfitt extends it further by looking at Richard Aldington, Arnold Bennett, Henry Williamson, H G Wells, D H Lawrence, Gilbert Frankau, C S Forester and John Buchan. If non-English language texts are included, Remarque, Barbusse and Jünger are frequently discussed. To avoid devoting too many words and too much emphasis on the classic canon I have compiled a list of twenty recognised contenders with a few annotations of my own at Appendix A.

The accepted canon of Great War literature blurs the line between fiction and memoir: Sassoon's autobiographical works are veiled as the exploits of George Sherston. Graves originally wrote *Goodbye to all That* as a fictional work during the war but later re-wrote it as memoir in 1929. Leonard Mann, who served in the AIF tells the story of a group of diggers in the final years of the war (*Flesh in Armour*), while Bourne, Frederic Manning's protagonist, like the author himself, is (almost certainly) an Australian serving in the British army.

My interest in the classic canon of Great War literature in this thesis is concerned with the influence these works have had on recent crime fiction set around the First World War. For instance, Parfitt points out Manning's protagonist (in *Her Privates We/The Middle Parts of Fortune*) Bourne, does not break under the pressure

¹² Although Rhoden (*Futility*) prefers to reserve the term "canon" for the European, disillusionment texts.

of war. He contrasts this to Aldington's Winterbourne who suicides by offering himself to the enemy guns (Parfitt 82-83). Mann's character Frank Jeffreys also suicides in the closing stages of the war, but this may not be entirely the result of the war but to a failed romantic attachment. The bifurcation between Manning and Aldington leads Parfitt to theorise later that *Her Privates We* "accepts war, and even in a sense glorifies it" (90). Because Bourne responds nobly to the horror around him, Parfitt believes that "a profound peace may be achieved through the experience of war" (90). While I agree that Bourne seems to be a character less affected by the war than men like Winterbourne or Jeffreys, I do not see this as a glorification of war, or as a possible useful function or justification for it: it is more representative of a complex attitude reflecting both pro-war and anti-war ideologies in the same character. Spittel, writing of Mann and his fellow novelists of that period, points out that "their novels are conscious attempts to re-shape the memory of the War" (123). Rhoden's comparison of Ford's *Parade's End* and Mann's *Flesh in Armour* "demonstrates overlaps between the ideologies, concepts and motifs of both disillusionment and heroic narration" (*Futility* 60).

However, utilizing Parfitt's bifurcation—novels about breaking or not breaking—in analysing recent hybrid novels, it is not difficult to find both: In Brodrick's *A Whispered Name*, a man allows himself to be executed by firing squad but in this case (unlike Aldington or Mann's suicidal characters) Brodrick portrays the execution as a noble self-sacrifice. By contrast, Elton's protagonist, Douglas Kingsley, begins the novel as a conscientious objector but ends it as a decorated war hero after attacking and killing Germans in their own trenches. The nobility, in this case, should lie with the pacifist but paradoxically Elton provides the reader with an alternative, one

that by its nature glorifies war. Anne Perry similarly has her investigator, Joseph Reavley, an Anglican minister and army padre, fighting like a common soldier in the trenches on several occasions in the Reavley quartet.

Untangling the myths, half-truths and lies from the historical events is not the job of literary criticism, it has however, been undertaken by creative writers and several novelists in recent years have sought an accurate representation of life both at the Western Front and the home front. Examples include Brenda Walker *Wing of Night*, Sebastian Barry *A Long Long Way*, Chris Womersley *Bereft*, Phillip Rock *The Passing Bells*, and Pat Barker, not only for her *Regeneration* trilogy but her later Slade School of Art novels, *Life Class* and *Toby's Room*. The non-fiction account of Percy Toppliss' activities, as revealed in William Allison and John Fairley's *The Monocled Mutineer*, is a bold examination of a painful episode in British military history succeeded by an equally painful police manhunt (*Allison and Fairley*). I have attached an annotated list of several recent war narratives to this thesis (Appendix B). Rhoden also includes a similar list (*Futility* 327). Those I consider hybrids are included in Table 1 to Chapter 4.

Disillusionment, nationalism and heroism are not the only emotions represented in Great War writing, of course, and Holger Klein¹³ notes that disillusionment, alienation, despair, accusation, endurance, the "heroic response triumphant", and nostalgia can all be found in these novels (Klein 8). Rhoden would probably add

¹³ Like Cobley, Klein examines original writers from the war, but includes authors not only from Britain France and America, but also Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary.

“futility” to this list. However, as I have set myself to close reading a relatively large number of hybrid novels for analysis in Chapter Four, I have simplified the list under pro-war or anti-war as disillusionment or heroic. This does not mean that I ignored other sentiments: alienation, despair and accusation occur in several hybrid novels, especially those involving executions. The character, Alfred Cresswell, in my novel “Watershed” also illustrates all these in his implied passive response and refusal to fight, as does Daisley’s character, Monroe, in *Traitor*.

The Hybrid Genre

Is it a detective crime psychological analytical suspense police story? No, it’s a hybrid. (Symons 9)

Hybrid genres in literature might be seen as mixing types of source material: documentary and fiction; poetry and prose (Galster), or as the bastard child of Western and post-colonial texts (Fludernik). Hybridity in fiction can also result from a bringing together of recognised sub-genres: romance and suspense; westerns and science fiction; crime and war. It is the latter combination I address in this thesis. Such a conjunction of forms might well distort the recognised boundaries of the genres or transgress the usual conventions in interesting ways.

Franco Moretti notes that Agatha Christie’s *Mysterious Affair at Styles* takes place in the middle of the Great War, and was written perhaps at the very nadir of that conflict, 1916, and “yet the only murder of interest occurs on the second floor of Styles Court.” (135) In this section I discuss the hybrid genre in which a crime occurs and the war plays some part in the plot and the back-story of the

characters. If I subscribed to the detective/crime typology discussed above, most of the hybrid novels reviewed in Chapter 4 of this thesis would be classed as “detective fiction”.

It is difficult to justify some of the novels I have selected for this hybrid category: Boyne’s *Absolutist* and Dunmore’s *The Lie*, for instance, appear to lack both a definable crime and an investigation. Their inclusion depends more upon the sense of mystery or foreboding that is slowly unpacked by the first person narrative as the story proceeds, and upon the constant, unspoken presence of guilt.

Modern crime fiction is multinational and the detective may originate from France, Belgium, America, Scandinavia, Italy, Australia, Japan, China or Scotland. However, apart from two French novels, the investigators in the First World War crime novels under review are all British (or Commonwealth) and most of them are middle-class, ex-officers or nurses, amateurs, reluctant and uncertain, and may be suffering from shell shock¹⁴.

Jacque Barzun feels that “[. . .] in any combination of the detective interest with anything else, the something else must remain the junior partner” (150), and, “nothing less than the play of the detective intelligence upon the physical world will give us a detective tale” (151). After searching for evidence to refute this I find that for the hybrid model surveyed in this thesis it appears to be true even when the combination involves another major sub-genre: the war novel.

¹⁴ Second World War crime fiction throws up a wider national background: Portuguese in Robert Wilson’s novels; German in Philip Kerr’s Berlin noir and H H Kirst’s novels; French in George Simenon; Australian in Deborah Burrows.

Notwithstanding Barzun's argument, one of the criteria for classifying a novel in the hybrid category of crime-war fiction must be that the war impinges on the story in some way. Ways in which a crime novel plot may incorporate a fictional representation of the First World War constitute the common tropes of the sub-genre. Spittel, discussing Brookes' novel *Old Desires*, sees the war as having an "essentially narrative function, a device for accelerating the action by bringing characters together again..." (124). The war frequently fulfils this same purpose in the hybrid novels where the crime and its investigation are foregrounded, but the correlative for these is directly affected by the war.

Firstly, of course, it is accepted that the returned serviceman is changed from the fresh-face recruit who marched away. Today we recognize the psychiatric classification of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, previously known under a variety of names, the most emotive being "shell shock". Many post-bellum crime novels involving returned servicemen or traumatised civilians, utilise this disorder. Even when shell shock is not a motif, unemployed ex-servicemen or the surplus of young women over men, or the number of young widows, all interpellate the reader in some way. In an interesting reversal of "the missing generation" of young men theme, Helen Dunmore in *The Lie* has her narrator think that "There weren't any gaps in the crowds that I could see, in spite of all the dead" (44) which is an equally effective narrative device.

Martin Petter reports on the particular plight of ex-officers unable to find suitable positions in civilian life. Many of them would "never again rise as high, hold as much power, or touch as much money as during the war" (Petter 131). From this cohort come many of the protagonists in the crime-war hybrid novels, men whose

personal disappointment reflects as disaffection for the war because of their experience of the peace.

Secondly, military justice: the proliferation of courts martial during the First World War, and the inherent injustice and punitive nature of the Field General Court Martial, has given several crime novels a useful plot device (*Armistice*, *A Whispered Name*, *Traitor*, *The Harrowing*, *The Return of Captain John Emmett*, *The Absolutist*). Scenes of execution by firing squad draw the reader to sympathise with the condemned man; our assumptions are of injustice, persecution *pour encourager les autres*, and we fear the one facing the firing squad at dawn might be any of us. Socio-politically, the accused is seen (and frequently portrayed in fiction) as working class or lower rank, the accusers and members of the court are seen as officers and middle class. There were over 300 executions during the war; only three were officers (Speller, Babington, Oliver. See my footnote to chapter 4 for details).

As Moretti notes of standard crime fiction, once the crime is solved and the criminal revealed, the rest of society is innocent, exonerated (144-5). In the case of the hybrid mix of war and crime in fiction, however, and using the court martial as an example, the implication is that the board of officers who reached the guilty verdict, and the chain of command that signed off on the documentation, are aberrant and guilty of heartless cruelty, perpetuating injustice and harsh punishment—and guilty too, as always, of incompetence. The reader of the 21st century is appalled and saddened by the verdict and shocked by the severity of the punishment.

Military law, laid down in the Manual of Military Law 1914 and revised in 1917, allows for crimes and punishments that are not found in civilian life: brutal field punishments (page 721) and

prosecution for cowardice or desertion (15-21), for instance. Some recent fiction has fore-grounded such wartime incidents and highlighted the injustices. This presents a paradox in which the maintenance of law and order, usually part of the [re]solution, is now part of the problem, and it also presents another deviation from the classical crime novel: how to make a crime such as cowardice appear more heinous than even murder.

A further obstacle in discussing murder during a time of war is that of making one death significant among so many, and any fictional work involving the investigation or outcomes of such a death (by criminal means) will need to either ignore the paradox or address it. From an ideological viewpoint, by concentrating on one death, either by murder, enemy action or execution, the author is bringing the mortality of the war into sharper focus and, by doing so, privileges the anti-war ideology.

Another problem facing the author in the hybrid genre is characterising the investigator as sympathetic or hostile to these regulations while maintaining an authority position. In classical crime fiction, the detective figure, by solving the problem will put the world back in order, make everything safe again. Such an outcome is rarely possible in crime novels set during war.

