

# NO ROOM FOR THE INNOCENT

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*Nothingness creates you,  
Nothingness retakes you,  
Leave nothing behind.*

Ack. Veronica Micle  
Romanian Poet (1850-1889)

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

ACC - Assistant Chief Constable

ARV - Armed Response Vehicle

Binbagged - displaced from home, clothes in a black bag

Bobby/Bobbies - British name for Police Officers

Bod - short for body - a person

Buck - person engaged in criminal activities

Con Requires - Constable requires immediate assistance

CSI - Crime Scene Investigator

DC - Detective Constable

DCI - Detective Chief Inspector

DI - Detective Inspector

Do one - Leave or go

DS - Detective Sergeant

DSU - Dedicated Surveillance Unit

Fantasy Island - Police Headquarters

FME - Forensic Medical Examiner

Heads up - bring to one's attention relevant info

Jacks - Liverpool police term for Detectives

Jigger - Small narrow alley

Kávé - Hungarian for coffee

Lancs County - Lancashire Constabulary

Liszt Ferenc - Budapest Airport

Matrix - Anti-organised crime unit

Met - Metropolitan Police

MISPER - Missing person system

MI5 - Security Service (home counter-intel and security)

MI6 - Secret Intelligence Service (foreign intel)  
M.O. - Modus Operandi (method of operating)  
MOD - Ministry of Defence  
NCA - National Crime Agency  
NICHE - Electronic case management system  
Nick - slang term for Police Station  
Oppo - opposite number- colleague or friend  
PCC - Police and Crime Commissioner  
PCSO - Police Community Support Officer  
Plainies - Plain clothes- civilian clothing  
Recce - reconnaissance  
RV - Rendezvous- meet at agreed time and place  
SAS – pron. Sass – St. Anne St Police Station  
SB - Special Branch (political security)  
Skip tracing - ‘art’ of locating absent debtors  
Scoff - Food  
SIO - Senior Investigating Officer  
Sitrep - Situation Report  
Ton - in money terms £100  
Traka - Secure key management system

# Chapter 1

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Sand blew across the beach in skittish waves encouraged by a fresh breeze. Soft, wet patches and the odd isolated ‘pond’ of water glinted in the near distance as the sun broke through the clouds like a searchlight cascade but he just stood and stared out to sea.

With a deep breath, he looked at his watch - 9.10 then turned back to the body of a naked female which lay face down alongside the detritus washed in by the last high tide.

“What can you tell me, Doctor?” Thurstan asked the FME.

She adjusted her glasses and looked up from the body; her brown, pony tailed hair, partially hidden by a grey bobble hat. She pressed her finger into the body’s back.

“See that? No change in colour but it hasn’t progressed to the usual darker colouration so, taking the current night temperatures into account, the height of the tide, the rigor mortis and the fact that she’s been lying on her back somewhere before being dumped, and I say dumped because it’s obvious she wasn’t washed in with the tide seeing as she’s above the high water mark,” she waved her hand over the debris. “I’d say she’s been dead approximately ten to twenty hours. I’d be happy to put money on maybe eleven to fifteen.”

He wasn’t an expert but he did know the discolouration on her back was due to *livor mortis*, gravitational pooling of the blood, which was supposed to begin within 4 to 6 hours after death. With the stages of *rigor mortis* appearing from 2 to 6 hours in the head, it

worked its magic until you had a prize-winning stiff somewhere near the 12-hour mark. Maths had never been his best subject so it all sounded reasonable to him.

She was right. The tide wouldn't have brought her in, certainly not this far. He looked again at the discolouration. Definitely been on her back somewhere, the bobbies and the finder hadn't turned her over and anyway there was no sand on it. When you got to body level the wind was only perceptible by sight.

“How old and means?” He gave her a smile as she stood up.

She glanced down at the still form. “Twenty to thirty and manual strangulation. I rolled her over and had a good look. No other signs.” She paused. “Do you need me further? I've got a dog to walk.”

He smiled again and shook his head. She stripped her glove off and they shook hands. He briefly watched her walk away before turning to the crime scene manager.

“Carol, she's all yours now. Make sure you get me some decent pics of that tattoo on her wrist.”