Hybridity in genre fiction has its rewards for both reader and writer—however, it does present challenges that may not be found directly in either parent form. Jane Mattison Ekstam, in a recent paper has examined possible reasons for the popularity of this sub-genre and includes many of the points I have covered in this thesis: the difference between those who served and those who didn't; the upheaval of the social order; the ever-present nature of death; (806-813). Her paper also discusses the parameters of this hybrid form in

much the same way as this section of my thesis. However, it is not my purpose here to analyse the popularity of the form but to ask how it has been used to incorporate ideologies relating to war in the narrative strategies of characterisation. The dominant ideology represented in conventional crime fiction is the maintenance of good order, protecting the status quo. In fictions where setting the world to rights is hindered by war, the situation may be more complex. The discussion in this chapter of the two contributory genres—war narratives and crime fiction—led to a profile of the hybrid form and its differing ideological inscriptions.

Through the use of the novel and the exegesis, this thesis will argue that class ideologies and attitudes to war are significant in this hybrid genre. My own creative writing explores the accepted narrative strategies of characterisation with special relation to class ideologies, heroism, patriotism and disillusionment in the hybrid genre. The following chapter of the exegesis examines a range of hybrid novels in more detail to demonstrate that a connection exists between narrative strategies of characterisation and various pro-war or anti-war ideologies. These ideologies are detectable in the attitudes or sentiments of the fictional characters and range from despair, disillusionment through to patriotism, nationalism and heroism.

Chapter Four: A Close Reading of the Hybrid Novels

The previous two chapters provide a background to ideology, characterisation, writing war and writing crime, leading to a brief examination of the hybrid genre of war and crime fiction.

This chapter will examine a range of hybrid novels for characterisation supporting or subverting ideologies of class and demonstrating various attitudes to war. As this project is presented within the discourse of creative writing, I concentrate firstly on the narrative strategies employed in the creation of character and the incorporation of ideological determinants within the text, before a more detailed examination of a selection of characters within this genre. The thesis will therefore blend some of the theoretical considerations discussed in the earlier chapters—primarily Rimmon-Kenan on characterisation and Cormack on ideology in cultural products.

Sometimes impressions evoked by close reading (or even distant reading) are indistinct and ill-defined, so, in order to bring them into better focus, I have concentrated on a relatively small number of felt qualities, pro-war or anti-war sentiments and attitudes to class, in a relatively large number of full-length fictional texts, and attempted to associate these with narrative strategies of characterisation. I begin by presenting an overview of the novels as a group, especially the types of narrative strategies found in them, before proceeding to more specific and more detailed examples from a smaller selection.

Overview

Perhaps spurred by the Great War centenary and the success of Pat Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy* or Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong*, the last

thirty years has seen a revival of that war as a setting for fiction. I include under Appendix B a list of thirteen such works. Among these recent war narratives is an increasing number of crime novels set during the war or in the aftermath to it which are not included in that appendix. This category forms the subject of this thesis and I list a selection of these in the following table.

Author	Title	Year
John Boyne	<i>The Absolutist</i>	2011
William Brodrick	<i>A Whispered Name</i>	2008
Philippe Claudel	<i>By A Slow River</i>	2006
Stephen Daisley	<i>Traitor</i>	2010
Robert Dinsdale	<i>The Harrowing</i>	2009
Helen Dunmore	<i>The Lie</i>	2014
Ben Elton	<i>The First Casualty</i>	2005
Robert Goddard	<i>In Pale Battalions</i>	1988
Reginald Hill	<i>No Man's Land</i>	1985
Sébastien Japrisot	<i>By A Slow River</i>	2014
Anne Perry	<i>No Graves as Yet</i>	2003
	<i>Shoulder the Sky</i>	2004
	<i>Angels in the Gloom</i>	2005
	<i>At Some Disputed Barricade</i>	2006
	<i>We Shall Not Sleep</i>	2007

Peter Pouncey	<i>Rules for Old Men Dying</i>	2006
Robert Ryan	<i>Dead Man's Land</i>	2013
Elizabeth Speller	<i>The Return of Captain John Emmett</i>	2010
Nick Stafford	<i>Armistice</i>	2009
Charles Todd	<i>A Test of Wills</i>	1996
	<i>A Duty to the Dead</i>	2009
	<i>An Impartial Witness</i>	2010
Jacqueline Winspear	<i>Maisie Dobbs</i>	2003
	<i>Birds of a Feather</i>	2004
	<i>An Incomplete Revenge</i>	2008

Table 1: Recent Hybrid Novels

The criteria for inclusion in this hybrid list are: a crime of some kind has been committed; that crime and/or the characters involved have a connection to the war, particularly the Western Front. The novel's investigation, if there is one, may be motivated by the crime in the conventional sense or it may be a moral dilemma or a search for meaning. The list at Table 1 could easily be extended; not all novels by Winspear or Todd, for instance, have been included. Others—through lack of definable crime—have been omitted from the study and may be located in Appendix B. It would, of course, be possible to extend the temporal range of the novels to include pre-war crime novels setting the social scene of women's struggle for suffrage (such as Felicity Young's Dr Dody McClelland mysteries); or to cover the late 1920s (as Kerry Greenwood has done in her Phryne Fisher mysteries). The crime-war genre naturally includes other wars (excluded from this thesis) such as the Second World War

novels of Deborah Burrows, Philip Kerr, H H Kirst and Robert Wilson. In one of the few scholarly papers addressing this crime-war sub-genre, Ekstam adds several novels by Edward Marston, Rennie Airth, Andrew Martin and Nicola Upson some of which cover the Second World War and inter-war period (Ekstam 802-03).

Perhaps the earliest example of the crime-war genre from the First World War is the final book in R H Mottram's *Spanish Farm Trilogy—The Crime at Vanderlyden's* published in 1926 (therefore far too early for my own project). The crime in this case, initially thought to be the rape of a French virgin by a British soldier, is soon shown to be the desecration of a shrine to the Virgin Mary. The investigation involves Captain Dormer in a long and pointless pursuit of the culprit. However, the subject of this chapter of my thesis is a selection of novels written more recently.

As discussed in the previous chapter, setting fiction in the context of the Great War introduces several recognizable tropes or motifs rarely found in other historical fiction: martial law, for instance, inflicted severe penalties for relatively minor offences (dereliction of duty; sleeping on watch); heinous violations of the law included shooting a superior officer, while failings such as cowardice or desertion can be portrayed as more important than murder itself. Certain World War 1 motifs are highly emotive: the treatment or denial of shellshock; execution by firing squad; the white feather for cowardice; the mud and the blood of the trenches; field hospitals and dressing stations; courts martial; military incompetence; nationalistic heroism, and fear. Attitudes to war range along a spectrum from heroic to disillusioned, and include indifference or disinterest (in both senses: impartial and uninterested).

Male investigators (usually amateurs) appear in these novels as officers or ex-officers who are serving or have served in the front line. The rank is important. A Second Lieutenant might be considered too junior and inexperienced whereas a major or above would be seen as too removed from the troops or the battle. In reality of course, these are essentialist fallacies—while officers of Brigadier General and above might be held at Brigade or Divisional Headquarters, those up to full Colonel (possibly commanding a battalion) could well be close to the action and involved with the men on a day-to-day basis. However, captain is a popular choice for the amateur sleuth in these novels. Exceptions to this officer rule include John Boyne's narrator in *The Absolutist* and Helen Dunmore's in *The Lie*. Maisie Dobbs (in Winspear's series) and Bess Crawford, (in Charles Todd's series) are ex-nurses. Philomena Bligh (in Stafford's *Armistice*) is a seamstress. One novel, *Dead Man's Land* by Robert Ryan, revives the character of Major Dr John Watson, who had been an army surgeon before he met Sherlock Holmes and, after a falling out, has returned to the colours. Philippe Claudel's investigator and narrator in *By a Slow River* is a local policeman in a small French town, but we learn little of his status.

These amateur—and reluctant—detectives, unlike Holmes or Poirot, are unlikely to solve the mystery by ratiocination. This is possibly due to the added complexity and compounding of guilt caused by the war and its ramifications. Father Anselm, (in William Brodrick's *A Whispered Name*) for instance, is asked to look not for the *causes* of an execution almost a century earlier, but to find the *meaning* of the court martial. Although not explicitly stated, this search for a meaning pervades several other novels: Boyne, Stafford, Speller, Barry. The crime in Helen Dunmore's *The Lie* is hardly a

crime at all and the novel has no definable investigator: however, there is guilt.

Most of the narrative strategies of characterisation discussed in Chapter 2 of this exegesis can be found in these hybrid novels. Direct definition by author or narrator or another character, is common in this sub-genre (as in most contemporary novels). A brief biography can be provided in analepsis, which frequently occurs near the beginning of a novel (as is Speller's *The Return of Captain John Emmett*) or later (as in Todd's *Maisie Dobbs* or Brodrick's *A Whispered Name*). Direct definition is, in this sub-genre at least, a common and effective way of reflecting ideological inscriptions in a character. As Cormack observes (see "Structure" in Chapter Three of this thesis), the position of a description within the overall text affects the reader's reception of any ideological inscription the characterisation may hold: whether it consolidates or refutes our previously-formed perceptions.

However, indirect narrative strategies, especially a character's own speech and actions are probably the most fulfilling narrative strategies in these novels. Elton's Douglas Kingsley and Daisley's David Monroe, for instance, both condemn themselves by their own words during their respective trials. Kingsley's later actions on the battlefield belie his words in this instance: Monroe's quiet acceptance uphold his. Pouncey's author-within-the-novel, McIver, begins his own novel by constructing the characters: Braddis by his actions (filing and oiling his bayonet, which is later reflected as a ritual part of his make-up) and Alston who is first seen talking to the men in his trench about nature, badgers and foxes. Meanwhile, Pouncey is constructing the more complex character of McIver himself through the way he lives his final days and the way he writes the novel-within-the-novel. Ryan, in *No Man's Land*, skilfully

uses a character familiar to most readers, Dr John Watson, as his detective, but adds little to our picture of the man that Conan Doyle hasn't already provided.

In the only epistolary novel in this study, Sébastien Japrisot's *A Very Long Engagement*, we are allowed into the minds of several characters through their letters: small details scattered throughout the novel until we gradually build on the brief biographies provided in the initial chapter, a more complex picture of five executed men and the women who loved them.

Three of the Reavley siblings in Perry's series participate in the war—often in an aggressive manner, as chaplain, soldier, spy, ambulance driver—which indirectly tells us they support the pro-war ideology at least for the duration. But we are shown little of their emotional make-up or internal monologue.

Claudé's *By a Slow River* uses the narrative strategy of physical appearance and mannerisms of the characters described directly—and comically at times—by the anonymous narrator. As, for example: "The owner [of the restaurant] is a fat man with a head white and yellow, like an endive, and a mouth full of rotten teeth" (6); or the judge who: "Underneath his fancy Kronstadt hat and bon-vivant airs, Judge Mierck was a man of no feeling" (9-10); or: ". . . to see even his turnip head again, his gray complexion, his moist eyes like those of a dog waiting for the hand that was sure to pet it" (150).

Claudé also employs several analogous names: the servant "Solemn" and the ten-year-old murder victim, "Morning Glory". Japrisot also has nicknames for the five condemned men in his novel, but it is not always clear whether these provide characterisation or are ironic or simply unconnected to the men themselves: "Eskimo" "Cornflower" and "Common Law" for instance.

The thoughts of the characters themselves, which I would have expected to find more of in this sub-genre, are not frequently available to us as readers: Philomena Bligh, in *Armistice*, is first introduced through direct definition, then through her thoughts and later, as she gains in confidence, by her brave (or foolhardy) actions. First person singular narration allows the reader into the mind of only that character and can be a useful method of characterisation. Claudel (*By a Slow River*), however, hardly lets us glimpse the internal monologue of his anonymous narrator, and when he does it often takes the form of short profound statements: “Writing makes me live for two, when I cannot live for one” (158); or: “. . . fear is born when one day we learn what we were unaware of only the day before” (26); and: “Justice is not of this world, but it’s not of the other one either” (161). Describing one character in the thoughts of others is found for instance, when Laurence Bartram (in Speller’s novel discussed in more detail below) recalls John Emmett from their schooldays as a leader, good at games.

Placing a character in an emotive environment might be expected to provide characterisation by access to internal monologue. Mathilde Donnay, for instance, visits a war cemetery and expresses anti-war sentiments: “. . . the obscenity of a war that hadn’t one [a reason], aside from the egotism, hypocrisy, and vanity of a privileged few” (*A Very Long Engagement*, 201). Philomena Bligh also visits a war cemetery on the Western Front after the war but—although her actions are somewhat eccentric (part of her character we are already familiar with)—we are given no real insight into her feelings.

Several novels give detailed scenes of execution, sometimes told by one of the soldiers in the firing squad. Usually these men have never spoken of the experience even to close family (Speller 184,

Brodrick 239-242, 246-250, Boyne 290-2). Japrisot's executions are very different; the five condemned men are to be sent into no-man's-land unarmed with their hands tied behind their backs. In this way, the Germans will do the killing. Paradoxically this allows their deaths to be reported as "killed in action" and their offences kept secret from all but a few people.

The gap between those who were there and know how bad it was and the people back home or behind the lines, is shown in the direct dialogue of Captain Shannon (a dislikeable but patriotic officer in Elton's novel discussed below). Claudel's *By a Slow River* has severely wounded soldiers convalescing in the town where other men have been excused military service due to the nature of their employment, bringing the two communities into direct conflict.

While Cormack's categories of content and structure fit well with the narrative strategies of characterisation of Rimmon-Kenan, his mode of address, or the way the text interpellates the reader is complicated in a hybrid genre. Readers of detective fiction as a genre are assumed by the author to be just that—readers of detective fiction; similarly, readers of war novels may be seen to comply with a second type. However, readers of detective stories set during the First World War are sometimes asked to be both. Switching between scenes of battle and solving crime is perhaps one area in which the hybrid novel struggles. In Elton's *The First Casualty* or Ryan's *Dead Man's Land*, for instance, the investigators are drawn into the thick of trench warfare; whereas, in Brodrick's *A Whispered Name* Father Anselm is several decades removed from the war, but Father Moore, in his war-time persona of officer in the Northumberland Light Infantry, witnesses the horrors for us.

This overview briefly covers various narrative strategies found in the hybrid novels listed in Table 1 and I shall now examine several

of them closer for form and content and observe a few main characters in detail.

Several novels employ a framing narrative set after the war (Brodrick, Speller, Boyne, Goddard, Daisley, Winspear and Stafford). This format allows reference to changes—real or imagined—caused by the war or the lapse of time. Laurence Bartram (in Elizabeth Speller's *The Return of Captain John Emmett*), for instance, reveals himself nostalgic and ambivalent for things as they were before the war: "Sometimes he was not sure whether he was more disoriented by all that had altered or by how much had not" (260). As covert references to class and disillusionment with the war abound in this novel, Bartram is the first character I shall look at more closely.

Elizabeth Speller: The Return of Captain John Emmett

We learn a great deal about Laurence Bartram in the first short chapter of Elizabeth Speller's novel; mostly told in summary as direct characterisation. An old-boy of the prestigious Marlborough School and Merton College, Oxford before the war; his wife and child are dead; he no longer works as a teacher or in his father-in-law's coffee business and he's writing a book about London churches. His only relative, a married sister, has lived in India for many years; and he has a friend, perhaps the only surviving friend from his childhood, Charles Carfax. Most of the ex-officers in this novel have also attended prestigious schools like Marlborough or Wellington or Westminster and were undergraduates at Oxford or Cambridge.

Speller's novel serves as a useful text for examining attitudes to war. The motifs of the Field General Court Martial and execution by firing squad are central to this plot, allowing the narrator or the various characters to draw the reader into an anti-war position: as

when Mary Emmett discusses the effect such things must have had on families: “ ‘ [. . .] for every one of them there’s a family who are destroyed too. And how could you bear it if your son hadn’t been killed by a German but in cold blood by his own side? You’d have a lifetime of nightmares, I would have thought.’ ” (344).

We also learn, early in the book, something of Laurence’s attitude to war. On the morning of an attack he is crouched in a trench “praying fervently to a God he no longer believed in. He had long been indifferent to which side won; he wished only that one or the other would do so decisively while he was still alive” (3-4); and of the war’s residual effect on him several years later: “Sometimes now he could go a week or more without revisiting the smells and tremors of the war...” (7) and “[h]e no longer had any imagined future different from the present” (5)¹⁵. Laurence’s friend Charles, remarks that he has become something of a recluse (characterisation by another character’s opinion) (107). Later Laurence admits to himself that, while Charles was “growing more bluff with the years,” he himself “had become increasingly intense, even melancholy” (267).

Laurence Bartram appears to be a passive character, drawn into the plot by his attraction to Miss Mary Emmett. His investigation is motivated at each stage by more forceful characters (Charles Carfax, Eleanor Bolitho or Tresham Brabourne). However, towards the end of the novel, we see a different side to Laurence when he confronts George Chilvers with the evidence he has gathered so far (315-323).

¹⁵Such negative emotion can be found even in the canonical works such as RH Mottram’s protagonist in *The Spanish Farm trilogy* has similar feelings (*Murder at Vanderlyden’s* 465)

This narrative strategy of reversing a stereotype gives the character greater depth, or, in Forster's terms, roundness. Overall, Speller provides us with an image of a decent man hoping to right an injustice but mainly driven by the power of others: Eleanor Bolitho has information which she withholds from him; she and Mary Emmett have some power over Laurence through their physical attractiveness; General Somers has the power of knowledge and of physical violence, and Charles is better connected than Laurence. Others Laurence interacts with hold neutral power relationships: Captain Bolitho and Major Calogreedy are, like Laurence, ex-officers getting on with life. Leonard Byers, who served as a batman/servant, is socially Laurence's inferior but balances this by holding detailed information about the execution. George Chilvers, a malevolent character, is the only one Laurence demonstrates superiority over, and much of that is threat and bluster on Laurence's part. (313-323).

Laurence has never been able to admit to his fear, but Captain Bolitho—who'd lost his legs during the war—describing a bad incident in a collapsed tunnel, admits to it as: "Simple, unalloyed fear. We weren't supposed to be frightened [...] (57). Now when you look back, you can see that fear was the rational response to much of it, but there was another set of rules then, wasn't there?" "Officers, though, were supposed to be above all that [...] get a commission and all your emotions had to be left at the door" (57). The narrative strategies used in this scene are the thoughts of Laurence and the speech of Bolitho. Paradoxically the effect of the admission—even though Laurence Bartram's is only in his head—is to raise our opinions of both men (Bolitho slightly more so because he admits to his fear openly). With our twenty-first century sensibilities, we can forgive a man for being afraid, especially if he

can admit to it, but to show fear in the heat of battle would be cowardice, which, although we may understand and sympathise with it, we struggle to forgive, until confronted with something like a scene of execution. When Laurence finally admits to Mary Emmett that he had been frightened, she struggles to convince him that it was a natural reaction and not cowardice; however, he knows that he and many others like him were fortunate not to have met the same ignoble fate as the executed officer (422-5). Speller softens any adverse opinions of Bartram's admission of fear by telling the reader that he had been twice mentioned-in-despatches and awarded the Military Cross for heroic action in battle (394). Any mention of gallantry awards in these novels has the paradoxical effect of glorifying war.

Calogreedy mentions the desperation of returned soldiers unable to find work and possibly turning to crime (159). The reader here is being drawn to sympathise with the ill-treated soldiers and apportion blame for this disappointment upon the government of the day. The establishment that let them down badly during the war, promising a land fit for heroes on their return, has failed them again.

Execution by firing squad is an awful business to contemplate and, as an ideological device, is loaded with anti-war sentiment. Speller's executed man is an officer and Calogreedy admits that he'd only heard of one other such execution in the war. He explains this: "They were tougher on the whole: good schools, independence, team sports, values" (Speller 163). Tresham Brabourne, another ex-officer, tells Laurence Bartram that, in addition to Lt Hart, two other officers were executed during the war and one of those was for murder (Speller 232). There may be something in Calogreedy's

explanation but it is much more likely that the military hierarchy itself was reluctant to shoot its own officers¹⁶.

Bartram's friend, Charles, is well placed to dig out obscure facts on almost anyone in English society—frequently through an aunt or cousin, of which he seems to have many (104, 86-7, 46). By having Laurence frequently defer to him, Speller implies that Laurence himself is not as well placed in society.

Walking in London at night Laurence muses on the “monumental architecture of the great financial institutions” and supposes, “they had fought to protect these as much as they had the idea of village greens or royal palaces, had fought to keep things as they were” (65-6). Later he recalls a time before the war and feels “a terrible self-pity that things he'd enjoyed had been taken away” (112). Laurence's sister, Millie, returning from India, “could never have guessed [when she left England, eighteen years earlier] how completely her world would have crumbled behind her” (430).

In one of the few direct criticisms of higher command found in any of these novels, General Somers calls General Herbert Gough “an incompetent commander. Callous, arrogant [. . .]” (388) [several military historians would doubtless agree (see Pope and Wheal, Neillands, and Carlyon, for instance).

In an overt reference to class, Laurence assumes Mrs Lovell's son was an officer because his mother “[...] although in visibly

¹⁶ Speller (437) states that over 300 British and Commonwealth soldiers were executed, and of those, three were officers. Neil Oliver says of 3080 men sentenced to death 306 were executed but this figure probably excludes men executed for rape and murder (*Not Forgotten* 240-41). Anthony Babington has a total of 346, (3 officers), 322 of which were executed on the Western Front. The vast majority, 266, were for desertion, only 18 for cowardice and 37 for murder (including one of the 3 officers. (*For the Sake of Example* 244).

reduced circumstances, she was a lady” (194). When he thinks that Lovell may have been a private, he recalls several cases of men who might have been commissioned: a schoolmaster’s son who chose to be a common infantryman; an old school friend who joined the Flying Corp as a mechanic. But, he also knows that this was much less likely to happen the other way around: “A costermonger or a miner didn’t get a commission, however good a soldier or however bravely he fought” (195).