She shook her head, slowly, and threw him a look of mock remonstrance. “You do know I've done this before, don't you?”

He waved her away, smiling. “Yeah, yeah. Whatever.”

Loose sand filling his shoes, he trudged between the dunes towards his DI, who was speaking with a couple of uniforms. Degsy shook hands with the older bobby and turned to greet him. “I'm up to speed now, Thurstan. Sorry about that but the bloody car wouldn't start.”

“I told you yesterday, Derek, it’s the battery. You need to get it sorted. Anyway, she wasn’t washed in with the tide, so what do you think?”

“In that case, I can’t see them carrying her all this way. Even with two of them, it would be a struggle. Why not just dump her in the woods or bury her in the nearest dune?” He hesitated. “Do you think it’s possible they drove along the beach?”

The DCI nodded. “That’s exactly what I’m thinking.” He glanced back at the seashore. “No obvious signs of sexual assault either. If it was pre-planned they’d have had the disposal boxed off, not this. Maybe some interaction went wrong, they panicked, got rid of anything that would identify her, overlooked the tattoo, or got squeamish, then tried to distance her from where she was killed.”

He hesitated. “And you wouldn’t risk anything other than four-wheel drive down here, not with the incoming tide. Maybe they thought it would take her out, expected it to be higher, who knows.”

Using the DI as convenient support, he pulled his shoe off, emptied it and shovelled his foot back in. Then, the other. “They did know something though. They knew their tracks would be covered.” He patted Degsy’s arm. “Come on, let’s get back.”

They swept into the office to be hailed by Chalkie. “What was your day at the seaside like?”

A forced smile then Thurstan swung round to his DS, Sammy Nolan. “Get those statements on Niche before you go for a cuppa, Sammy, and get someone to trawl through the Misper system and liaise with our neighbours, if necessary.” He turned back to his oppo.

“It was a little windy and gritty, Chalkie. It’s a tricky one as well. We’ll have to go straight for a press release and see what comes back. The only ID on her is a tattoo of a thin chain on her left wrist.”

“Do you need any of my syndicate? We’re just tidying up the Page Moss job at the moment, so it wouldn’t be a problem.”

Thurstan smiled. “No, it’s fine. Thanks for the offer. I may take you up on it sometime but for now, we’re ok.”

They were interrupted. “DCI White?” It was a young uniformed bobby. Chalkie nodded.

“I was told you wanted to see me, Sir?” The bobby looked worried.

As Thurstan wandered off to his office, a smile relaxed the officer - a little. “Yes, I do. It’s nothing to worry about. I just need a quick continuity statement from you and wanted to say you did a great job at the scene. I was very impressed.”

The officer smiled back. “Thank god for that. I thought I was in the shit again.”

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Looking out onto the beach and the Dee estuary, Donny Mostyn sat in his car and flicked the butt of his spliff out of the window. Sun bounced off the water, occasional white caps emulating floating seagulls. A smile consumed his lips. It was one of triumph.

At this time of the day, there were never many people here. The fact his was the only car there didn’t disturb him at all.

Once more the bizzies had tried their ‘best’ and once more they’d failed. Absolute bunch of muppets. It paid to have a clever lawyer

and his was a master of the dark arts. It was no wonder she was Liverpool's most popular, with the 'bucks' that is.

The couple in front of him held his attention. Hair fluttering helplessly around her face serving only to make her more alluring to him, the dress clung to her buttocks. Great figure, wonderful arse. What she saw in the mook she was with was baffling. A voice at the window startled him.

He looked up. A scruffy guy waved a cigarette at him. "Got a light, Boss?"

Normally, he'd tell him to 'fuck off' but the spliff and his recent victory had left him somewhat mellow. His thoughts still on the girl, he absently lifted the lighter from the seat next to him and turned back to offer it.

The bullet drilled a neat hole in his forehead.

Unhurriedly, 'scruffy guy' stepped back, clicked to full auto and emptied the magazine into the body of the car. What noise there was, as the rounds punctured the bonnet, door and windscreen, found itself carried away by the stiffening breeze. A quick reload and seat foam filled the vehicle interior as Donny's body shuddered under the onslaught. The young couple walked down the ramp to the beach, seemingly unaware.