Laurence volunteered for service but allowed his wife to believe he’d been conscripted. Setting off for the front he feels (possibly in a show of patriotism or heroics) “almost exhilarated at the opportunity of war” (129). Later he and Mary Emmett have a heated discussion about men being unable to tell their wives about the war (203-4)—this is another example of the divide between those who were there and those who weren’t. Making a woman a nurse is one narrative strategy for overcoming this; Eleanor Bolitho had been a nurse (as had Winspear’s character Maisie Dobbs and Todd’s Bess Crawford); but their presence close to the front is not entirely a pass into the male-dominated world of the returned soldier.

Laurence and Mary discuss some war poems: one titled “gung-ho” was acceptable for publication but anti-war sentiment and “the glorious dead” had to be published under a pseudonym (201-2). So much of what we know and feel about the First World War has been filtered through the war poets like Sassoon, Owen, Sorley and Rosenberg, some of whom, if they lived long enough, changed from patriotic verse to cynicism.

In spite of Bartram’s investigation being instigated by Mary Emmett, she and Eleanor Bolitho play very little part in the investigation. Sometimes he has no Watson and sometimes he has

his friend Charles. This has the effect of excluding women from key roles for much of the novel.

This novel takes place entirely in the early 1920s, any details of the war being supplied by various characters' personal accounts. William Brodrick's *A Whispered Name* (discussed below) takes place almost a hundred years after the war but frequently depends upon the accounts of men who were there.

Disillusionment ideology is re-enforced in Speller's novel by memories of better days before the war. Mary and her mother now live in Cambridge and Laurence contrasts the larger house in Suffolk where they lived before the war with the "dull meagreness of the tall, narrow house they lived in now" (28). He asks himself, "What had happened to their leisured existence before the war?" (28). This could be an example of class impinging on anti-war ideology: only those elevated (however slightly) in society would be capable of such thought. It is also a reflection on downward class mobility.

The two other women of significance in this story, besides Mary, are drawn as middle class: Mrs Lovell mentioned above; Eleanor Bolitho, a friend of John Emmett, wife of an injured officer, had been at Girton College, Cambridge before the war and been a nurse during it.

Both Speller and Brodrick include in their investigations interviews with ex-soldiers who had been part of the firing squad. Both men are still affected by the experience and reluctant to talk about it: In Brodrick's novel, Father Moore was part of the Field General Court Martial and never spoke of his experience; Harold Shaw in Brodrick's novel and Byers in Speller's both took part in firing squads and neither ever told anyone about it. Boyne's narrator actually inserts himself into the squad (Boyne 291). In

Speller's, John Emmett was forced to deliver the coup de gras at an execution which went horribly wrong—something he only reveals to his psychiatrist. The ideological effect of characters recalling the details of an execution under duress, re-enforces the cruelty of war not only to the condemned man but also to all those involved in the sentence. This trope draws the reader into an anti-war stance.

While Speller's novel illustrates various attitudes to war and to a lesser extent ideologies of class, Jacqueline Winspear's early novels in the Maisie Dobbs series (*Maisie Dobbs* and *Birds of a Feather*) more strongly demonstrate class mobility, and I shall examine Maisie more closely here.

Jacqueline Winspear: Maisie Dobbs

By placing people into proximity with those of different classes and moving some from their familiar environments, the First World War accentuated class differences while, at the same time, increasing class mobility. On a patriotic level the whole population had been expected to support the war effort during the war. However, in the post-war period, in which many of the hybrid novels are set, with the conservative establishment re-asserting itself, the newly elevated, the unemployed ex-servicemen, disenchanted ex-officers, and women who had glimpsed possibilities of a better future, the situation became rife for post-war bitterness and class rivalry. Anti-war sentiments that might have been checked for the duration now emerged.

Jacqueline Winspear's sleuth, Maisie Dobbs, is an interesting study in British class structure in the early twentieth century, having begun her working career as a lowly "tweeny maid". Her mistress, Lady Rowan Compton, becomes her patron and benefactor

and young Maisie (like Eleanor Bolitho in Elizabeth Speller's novel) goes off to Girton College, Cambridge. Her studies are interrupted by the war and she serves as a nurse on the Western Front—admitting her to the society of those who were there and know what it was like. After the war, she sets up in practice as an investigator: her brass plaque initially states “M.Dobbs. Trade and Personal Investigations” (in spite of Lady Rowan's suggestion of “Discreet Cerebral Investigations” (*Maisie Dobbs*, 5-6). This brass plaque eventually becomes “M.Dobbs. Psychologist and Investigator” (*Birds of a Feather*, 2). P D James also employs the status symbol of the brass plaque in her Cordelia Gray novel, *The Skull Beneath the Skin*.

The discussion between Lady Rowan and Maisie concerning the brass plaque takes place in Ebury Place, where Maisie “was at ease, seated in front of the fireplace in her former employer's library, a fireplace she had once cleaned with the raw, roughened hands of a maid in service.” (*Maisie Dobbs* 5). Although Maisie is referred to as a maid, Winspear chooses not to call Lady Rowan her mistress but merely “her former employer”. Both are ideological terms and dated to the early twentieth century.

Winspear sets her novels in the late twenties some 10 years after the war, but the plots frequently depend upon events that occurred during the war. Maisie's back story is told in the first novel of the series as one long analepsis (*Maisie Dobbs* 67 – 201) taking her from a young maid entering service at Ebury Place in 1910, rising under the patronage of Lady Rowan and the mentoring of Dr Maurice Blanche to the position of private investigator with her own brass plaque.

This long flashback is part war story, part poor-girl-makes-good, and part romance. So Maisie crosses the great divide between service and privilege, in spite of what Enid, another maid in the

same house, once reminded her: “there’s them upstairs, and there’s us downstairs. There’s no middle, never was. So the likes of you and me can’t move up a bit, if that’s what you think. We’ve got to jump, Dobbsie, and bloody ‘igh to boot!” (99). Years later Maisie herself reflects: “How strange to be living in the upstairs part of the Ebury Place mansion, to be addressed as “Ma’am” by girls doing the same job that had brought her to this house, this life.” (*Birds of a Feather* 157). And again: “Maisie smiled, noting the change of address again, from ‘Ma’am’ to ‘Miss’. Maisie felt like a citizen of two countries, neither here nor there, but always somewhere in the middle” (161-162).

During this flashback, Maisie is transformed through the chrysalis of academe and the meeting with the dashing young captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and nursing on the Western Front, to the confident young lady we met at the beginning of the framing narrative. Ideologically I suspect we are being given several different messages: it is better to be an independent and worldly woman than to remain as a servant in the household of the aristocracy; and it is open to any hardworking young woman of ability and talent; and, paradoxically, that Maisie Dobbs is a special case. We are also introduced to a sympathetic and progressive upper class: Lady Rowan Compton, a suffragette, sees Maisie as a just cause and her involvement is essential to Maisie’s transformation.

As if to accentuate the social distance Maisie has travelled, we learn that her father was a costermonger and her grandfather a lighterman on the Thames barges (*Maisie Dobbs*, 16-17).

Costermonger is also the social level noted by Laurence Bartram in Speller’s novel, discussed earlier, which would never obtain a commission. Maisie first meets her dashing young love interest,

Captain Simon Lynch, a doctor bound for the Western Front, at a party in the Lynch's large house in Grantchester: "It was the first time she had ever been to a party that had not been held in a kitchen." (*Maisie Dobbs*, 149). A Major Jenkins (who is not, in fact, a major at all) in the first novel of the series makes the same mistake as Laurence Bartram when he assumes Maisie's assistant is an ex-officer: "Yes, is he a captain, a second lieutenant?" To which Maisie answers: "Oh. Actually Billy was a soldier, a corporal when he was injured." (*Maisie Dobbs*, 228).

At the end of the first book in this growing series, Maisie moves her office from Warren Street to the much grander sounding Fitzroy Place. At the same time her brass name plaque is changed too. She also moves back into the London home of Lord and Lady Compton in Belgravia where she had once been a maid.

Maisie Dobbs' assistant, Billy Beale, an ex-soldier, was injured in France where he was treated by Maisie and Captain Simon Lynch. Beale is still suffering the effects of a leg wound a decade after the war and Captain Lynch, Maisie's brief romantic interlude, is now a helpless, incurable case, reminding the reader that while the men were injured, the women who loved them suffered too. Beale is a working class Londoner who slaps his flat cap against his knee (*Maisie Dobbs* p 6-7) and occasionally employs rhyming slang: "Gawd, Miss, there goes the dog-and-bone again!" (*Birds of a Feather*, 5). Beale also remembers being presented with a white feather, in the time between enlisting and being fitted with a uniform. Unfortunately, his younger brother also received one and was shamed into enlisting underage; he died aged just 16.

Lawrence Bartram (in Speller's novel discussed earlier), Billy Beale, and Maisie Dobbs show us that class and class mobility can be characterised by a range of narrative strategies. The connection

between class and attitudes to war is complex: rank in the military is of primary importance but, as Petter's historical study notes, the wartime order of "the temporary gentlemen" rapidly broke down after the war. Nonetheless, people like Billy and Maisie know their places and seem to meet very little resentment. Helen Dunmore's narrator in *The Lie*, however, shows some bitterness when he observes of his childhood friend: "Everyone understood that with him an officer and me a private, being from the same town didn't mean much. As soon as he opened his mouth you could tell he wasn't my kind. His kind and mine lived parallel, not together" (179). Civilians may not feel entirely comfortable in their relations with the military (or ex-military), as when Philomena Bligh (in Stafford's novel *Armistice*) has to deal with a range of ex-officers. Such civilians may share anti-war sentiments with other characters but they may also show anti-military attitudes. Jane Cresswell, in my own novel "Watershed", initially resents both Doyle and Frampton for being at the front at the time her brother was executed.

Ben Elton: Inspector Kingsley

Conscientious objectors could be found in all social classes: Siegfried Sassoon, in life and in Barker's *Regeneration*, publicly objected to the war while he was a serving officer; Boyne's *The Absolutist* has a young private recruit who is murdered by his own squad for his beliefs; and Ben Elton's conscientious objector in *The First Casualty* is a policeman. However, Inspector Douglas Kingsley of the Metropolitan Police, a decorated and experienced officer, is in disgrace after declaring himself a conscientious objector. Tried in a civil court he draws accusations of cowardice from the general public and Elton uses Kingsley's rebuttal early in the book to point

to the irony that the German soldier, representing the will and morals of the German government, was similar to the British soldier representing his government's. Even Kingsley's wife has turned against him and left a single white feather in their bed, and, on his conviction, she seeks a divorce. She has a certain social status, the daughter of Sir Wilfred Beaumont, Commissioner of Scotland Yard, while Kingsley himself has a more intellectual status as a formidable detective. All that, of course, counts for nothing as his fortunes are now in reverse and the class and culture which might have protected him collapse with his imprisonment. He is sentenced to two years hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs where the prisoners despise him, partly because of his profession but more so as a conscientious objector.