He tucked the Skorpion VZ 61 back under his jacket as the Fiat 500 glided effortlessly from the sailing club car park and halted on the exit road.

Nicks walked across the grass and gravel and slid into the passenger seat. “Couldn’t you get any further away?” he said, sarcastically.

“Nope, those boulders stopped me.” Simon smiled.

Weapon unloaded, he removed the suppressor and stuffed everything in the compartment hidden in the base of the glove box.

“Any requests?” Simon threw him a glance as they calmly departed.

“I fancy some decent fish and chips, to be honest.”

“Parkgate then. We can sit on the benches and take in the view.”

## Chapter 2

“You ready?” Chalkie leant through the doorway to the office. “If I’m going to drop you off and get home in time we need to go now.”

Thurstan nodded, placed some files in his drawer, locked it and grabbed his jacket from the coat stand. “Thanks, I appreciate this.”

Chalkie signed them out whilst Thurstan spoke quickly with Degsy about the arrangements and enquiries for the following day. Someone held a phone in the air and called, “They need to speak to a DCI now! Body at Thurstaston beach.” Chalkie wandered over.

Finished, Thurstan, moments later, stood in front of him with a face full of questions.

Chalkie looked at him and raised his forefinger as he spoke to the Control Room Inspector. “Yeah ...yeah....ok. We’ll get there as soon as we can ... Thirty minutes, depends on the traffic. We’ll take the Birkenhead tunnel.”

He put the phone down and rolled his eyes at his oppo. “Shooting victim in the car park next to the sailing club. We’ll have to make a detour. I’ll tell you about it in the lift.”

At a far-flung edge of the Wirral peninsular, known to some as ‘God’s country’, Chalkie and Thurstan stood alongside the slipway to Thurstaston beach, watching the pathologist go about his business. Eventually, he rose from the body, stepped over and spoke.

“Well, as you can see, no expense spared on bullets. I’ve looked at the angles of entry and can tell you I’m fairly certain the hole in the centre of his forehead was the cause of death. He was sitting

upright when that was delivered, looking towards his killer. Close as well. Looks like the others were delivered whilst he was slumped over, but I'll know more when I've had him on the slab and rummaged around." He stepped back with a disarming smile. "Just got to go and finish a couple of things then I'll be off."

Chalkie, a light breeze in his face, took in the view across the Dee estuary; the glistening water and the Welsh coast beyond. "Do you know? This is the first time I've been here. Apart from him," he pointed at Donny Mostyn sprawled in the car, "it's really nice." He wandered around the vehicle. "What do you reckon?"

Thurstan took a deep breath. "Well, it looks like a gangland killing, for all intents and purposes, but if what the Pathologist says pans out then I think it's just been staged to look that way."

Chalkie rubbed his chin. "If that's right, surely the killer would have known it wasn't going to stand up to hard scrutiny, so, why bother?"

Thurstan smiled. "Maybe they're letting us know they're back and giving us what we need to write it off with the press. Or, it could just be a thick twat with a large expense account."

Chalkie laughed. "You think it could be your boy, Nickson, don't you?"

"I do. I can almost smell him all over this and that's why I'll take this one off you."

"Whoa! I can't let you do that! You've got enough on your plate."

Thurstan shook his head. "I can balance the two jobs, especially if you lend me two or three of yours who aren't being fully utilised."

He patted Chalkie's arm. "You get on your way or you'll be in deep shit with the kids if you miss 'em in that play. I'll have a word with the crime scene crew and speak to those uniforms who've just come off the beach. I'll bum a lift off one of them when I'm done."

It was late when he got home. The patrol was kind enough to wait for him, outside the chippy, whilst he got himself a Chinese meal. He poured himself a large whiskey with a dash of water from the tap and downed it in one. Jacket off, he spooned rice onto a plate, decanted the chicken curry, grabbed a fork, and settled down in front of the telly.