The crime mystery in Elton's novel begins with the murder on the Western Front of Captain Alan Abercrombie, a famous poet, a viscount and the son of Lord Abercrombie. A British soldier, Private Hopkins, stands accused. Kingsley is mysteriously spirited out of prison (ostensibly shot while attempting to escape). Escorted by the objectionable Captain Shannon (an officer in the Intelligence Service), he is given a new identity as Captain Christopher Marlowe, Royal Military Police and is sent to the Western Front to investigate the murder.

Developing Kingsley's character through his own thoughts, speech and actions as well as those of others, Elton repeatedly shows us a man of upright morals and unshakable belief in his antiwar stance: a conscientious objector; arrogant to the point of martyrdom. At one point, while in civilian clothes he is given another white feather by a schoolgirl (167). He then saves a young waitress from being raped by Shannon, an officer whose experiences at the front have turned him into an interesting and conflicted

character: "...we have to win this war. We just have to...We're the British Empire, for God's sake, we can't go through all this and *lose*" (130). To prevent the ideological message becoming overwhelming, Kingsley's high self-regard and Shannon's patriotic fervour are mitigated and challenged by Elton at every opportunity by taunts of cowardice from all and sundry: private soldiers, prisoners, guards, the doctor, orderly, the intelligence officers and his own wife. This narrative strategy, pitting the disillusionment ideology against the nationalistic/heroic, naturally favours Kingsley in the eyes of the present-day reader as a man who objects to the war on intellectual grounds: "This war is . . . stupid. It offends my sense of logic" (17), he tells the judge at his trial; a statement he later repeats to his wife when she visits him in prison: "This war is actually *destroying* the very Britain we are fighting for. It will destroy all of Europe. It's a stupid war." (24)

While in prison, after being challenged by a trade unionist, Kingsley is forced to re-consider the logical contradictions of the society he had lived in: "Britain's power over the populations of its Empire. Capital's power over labour. Men's power over women." (58) In the same political key, he later sympathises with the soldiers in the trenches over inequalities in pay and conditions (234) and, as if to demonstrate that socialism in the ranks was not solely a British phenomenon, Elton has him eavesdrop on a German soldier complaining: "I tell you, this war is a war between two ruling classes. And *we're* fighting it, more fool us!" (276)

The dislikeable lecher, Captain Shannon, adds his own ideological musings in contrast to Kingsley's. Firstly, as a soldier who has been at the front he berates Kingsley who has not: "But you don't know *what it's like*. You could spend the rest of your life trying to imagine it but you'd never get even close. Nobody could

who hasn't been there. You'll never join our club." (127). Shannon's personal philosophy, perhaps affected by the war, has become: "Any drink. Any meal. Any girl. Any time. Without fail." (133)

Understandable sentiments, perhaps, for men who felt they might die at any moment, only when Elton shows us this character forcing himself upon women do we see the inherent evil in it.

Paradoxically, Kingsley's actions at the front make him a hero and he is granted a new life as a returned officer, recommended for bravery awards. The anti-war ideology is replaced by the heroic and patriotic. This is not the "middle ground" Rhoden found in Manning's *Her Privates We*, it is closer to what Cobley meant by anti-war texts being complicit with war.

Relating the attitudes to war to characterisation, there is a tendency, in this novel, and probably in most of the hybrid novels, for disillusionment to be expressed in internal monologue; patriotism to be revealed by speech; and heroism by direct action.

William Brodrick : *A Whispered Name*

Father Anselm in William Brodrick's *A Whispered Name*, is a Gilbertine monk in a peaceful rural Suffolk monastery. His main secular duty within the community is tending the monastic beehives. The investigation takes place in the late twentieth century; the story's leading protagonist, Father Herbert Moore (a fellow monk whom Anselm thought he knew fairly well), has been dead for some time before the novel begins. Moore had been an officer in the Northumberland Light Infantry in the First World War. It is up to Anselm to piece together the disparate strands of a sad story involving desertion, court martial and execution by firing squad so many years ago. One of the facets of Cormack's category of "structure" concerns where in the narrative a character or event is

encountered. Placing the framing narrative many decades after the war and years after the death of one of the main protagonists, Father Moore, the author places Father Anselm, ideologically closer to us than he is to the conflict. Like us, he has the prism of the twentieth century through which to observe the war. The only other novel in the hybrid list (Table 1) to leave such a wide temporal gap is Robert Goddard's *In Pale Battalions*.

In terms of Cormack's category of "content", what are we to make of an investigator who is a monk? Anselm, a reluctant detective, more suited to the contemplative cloisters of Larkwood monastery than the cut and thrust of the secular world, brings to the novel a gentleness and humility. Through him we come to see Father Herbert Moore as a gentle and humble man also. Was Father Moore a monk for the purposes of atonement? To atone for what? The monastic role confers gentleness and poise. There is peace and quiet contemplation in this community where Father Moore had lived from 1925 until his death in 1985. This contrasts starkly with the Western Front and a war he once fought, a past that few of his fellow monks knew about. As a monk, Anselm shares this neutral, contemplative character but his current social status is contextualised by his previous profession: before joining the order, he had been a lawyer. Although this earlier occupation is hardly mentioned, it does explain Anselm's suitability to read and understand legal files, search archives and investigate the past.

The court martial of Private Doyle is central to the story of *A Whispered Name*. Doyle is quite willing to face his punishment, refusing even to defend himself, but admits to his fear of the actual execution to the padre on his last night. Here Doyle appears to step out of character—a complex character the reader can only half

understand, but a character whose reason for acting as he does is moral and just and brave.

Brodrick's novel, like several others in this study, describes the court martial and execution in detail. The modern reader—through that prism of time—is shocked by the brutality of it. During the investigation Anselm finds Mr Shaw, one of the members of the firing squad, an old man now, who has kept the awful events of that morning to himself through all the intervening years. Several people in this novel are wracked by similar guilt: Madame Painau, who sent her only son off to die in the war, expresses sentiments that must have been common:

Do you know why I did it? For France, yes. And to buy the respect of my neighbours. Because everyone else's son had put on uniform (281).

There is also the old man who weeps near the grave of Father Moore; and Father Herbert Moore himself, one-time Captain in the NLI, whose character is so formed by the trial and execution that when the war ends, he does not return to England for some years, but joins the monks at the abbey where he heard singing in the week of the execution and the bell peeling after the sentence was carried out (290).

Nick Stafford: *Armistice*

Apart from the prologue, this novel is written in third person focalised through the main characters, Jonathon Priest and Philomena Bligh. The predominant narrative strategies for characterisation are Philomena's speech, actions, and internal monologue—although we also share Jonathon's thoughts at times. Philomena is a seamstress from the north of England, nervous but driven by a mission. She suffers anxiety attacks: "breathless lungs racing heart scrambled thoughts," and "periods of torpor" (10) and

her hands have a nervous habit of moving of their own volition. She seems impressed by the sights of London, the cars that “purred past” were “expensive” the terraced houses “elegant” (23). When she tells Jonathon that she is a seamstress she adds “high class [...] alterations for the wealthy” (50), and she finds his Yorkshire accent reassuring (38), although when she tells him he’s clever he explains that, as a scholarship boy, he’s learned to speak with a more acceptable accent if he has to: “Contrary to what they would have you believe, the way the people who run things speak is an accent, rather than the “right” way. This accent lends authority and gives the impression of intelligence” (75-6). A third character, Dan, perversely coarsens his north-country accent because the man he’s speaking to “was so posh” (77). On meeting Major James, Philomena thinks he speaks with “clipped consonants, long vowels; very Standard English” (15). By allowing the characters to talk or think about these accents saves the author the embarrassment of attempting to transliterate the varieties of speech while admitting the social differences perceived to lie behind them.

Images which instil an anti-war sentiment in this novel include an eighteen-year-old, one-armed war veteran; a court martial and execution in which the firing squad refuse to shoot so that “the officer had to shoot him” (203); Jonathon’s role as defending officer or prisoner’s friend at the trial; and unemployed ex-servicemen, illustrated when Philomena passes “a line of shabby soldiers waiting patiently at the soup kitchen” (257). These images and the accents used by various characters I discussed above, combined with Philomena’s certainty that one of these men—an ex-officer, a gentleman—has murdered her fiancé, combine to reflect an anti-war ideology.

Peter Pouncey: *Rules for Old Men Waiting*

Robert MacIver is the old man waiting—for the inevitable—in this novel. One of the rules he imposes on himself while snowed in for what must surely be his final winter, is to write something every day. What he writes is a murder story set on the Western Front in World War 1. The reader is constantly reminded that this is a fiction within a fiction; the narrative moves between MacIver's everyday life, his personal history, and the novel-within-the-novel. Pouncey has created a well-rounded character in MacIver—retired professor of Military History, Scottish rugby union cap, naval commander—and he in turn creates some well-rounded characters in his novel-within-the-novel. The narrative strategies involved in both the primary (MacIver) plot and the secondary (Western Front) plot are predominantly the introduction of characters in summary form with minimal scene or dialogue. Working on the secondary novel, MacIver invents the characters before introducing the plot: the murder of Lieutenant Dodds by the evil Sergeant Braddis. MacIver himself, a veteran of the Second World War, had interviewed veterans of the Great War as part of his research in the 1930s. Any scenes introduced in this way have a more clinical feel than the customary “blood and mud” settings of traditional war novels. MacIver, for his fiction, balances bad characters, like Braddis, with good, like Alston, Callum, and Dodds. Pouncey gives these characters (and MacIver) at least two roles: MacIver, international rugby player, naval officer, widower, writer and old man waiting; Dodds, company commander and sailor on the Norfolk Broads; Callum, artist and soldier.

Towards the close of this novel Pouncey ties the two stories together by having MacIver, by now a man *in extremis*, enter the final scenes of the war story as an observer, while the reader remains aware that he, MacIver, is still an author imagining the

denouement of his tale. Pouncey, himself a classical scholar, may even be insinuating himself into the story in the later stages when he brings in the gods from the *Iliad* and has Hector slain by Achilles. An academic colleague had once told MacIver that she believed “every great epic has planted within it the seeds of a critique of that ideology that drives the narrative” (195-6). Andromache, wife of Hector, sees the futility of her husband’s actions and knows he might have protected them better from within the walls of Troy than dying a noble death on the field of battle. MacIver recognises this as the counterideology. Copley’s observation that “apparently anti-war narratives are often complicit with war” (5) may be interpreted as the novel having within it the seed of a counterideology.

Stephen Daisley: *Traitor*

David Monroe is another old man dying. It is New Zealand, 1965. In the course of his death we are told a story going back to the Great War: Gallipoli and the Western Front. It is the tragic story of Sergeant David Monroe, injured at Gallipoli, recovering on the island of Lemnos with a Turkish doctor who was injured by the same Royal Navy shell. There may be an ideological inscription here about the indiscriminate nature of long-range industrial warfare.

Monroe, the old man, a simple shepherd, is unexpectedly taken to the local police station for questioning. Fifty years earlier he had been court martialled and sentenced to death as a traitor—desertion and aiding an enemy prisoner to escape. His death sentence is eventually commuted to hard labour, field punishment number one and loss of all privileges, medals, pensions. He serves out the war in France and Belgium as a stretcher-bearer.

The reader is drawn to sympathise with this stoic, reticent old man. His answers to the inspector’s questions are quiet and

monosyllabic; he sits patiently remembering an earlier interrogation, and stares out of the window worrying about his ewes and the lambing.

The relationship between David Monroe and the Turk, Mahmoud, shadowed by homoerotic overtones, shows the Turkish doctor to be a Sufi Muslim full of mystical wisdom compared to the New Zealander's uncomplicated and uncomprehending simplicity. Monroe's case is not improved when he tries to verbalise his feelings for Mahmoud at his court martial. The RSM, previously Monroe's friend, is so incensed that he physically beats him severely.

Cormack notes that, of his five categories, style may be the least involved with ideology, and, up to this point I have not used it in my analysis. However, it is impossible not to be struck by Daisley's unusual style: minimal punctuation and no quotation marks. The effect is at once complex and simple, drawing any speech act directly into the narrative, blurring dialogue and action.

Monroe's character is notable by saying very little: he fails to defend himself in words either during the war or in the long years since. It is left to the reader to be indignant at the harsh treatment he receives from fellow soldiers at the front and civilians at home. Returning to New Zealand, Monroe is shown a small kindness by an ex-officer who gives him work, a place to sleep, five pounds and a red paper poppy. When Monroe says other people would not allow him this, the captain replies, "They would not have been there." (168, quotation marks not in the original). The captain's wife, however, spits in his face and calls him a traitor (169). The effect of Daisley's structure here, leads the reader to believe one moment that the war and all the horrors he has been subjected to are over, and then forcefully reminds us that they will never be over.

National differences, even between the Anzacs, are illustrated by a British-trained, Australian doctor, Major Abehard, who says that Monroe's CO speaks highly of him: "Exceptional, he says. This is bloody rare for you New Zealanders. Bloody stoical lot. Adequate bespeaks high praise" (112, quotation marks not in the original).

This unconventional novel, ideologically anti-war, builds an almost silent character. Through the absence of words and the tumultuous events that shaped him fifty years earlier, the reader is shown a character who has every reason to be disenchanted and bitter: and yet, David Monroe, the aging shepherd, is, as he has always been, a man buffeted by the storms of life.

John Boyne's protagonist, Tristan Sadler in *The Absolutist*, is in many ways similar to David Monroe—a man once disgraced by a homosexual encounter, rejected by family and friends. Boyne's characterisation, however, is through speech and action (Sadler's own and others) while David Monroe is revealed more by what he does not do or say. I shall now look briefly at Tristan Sadler in *The Absolutist*.

John Boyne: *The Absolutist*

Tristan Sadler, an ex-soldier, travels to Norwich in September 1919 to return some letters to Marian Bancroft, the sister of his dead friend, Will. This is one novel where the leading male protagonist is not an officer, and admits to being the estranged son of a Chiswick butcher. He bears some after-effects of the war: bruises and scarring and a hand that shakes uncontrollably (32-33).

Marian Bancroft, on the other hand, is the daughter of an Anglican vicar, putting her, presumably, in a different socio-

economic group. She is also more confident and forceful than Tristan.

Tristan's attitude to war, as a recruit who has not yet seen active service, is encompassed by his feelings on conscientious objectors: "I don't object to those who oppose the war on principle or wish for its speedy conclusion—that's natural enough—but I am of the belief that while it's still going on, it remains the responsibility of us all to join in and do our bit" (67).

While gender ideologies have not been the focus of my thesis, they are suggested regularly in relation to class mobility and class rigidity. Marian makes some telling comments on the subject: as when Tristan innocently suggests that she might still train as a nurse, to which she replies that she could train to become a doctor! (206). Or, shortly after, when she admits to having been involved in the suffragette movement, prompting Tristan to remark that the vote has now been granted: "The vote has *not* been granted, Tristan," she replied tartly. "*I* don't have the vote. And I won't have until I'm thirty. And even then only if I'm a householder. Or I'm married to one. Or possess a university degree. But you do already and you're younger than I am. Now, does that strike you as fair?" (209).

In terms of Cormack's category of absence, there seems to be a dearth of officers in the war scenes of this novel. The unit to which Tristan and Will Bancroft belong is run solely by Sergeant Clayton and two corporals—all addressed as "sir". At one point Bancroft threatens to go over Clayton's head to the general, implying that there are no intervening ranks when in any reckoning there would be nine or ten ranks between Sergeant and General, from Warrant Officer to Brigadier General (now simply Brigadier), and an equal number of levels of command from company commander, battalion, brigade and so on.

This is another novel of a young woman trying to find out why one man had to die. Marian's brother was executed for cowardice. The execution forms the climax of the novel. It also involves one of the six men who pulled the trigger and has lived with the consequences for the rest of his life. Oscar Wilde's famous line "Yet each man kills the thing he loves," is never truer than this.

Although Boyne does not begin the novel with the survivors' having grown old, he ends it there. In a temporal narrative strategy, he has Tristan and Marian meet again for the first time since that day in Norwich sixty years earlier. Tristan has never married and has no relatives; she, in spite of a bad marriage, has three children, eight grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.

"Do you ever think of me, Tristan?"

"Most days," I admitted without hesitation.

"And my brother?" she asked, apparently unsurprised by my admission.

"Most days," I repeated (302).

While this closing dialogue may seem trite, in Boyne's novel it is plausible and significant.

This narrative strategy of showing the aging survivors of the story, while rarely found in crime fiction *sensu strictu*, is used by several writers in the hybrid genre: Reginald Hill, Robert Goddard, John Boyne, Stephen Daisley and William Brodrick. I found it effective enough to risk using it in my own novel for this thesis where it acts as a reminder of the futility of war and the longevity of memory.

Summary

In this chapter I have gathered samples from hybrid novels to illustrate characterisation, ideologies of class and attitudes to war. The selection may appear fragmented and disparate, but I have

attempted to find and isolate useful threads connecting the examples by utilizing the categories of Cormack (content, structure, absence, style and mode of address) and narrative strategies of characterisation from Rimmon-Kenan and Burroway (speech, action, appearance, thought, and direct methods).

As this is primarily an exercise in creative writing, I have not attempted to make judgements on the literary merit or otherwise of the novels selected, so the selection itself and any comments on content or structure, are not intended to be critical in the general sense.

The predominant ideology of the novels is anti-war, through disenchantment, disillusionment, or disinterest/avoidance; sentiments we are to expect, according to Cobley and Norris. Occasionally, battle scenes and acts of bravery support a counter-ideology glorifying war.

While we as readers easily condemn the common criminal or murderer in such novels, but are interpellated to sympathise with characters who resist the harsh, unjust strictures of the military system: we become, like them, anti-establishment. From these novels we see, too, the effects of court martial and execution on the other men involved and on the families of those condemned. For so many—perhaps all—the war did not end in November 1918.

While this chapter of the exegesis is informed by a great deal of reading in several genres, most especially the hybrid form, and builds upon the theoretical foundations touched upon in chapters 2 and 3, in the next chapter I shall attempt to draw useful conclusions from these examples for the discipline of creative writing.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

History proves that writing truthfully about World War 1—as with the modern-day broadcasting of explicit images of wars across the globe—does not prevent future wars and even worse horrors.

Clare Rhoden: *The Purpose of Futility*, 3.

This thesis has two parts: the creative component (the novel “Watershed”), and the theoretical component. Both address the research question: What narrative strategies of characterisation might be utilised to represent the detective figure as a bearer of ideological significance in the crime novel set in the First World War?

This question immediately presents two main areas of study: Narrative strategies of characterisation and ideologies as represented by attitudes to war and class in a range of hybrid novels. It also involves the minor area of the nature of the sub-genre itself within the wider category of crime fiction.

In this chapter I shall examine the creative and the exegetical components in the light of this research question to ascertain in which areas my research has been fruitful and where it might lead to further studies.

Although this exegesis is not intended as a reflection on my own creative process, as both parts of the thesis concern fiction writing it is necessary in this final chapter to examine my own characters and their attitudes to war and class before proceeding to a review of the findings from other hybrid novels in the crime-war sub-genre.

In writing “Watershed” I have tried, without detracting from reader expectations of the hybrid genre, to incorporate various

narrative strategies of characterisation, especially around the male protagonist, Richard Frampton. The reader first encounters Richard settling down to an opium-smoking session, but I hope he is not seen as an addict. Jane Cresswell initially thinks him drunk and later feels he might be shell shocked—neither of which are accurate reflections of his nature. Both Jane and Danny Doyle think his mores and attitudes are pre-war or even Victorian. His attitude to war, although rarely expressed, is (like most people) variable, but I would consider it disinterested rather than disenchanted. He is probably higher on the class ladder than Jane or Danny, although he seems unaware of this. He admits that he doesn't have to work very hard and is supported by money inherited from his grandfather and uncle. His male antecedents are professional men: the church and the law, while he however, indolently drifts, vaguely attached to the publishing industry. One brief glance into his class-consciousness comes when he notes, with surprise, the neatness of the Cresswell cottage and the genteel nature of its furnishings.

Jane Cresswell initially appears as a nervous, slightly under-confident young woman. And yet her journey to find Captain Frampton shows an ability with timetables and maps and a domestic rebellion against her mother. During the novel she grows in confidence, repeatedly meeting with Frampton and Doyle, and taking the notebooks without her mother's permission. Some of her character is created by the narrator's description and some from her own thoughts, words and actions. Her deference to Frampton and Doyle, if it is seen at all, is more by virtue of their status as war heroes than to any class or gender differential.

Danny Doyle is physically and socially a stereotypical Australian digger. He has little respect for rank—although his first meeting with Richard Frampton in the heat of battle is confused by mud on

their tunics and the fog of war. The estaminet in Armentieres is probably a common soldier's haunt, so it is Richard who is out of his officer milieu. The sun-bronzed Aussie myth is probably dented later in the novel when Doyle's sexual orientation becomes apparent, but our twentieth century attitudes would hardly be affected in the same way.

Inspector Bannister is a collage of several television and film policemen of the twentieth century with the added obsession of aphids on roses. His police work investigating the murder of Oswald Walters, indicates a plodding but persistent nature. Although he hardly solves the case by the denouement at Sadec House, he is by then in possession of much information. He shows grudging respect for other characters: over-using the appellation "sir" when he addresses Richard Frampton, and places himself firmly in the fold of "those who were not there" in his attitude to the war.

The main source of pro-war sentiment in this novel is the Reverend Clarimond/ Clare, who condemns Alfred Cresswell as a coward who deserved his punishment.

Narrative strategies employed in writing the characters in "Watershed" include direct description by the narrator; opinions of other characters, either openly expressed or internalised; the actions of the characters themselves; dialogue; and some direct definition.