The following morning he reorganised the staff and reallocated enquiries. The 'beach girl' press appeal was under way and they were waiting on the results of the post mortem. He'd named the teams in the style of a WW2 specialist unit; Beach Commandos; 'A' – Southport: Intel, Missing Persons, Domestic Violence databases and the search for meaningful CCTV. 'B' – Wirral: Intel, Informants, Sailing Club and more CCTV. It helped him focus.

With a steaming mug, he sat himself down in his office for a short respite. Someone had left a copy of the local paper on his coffee table. He checked the date, it was current enough.

Five minutes later, he dragged his jacket on and signed out of the office. "I'm on the mobile, Arthur," he called to the office manager.

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In Cavern Walks, Thurstan descended the steps into the bar. The music hit him like a wet curtain as he pushed through the happy

crowd, leant on the bar and tried to attract someone's attention. A surprisingly strong skinny guy, with a loaded tray he hadn't looked capable of carrying, backed away from the bar. "It's all yours now, mate," he cheerily imparted.

Thurstan spoke quickly to the barman who pointed to a door guarded by a bouncer. It took several attempts but eventually, the doorman heard what he was being told and called it in. Within seconds, he nodded and opened the door. As Thurstan passed him, he was grabbed by the shoulder. "Third on the left," was yelled in his ear. He smiled his appreciation. The door closed, leaving the noise a distant memory. He made a mental note to ask who did their doors and windows. He was impressed. A second bouncer waved him in.

"Well, well, Mister Baddeley! Advertising does work! You come for your freebies then have you? Or is it just a social call?" Mickey Fenton grinned at him from behind a large oak desk. "I never had you down as a keen reader of the Echo."

"Hello, Mickey. I'm not *normally*, but you know how I worry about you. Sadly it's not purely a social call. Donny Mostyn?"

Fenton lit a cigar and puffed a pall of smoke into the air. "I thought it wouldn't be long. What do you think of the place anyway? You missed the grand opening. Might catch it on the news tonight though." He got up and poured himself a scotch. "I'd offer you one but you're obviously on duty."

A little smile and he sat down once more. "Yeah, Donny. Tragic and so young. Only to be expected though, what with all the sordid

little things he had his grubby little mitts in. The words I'm hearing are 'it's not local'. Caused quite a stir, so people were keen to confirm. Will that do you?"

Thurstan nodded. They had an understanding. If something involved the local organised crime chiefs, Mickey would say he'd heard nothing. Otherwise, it was to everyone's benefit to set the record straight.

"How's Sharon?" The temptation to mention Fenton's wife had proved too much.

Mickey scowled. "I'd rather not hear that woman's name spoken, if it's all the same to you. Years of devotion I gave her and she repays me by trying to stitch me up like a kipper."

Thurstan affected a sympathetic countenance but couldn't resist another poke, although he already knew the answer. His prize would be the momentary expression on Fenton's face. "When's *your* trial?"

Mickey took a swig and put the glass on his desk. "Three months, as you're fully aware, I'm sure. Not that I'm concerned. Not being able to go on holiday this year was a kick up the arse. Had to surrender the bloody passport. Not to worry, there's always next year."

"Nice to see you so confident, Michael."

He forced a smile. "One has to do their best, Mister Baddeley. Anything else?"

The DCI had started to turn for the door. It felt almost as if Mickey *wanted* to tell him something. "Well, seeing as I'm here. We

found a naked girl on the beach, Formby way. Is there something you could tell me?"

He took the cigar from his mouth. "I'm glad you asked because now that you've brought it up, there is something." He got to his feet and wandered, thoughtfully, up and down behind his chair.

"It might be worthwhile you looking at a couple of brothers who've set themselves up in Southport. Them and a few spurious relatives. The Council and Immigration think they're Syrian refugees but they're not. They're Albanians, passing themselves off." He placed the cigar in the ashtray. "I don't bother out that way anymore. Too much trouble. You know I've never been into supplying girls, I don't agree with that sort of thing, but from what I'm hearing, they're into everything and getting a little too cocky."

"Not worried about them filtering south to the city?"

A genuine grin. "I look forward to them trying." He emptied his glass.

They nodded mutual grudging respect and Thurstan left to slap his face with a wet curtain once more. Dexy's Midnight Runners were imploring Eileen to take off her dress.

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