Directed by my research question, I occasionally found myself searching—in my creative work and the hybrids—for *the best* narrative strategy for creating characters who reflected certain ideologies. This was setting unnecessary boundaries. I was not attempting to compile a "top ten" of strategies: I had merely to unpack each major character to see how the author had built them.

Not surprisingly, I found a whole range of narrative strategies employed. The difficulty now was to make a connection between characterisation and ideologies reflecting attitudes to war and class. Narrative strategies themselves do not inscribe the ideologies: they merely assist the reader to create an image of the character. Moreover, it is the character—at least in my study—who reveals (or conceals) the ideology.

During the course of my research, I read over two-dozen hybrid novels in the crime-war genre. Several of these are utilised in Chapter Four and I list them all in Table 1 to that chapter. Although crime novels with a connection to the Western Front in World War One form only a small proportion of all war books, and an even smaller proportion of crime novels, it is worth repeating here that most of the hybrid novels reviewed and listed in Chapter Four were published in the last fifteen years, indicating the growing popularity of this small sub-genre. As might be expected, a range of narrative strategies of characterisation is found in them. Direct definition frequently provides a short biography of the person: the facts of his or her parentage, education and employment are all bearers of class ideologies, as are father's position in society; private school education, especially the more prestigious private schools in England (although none of the major protagonists in these novels went to Eton or Harrow); and university (usually Oxford or Cambridge), are all provided for several characters by authorial narration/direct definition. A person's military record is certainly more relevant in this hybrid genre than in other forms of crime fiction: officers might be expected to have a more conservative attitude to war and class than other ranks and support the dominant ideology of the era, although this is rarely found to be the case. Ex-officers like Bartram, McIver, Fr Moore, Jonathon Priest,

might also have been party to the machinations of a court martial and witnessed an execution; private soldiers might have been members of the firing squad. All these roles interpellate the reader to an anti-war position.

Because the hybrid novel is by definition a crime novel, a mystery or detective story, the true nature of a character may be deliberately disguised or withheld. In detective fiction this is usually true of the villain/perpetrator, but in the hybrid form it may be true of any character: the investigator is often shown as a flawed character deeply affected by the war. Fictional characters in this sub-genre, then, may reveal their attitudes to war or to class through their own thoughts, words or actions or those of others. However, in the hybrid form, unlike the straightforward detective story, characterisation is frequently complicated by the overarching presence of war. The reader is drawn to an anti-war perspective by markers of disjunction relevant to ideological inscription, such as shell shock, guilt, confusion, grief and anger, in addition to the normal ones of age, gender, religion, nationality.

In the course of this project I have passed several tempting byways not directly related to my research question. Several of these, I feel, would be fruitful of further research. Clare Rhoden has examined the different attitudes to war found in the canonical European narratives and their Antipodean equivalents and Harari has looked at accounts written by soldiers from several historical periods. Christina Spittel looks at the way narratives written during the war, or of the inter-war period, and those being written in the twenty-first century, have shaped modern memory. My own study looks for narrative strategies in relation to characterisation and ideological inscription. However, an examination of differences between

narratives written by ex-officers (such as Sassoon or Graves) and those written by other ranks (such as Manning or Mann) might generate alternative areas of interest in relation to pro-war or anti-war ideologies. These differences might be extended to the rank—service or civilian—of the fictional narrator in present-day hybrid crime novels. Other narrative strategies, such as setting: before and after the war, the home front versus the battle front—the way in which the home front changes or fails to change in the post-war era—might also prove fruitful for further study. And how society itself was changing even before the outbreak of war and how these changes were encouraged or resisted by those involved in the war. Again, the present-day hybrid novels are ideal for this purpose.

Are the findings of this project significant? Our attitudes to war change constantly with the situation. Would I have gone gladly to the trenches in 1914? Or to Bomber Command 25 years later? Or to the jungles of South-East Asia 25 years after that? Is my attitude towards a ground war in Syria and Iraq today (2015) significantly changed since the first and second Gulf Wars of the Presidents Bush? Of more relevance to my thesis is the question: would my attitude to these situations be different had I not had some knowledge of war (and history) gleaned from fictional reconstructions in films and novels?

Many of us today enjoy a way of life, for the most part, free of persecution, torture, harsh and unnecessary punishment, and injustice. While we can't pretend that such things are all in the past, we now have commissions established to investigate abuses and transgressions from society's norms and expectations. It is certainly true that the First World War and the literature it prompted and continues to prompt, has not put an end to war, but would our humanity have progressed this far, and this rapidly, without texts

detailing how bad things once were? Or is it simply another ideological device to normalise present-day violence in an historical context: making our wars seem less violent than they otherwise might?

In the discipline of creative writing, few if any studies have addressed ideologies revealed by our attitudes to war in hybrid novels and how these relate to narrative strategies of characterisation in fiction. In this thesis I have attempted to address these connections firstly through a fictional novel confined by the genre conventions of crime writing and war writing, and secondly through an examination of theoretical issues and analysis of several novels within the same genre confines.

Appendix A: First World War Literature

Although I have endeavoured to read as many books from the First World War as I could, my time is limited, the list is long, and the difficulties of obtaining copies of out-of-print novels, has meant that I have only been able to skim the frosty layer off the top of the iceberg. Four of the books listed here (Aldington, McKinney, Dos Passos, and Harris) I have still not read and the annotations for these, therefore, depend upon comments from secondary sources.

Aldington, Richard. *Death of a Hero*. 1929. London: Hogarth, 1984.

This novel tells the story of George Winterbourne, a runner in the trenches, through an unnamed narrator to whom he has supposedly related his experiences (Cobley). Parfitt believes Aldington “is the novelist who is most preoccupied with the idea of war as transforming its victims . . .” (Parfitt 43).

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. 1928. London: Faber & Faber, 1999.

This 1928 volume begins Sassoon’s series of memoirs in which he, thinly disguised as one George Sherston, orphaned and cared for by an aunt, spends an idyllic and pastoral childhood apparently obsessed with riding and hunting. It takes him as far as his commission into the Special Reserve via a Yeoman unit.

In addition to disguising himself, and publishing anonymously, Sassoon changes the names of people and places throughout the three volumes. Although Sassoon served with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, for instance, he chooses to name Sherston’s regiment The Flintshire Fusiliers.

This book ends with Sherston/Sassoon billeted near Morlancourt on the Western Front.

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. 1930. London: Faber and Faber, 2000.

The second volume of Sassoon's autobiographical memoir of the war was first published in 1930. It covers Sassoon/Sherston's time in France from the spring of 1916 to the Battle of Messines in 1917, at which time Sassoon was in London on home leave.

The final chapter describes Sassoon composing his fateful anti-war statement, made "in wilful defiance of military authority" which resulted in an army medical board shipping him off to Craiglockhart Hospital for psychiatric therapy.

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Sherston's Progress*. 1936. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

This final volume in Sassoon's wartime memoir is in four parts. The first covers, in some detail, his time at Craiglockhart Hospital being treated by the eminent psychologist Dr WHR Rivers, having narrowly avoided court martial for his very public rejection of the war.

The second section describes his return to the regiment in Liverpool and Limerick before departing for Palestine. The journey to Palestine and the regiment's time there (section three) is taken directly from Sassoon's diaries written at the time and thus differs from the overall trilogy which has been composed from memory and reflection.

The battalion eventually returns to France and section four covers to the summer of 1918 on the Western Front. The notebook containing his daily diary was lost and he reverts to conventional memoir again.

A final short reflection takes the story to the point where Sassoon receives his head injury (inflicted accidentally by one of his own sergeants) and, for him, bringing the end of the war.

This book (and Sassoon's later, less fictionalised memoirs) must have provided Pat Barker with much useful material for her *Regeneration* trilogy.

Blunden, Edmund. *Undertones of War*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982 (1928).

Fussell compares this book to Sassoon's *The Memoir of George Sherston* and Graves' *Goodbye to all that*. All three

authors, of course, are well-known poets or literary writers, but I find Blunden's style the most noticeably poetic. As a memoir of a group of soldiers at the front, it is structurally similar to Sassoon and Graves (or Remarque or Manning or Mann, for that matter) but each memoir is unique. Blunden's descriptions of the natural environment remind me of Hemingway's in *A Farewell to Arms*, but Blunden still finds a pastoral beauty even in the blasted landscape of the Somme.

Brittain, Vera. *Testament of Youth*. Originally published by Victor Gollanz 1933. Virago, 1978.

Brittain's autobiography is a record of a generation growing up during the war years. She herself left Somerville College, Oxford to train as a nurse. She later served in military hospitals in London and France. Her memoir (and her life) have provided the inspiration for many female characters in fiction to this day and I see shades of Vera Brittain in Eleanor Bolitho (*The Return of Captain John Emmett*) and Bess Crawford (Charles Todd's *Bess Crawford* series) for instance.

Testament of Youth is perhaps, more than any other book, a heart-breaking memoir of a young woman who saw so many of her friends, lovers and relatives die at the front.

Dos Passos, John. *Three Soldiers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921.

Dos Passos uses three intersecting stories in the bildungsroman model to narrate the dehumanising effect of war. The three soldiers react differently to the injustices heaped upon them: one rebels against military discipline only after the armistice, another, driven by cowardice, accepts any humiliation or insult in order to remain safe. (Cobley 155-63)

Edmonds, Charles. *A Subaltern's War*. London: Icon, 1929.

Charles Edmonds (Charles Edmund Carrington who also wrote *Soldier from the Wars Returning*) is relevant to my thesis for two reasons: firstly, he describes in some detail

the battle of Ovillers on 14th and 15th July 1916 which I have conflated with Pozieres in my novel “Watershed”. Secondly, in a preface added to the 1964 edition he admits to being astonished that when the book was first released in 1929 he was criticised for being “a brutal unfeeling militarist” (10). In that same preface he discusses disenchantment and disillusionment, claiming that “no professional soldier is likely to be ‘enchanted’ by the prospect of going to war” and disillusionment, therefore, is felt by non-combatants and diplomats (11).

Edmonds also confesses that as a nineteen-year-old subaltern “like so many young men he enjoyed being a soldier on the whole” (14).

Ford, Ford Madox. *Parade's End*. 1924-1926. Sphere Books, 1969.

Cobley excludes *Parade's End* from her analysis on the grounds that, although it is “partly situated on the Western Front . . . it is primarily concerned with the impact of war on English society . . . rather than with the experience of the soldier as such” (Cobley13). *Parade's End* is a collection of four novels (*Some Do Not...*, *No More Parades*, *A Man Could Stand Up*— and *The Last Post*). When Graham Greene edited an edition in 1963 he omitted the final book and published it as a trilogy.

A very difficult book to read, *Parade's End* tells the story of a stormy marriage between the brilliant Christopher Tietjens and his beautiful but vindictive wife, Sylvia, in the opening twenty-five years of the twentieth century. Loaded with upper and upper-middle class characters and mores, it reminded me of the novels of Evelyn Waugh or Anthony Powell.

Forester, C S. *The General*. 1936. London: Michael Joseph, 1953.

Forester shows how a simple man rises above the level of his competence to become a senior staff officer in the Great War. While this novel contains some details of the battlefield, it is really an extended characterisation. Forester uses the framing device of showing us an aged Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Curzon, KGMG, CB, DSO, retired to an English seaside resort before we meet him as a moderately ambitious but dedicated young officer.

Graves, Robert. *Goodbye to All That*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969 (1929).

Like Sassoon's Sherston books *Goodbye to all that* confuses issues of historiography, memoir and fiction. Also, like Sassoon (*Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*) Graves takes us back to his childhood in order to show us early biographical details of an English poet. Graves himself struggled between making this account fiction or documentary (*Goodbye to all that* 262).

Harris, John. *Covenant with Death*. 1961. Companion Books, 1962.

Harris, like Derek Robinson's novels listed below, might be considered too late to be included in the classic canon of Great War books. However, this book (and Robinson's *Goshawk Squadron*) are highly regarded among First World War literature.

Harris takes his title from the Old Testament book of Isaiah Chapter 28: "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we in agreement;" The book exposes the terrible loss of Britain's youth in the Battle of the Somme.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. Jonathan Cape 1929. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1935/1975.

This novel differs from the others in this bibliography: being written by an American, of course, but also describing the war on the Italian front—a very different war to the Western Front covered in the other texts in this thesis. Hemingway tells the story of an ambulance unit through the eyes of Henry Frederic in first person narration. As the protagonist might be considered a racist, a coward and a deserter this novel has ample spaces for ideological inscription and has resulted in much critical examination over the decades since its publication. In my opinion, as an American serving as an officer in an Italian brigade, he is disillusioned when he sees the Italians shooting their own officers and his desertion is primarily an act of self-preservation.

McKinney, J.P. *Crucible: A Novel of an Australian in World War 1*. BWM Books, 2012.

Recently re-released as an ebook 78 years after its first publication. Clare Rhoden agrees with reviewer Rodney Hall (Hall) that this Australian book “does not convey the ‘brooding’ or ‘outrage’ of better-known Great War authors such as Remarque or Owen” (Rhoden "Reprise").

Mann, Leonard. *Flesh in Armour*. Phaedrus Press 1932. Melbourne: Penguin (Aust), 2014.

The story of a handful of Australian soldiers on the Western Front. Mann’s war story, however, is skilfully interwoven with a romance between two of the soldiers and a young woman they meet in London in the opening section of the novel. With dramatic irony the reader appreciates early that this triangle is destined to bring disaster when its existence is finally revealed.

Manning, Frederic. *Her Privates We (the Middle Parts of Fortune)*. London: Hogarth Press, 1986 (1929).

First published in 1929 as *The Middle Parts of Fortune* and later issued in an expurgated version as *Her Privates We*, this fictionalised account of the war finally came out in unexpurgated form under the latter title. Both Manning’s chosen titles come from Shakespeare and both hold the same bawdy entendre.

This book tells the story of Private Bourne and a group of soldiers who travel with him through the latter half of the war. Bourne is ill suited to soldiering, probably officer material, but has chosen to enlist as a common infantryman. He is unusual also for being an Australian in a British regiment (although Manning barely hints at this). Manning himself fitted those criteria: an Australian who served as a private in the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry, later commissioned in the Royal Irish Regiment.

Like Remarque, Manning tries to show the reality of war and like *All Quiet on the Western Front* Manning’s book shows the ghastly attrition of those years by gradually reducing the number of men in the group.

Mottram, R H. *The Crime at Vanderlynden's*. 1926.
---. ***Sixty-Four, Ninety-Four*. Chatto & Windus, 1925.**
---. ***The Spanish Farm*. Chatto & Windus, 1924.**

In spite of the name, the Spanish Farm—Ferme l’Espagnol— of Mottram’s novels lies in France, twenty miles from the Western Front. Published separately between 1924 and 1926 these stories were later gathered together and linked by three shorter pieces as *The Spanish Farm Trilogy*. (Parfitt; Copley). The last of the longer pieces, *The Crime at Vanderlynden’s*, tells of Captain Dormer chasing a soldier across the Western Front at intervals throughout 1916 and 1917 for a crime that was initially thought to have been the rape of a French virgin but was quickly discovered to be the desecration of a French shrine to the Virgin Mary.

This is the only canonical work I have found which mentions the mutiny of Allied troops at Etaples in 1917 (477-479).

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. 1929.
Trans. Putnams. St Albans, Herts: Triad Mayflower, 1977.

This definitive fictionalised memoir was first published in 1928/29 as *Im Westen nicht Neues* and in various translations since. It tells the story of seven classmates from a German school who enlist and are, one by one, killed on the Western Front. Like others of its type, this story moves from the heat of battle to the relative safety of the reserve and support trenches but rarely leaves the front entirely. Written in first person narrative, the sole surviving protagonist is able to reflect in the final pages that, if any were able to go home now, after all they have seen, they would be “weary, broken, burnt out, rootless, and without hope. We will not be able to find our way any more.” (190)

Robinson, Derek. *Goshawk Squadron*. William Heinemann 1971.
London: Cassell, 2000.
---. ***War Story*. Macmillan 1987. London: Harper Collins, 1993.**

Like John Harris (vide supra) Robinson has written about the Western Front from a distance of several decades and an intervening Second World War. Robinson's novels are the only two books in this bibliography to describe the air war over the Western Front from the perspective of the men who flew in the Royal Flying Corps, and, in them, Robinson explodes the myth of a chivalrous war over the trenches.

West, Rebecca. *The Return of the Soldier*. Fontana (1982), 1918.

While this novel, first published in 1918, is the story of a shell-shocked officer with amnesia, it is perhaps better known as a study in social snobbery and class ideologies. Two women, Kitty and Jenny, safely wrapped in their genteel environment, are confronted by Margaret, "repulsively furred with neglect and poverty". This short novel is a great source of such ideologically loaded comment.

Appendix B: Recent World War One Novels

Allison, William, and John Fairley. *The Monocled Mutineer*. 1978. London Melbourne New York: Quartet, 1979.

Although non-fiction, this book deserves to be included in any list of recent publications on the First World War. If Percy Toplis were a fictional character readers would find him improbable to say the least; fraudster, conman, imposter, Toplis joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private soldier in 1916 but hardly served in that role at all.

Stealing uniforms, wearing gallantry medals he had certainly not earned, and posing as an officer to avoid detection, Toplis became one of the British army's most notorious deserters. He was also involved in one of its most infamous incidents, the mutiny of Allied troops at Etaples on the French coast in September 1917.

Barker, Pat. *Another World*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998.

---. ***The Eye in the Door*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993.**

---. ***The Ghost Road*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995.**

---. ***Regeneration*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991.**

---. ***Toby's Room*. London: Penguin, 2012.**

---. ***Life Class*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007.**

Three of these novels, of course, form the *Regeneration* Trilogy and cover real-life characters such as Dr WHR Rivers (and his Freudian treatment of shellshock victims Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen) along with fictional creations like Billy Prior.

Toby's Room and *Life Class* follow a group of students of Henry Tonks at the Slade School of Art who, in various roles, go off to the war.

Barry, Sebastian. *A Long Long Way*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005.

This novel is another story of one man's experiences on the Western Front. But, like Monaghan's *The Soldier's Song*, the protagonist is an Irishman and the basic war story is complicated by the Irish problem and the uprising, the breaking of families and communities. Barry includes the remarkable scene of young Irish recruits to the British

army being ordered to attack their own countrymen in Dublin 1916.

Faulks, Sebastian. *Birdsong*. London: Vintage, 2004/1993.

Although this novel is perhaps best remembered for the long description of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, and for the eroticism of its pre-war sequence, for me, the real success here lies in the way Faulks uses the peace and tranquillity of the Somme and Ancre valleys in 1910 and contrasts it with the subsequent events—most particular, of course, the summer of 1916.

Hague, Graeme. *And in the Morning*. Pocket Books 2003 ed. East Roseville, NSW: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

Western Australian author Hague successfully mixes World War 1 and romance. He invokes the disillusionment viewpoint by using tropes such as the white feather for cowardice and a major who thinks shell shock is just “mumbo-jumbo”.

Monaghan, Alan. *The Soldier's Song*. London: Pan Macmillan, 2010.

This story of an Irishman who leaves his scholarship place at Trinity College, Dublin, for a temporary commission in the British Army, ranges from Gallipoli to the Somme and Ypres. Good details of trench warfare and tunnelling are lightened by a romance interest and complicated by the uprisings in Ireland for Home Rule or independence.

The finale of this novel moves from the close detail of battle and the stilted romance of two young people, to a psychotherapy session with Dr WHR River—the same therapist who treats Sassoon and Owen in Barker’s trilogy.

Rock, Phillip. *The Passing Bells*. Hodder & Stoughton Ltd 1978. London: Book Club Assoc., 1979.

A forerunner to series such as *Downtown Abbey*, this novel covers the lives of Anthony Greville, 9th Earl of Stanmore, whose sons—together with their generation—

are swept up by the war. Battle scenes include Gallipoli and the retreat from Mons.

Thorpe, Adam. *Nineteen Twenty-One*. Jonathon Cape 2001. London: Vintage, 2014.

Joseph Monrow, conscripted at the end of the war, was on his way to the front when the armistice occurred. Back in England, he wants to write the great war novel but his writing is interrupted by a trip to the battlefields and graves of the Western Front and a meeting with a strange German lady and a young English woman both of whom are mourning a loved-one. (Thorpe)

Walker, Brenda. *The Wing of Night*. Camberwell, Vic: Penguin (Australia), 2005.

This novel set in Western Australia and Gallipoli tells the story of Elizabeth Zettler whose husband Louis sailed for the war with the Light Horse regiment. Louis is killed. Elizabeth, with some access to money through her husband and her father, is left in control of the farm that borders a small property of Bonnie Fairclough. Bonnie's first husband is already dead and she has a brief affair with another lighthorseman, Joe Tulley. After the war Joe comes back and works for Elizabeth (after Bonnie has married Elizabeth's father and moved to the city (presumably, Perth).

The book is structured into sections dated from February 1915 to October 1922 with unnumbered chapters in each section. Written in third person singular external POV mainly Elizabeth but occasionally Louis, Joe or Bonnie.

Ideologically the Zettlers (and Ramsay her father) are financially better off than the other characters but this does them little good ultimately. Elizabeth has Joe's baby at the same time he kills himself in a police lock-up suffering from shell shock

Womersley, Chris. *Bereft*. Carlton North, Australia: Scribe, 2010.

Quinn Walker is accused of murdering his own sister when he is only 14. He flees the small rural community of

Flint NSW. During the war, as Sgt Walker he is awarded a MM, which he throws into the sea on his voyage home. He returns to the hills around Flint where he joins up with a young orphan girl Sadie who has mystical powers (or thinks she does).

Quinn's mother is dying of influenza (like so many others). His Uncle Robert is now the local constable and is hunting the girl down.

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