An excerpt from Harm None:

Book 1 in the Davies & West Mystery Series

Will North

For Nancy

The Major Crime Investigating Team

Detective Chief Inspector Arthur Penwarren

Detective Sergeant Morgan Davies

Detective Sergeant and Crime Scene Manager Calum West

Police Constable Terry Bates

*An ye harm none,*

*Do what ye will*

From the “Wiccan Rede”

Some There Are Who Know

Prologue

 I knew before Tamsin did. I had one of my seeings. Gave me a shock, I can tell you. The problem with seeings is they fade fast, the way dreams do when you’re just coming awake. Seeings aren’t dreams, though. Uh-uh. In a dream, you sort of know you’re asleep. Seeings happen when you are awake. Suddenly I can only see the normal world around the edges of my eyes, because there’s like a video going on in the center, like suddenly I’m at the cinema on Causewayhead.

Clearness was the problem with my seeings of Becca those first few weeks after she’d gone off to…well, wherever she went. They were ever so dark and muzzy, like looking through a grimy window into one of those old miners’ cottages up on the moor above Penzance. I knew she was trying to get through to me, but I couldn’t see her true.

Tamsin says my seeings are a gift. I can tell something’s gonna happen before it does, or sometimes after it has but I wasn’t there. *Clairvoyance,* it’s called. That’s French and means “clear vision,” she says. But mine aren’t so clear. Tamsin tells me, “Don’t worry, Tegan girl, they’ll get clearer as you get older.” That could be long wait; I’m only ten.

I heard once that people who lose an arm or a leg can still feel it. That’s Becca to me. I feel her so often, and I know she’s still here, somewhere here in West Penwith. That much, at least, I can see. I just don’t know where, you know?

 Anyway, today I’m at Tamsin’s cottage. Tamsin Bran’s the village wise-woman in St. Euny. She never uses the word “witch,” though other people do. Her cottage used to be a small mill for grinding grain, powered by the fast stream that gathers on the moors and races down through this narrow valley. Ages ago, someone built a long, level, stone-lined leat into the side of the valley to divert some of that stream water to a flume where it tumbled over the mill wheel. Tamsin says when she bought the place it was a ruin, but she’s fixed it up nice and tight with the help of those she’s done spells or healings for. One of the huge old grooved millstones now sits atop a granite pillar in the middle of her kitchen as a work surface.

That’s where I’m standing today—Monday—measuring herbs for a powder. I love this room. It’s a modern kitchen and all, but there are also shelves and shelves of labeled glass jars filled with all manner of herbs and stuff. There’s a massive granite hearth in one wall with a big copper pot hanging from an iron arm set into the stone. It’s for when she needs to cook up a spell. Beside the hearth is where she leans her tall staff, the one she always walks with. It’s wood and it has two short branches at the top, like horns. Tamsin says the branches represent the duality of nature. I had to ask her about that; it means the two-ness, like day and night, good and bad, black and white, male and female. That’s what she says anyways.

There are also two handmade brooms: one of skinny stiff hazel branches, the other—my favorite—made of snowy swan feathers bound to a stick with cord. And there’s a short stick with a hook at the end, a “hook wand,” which she says she uses to pull in good energies when she’s doing a ritual. I never saw her do a ritual, so I don’t really see how a stick could hook energies, but there’s a lot I don’t know.

There’s also stuff I’m not to touch, ever. Like a sacred pottery bowl with the image of a hare inside, a cup made from animal horn she says is a chalice, and a knife she calls her *athame*. It has a carved black handle and cutting edges on both sides. She says it does good things, but honestly it scares the death out of me.

 I’m here doing cleaning and tidying to earn pocket money. My teacher at school arranged that, as a summer job, like. She’s friends with Tamsin. I live nearby, just a twenty minute bike ride over the moor-top. But Tamsin also lets me help her with her work, too. She writes the ingredient amounts for powders and potions on a slip of paper and I put them together for her. It’s brill that she lets me do this now, like she used to let Becca. And she says I have “more promise.”

Today, I’m putting together a Go-Away Powder for Brian Tregarren. He’s the captain of the Lady B—that’s for “Brenda,” his wife—out of Newlyn. It isn’t to make him go away, of course, but to banish the fogs. Out on the cuttlefish grounds, he’s been bedeviled by sea fogs and his catch is falling behind the other vessels in old man Stevenson’s line, which isn’t good as the Tregarren’s have three kids to support. So he’s asked for a spell.

Tamsin’s cat, Desmond, who’s black but for the one white paw, like he stepped in paint or something, is watching me from atop the herb shelves, as if my measuring is a test he’s judging. Some cats, you know, they just seem to wander aimlessly in their own little dream world, or they’re asleep in the sun somewhere. Not Desmond. He’s a watcher. It would be creepy if he weren’t such good company. He also has some kind of glitch in his brain that makes him twitchy, and sometimes he rockets around the cottage for no reason I can figure, howling as if he’s possessed. But Tamsin says he’s not really bewitched or bedeviled, just different. Desmond doesn’t like most people, but he likes me, which is brill. When I ride up to Tamsin’s cottage on my bicycle he races out through the cat flap to greet me, whirling around in circles and talking a blue streak, as if he needs to fill me in on everything that’s happened since the day before.

But he’s not worried today; we both know Go-Away is a simple powder to measure out, nothing like as complicated as some others. It’s just three teaspoons of benzoin, one each of mullein and St. John’s Wort, two of wormwood and salt, and two blackthorn tree thorns. I don’t grind them, though. Tamsin does that bit: seven grinds clockwise, seven counterclockwise in her big black mortar and pestle, over and over till it’s ready. I don’t know how she knows when that is; I reckon that’s part of the witchery, part of the Old Craft. That’s what Tamsin calls her work: the “Old Craft.”

Anyways, the tide will begin ebbing just after midnight, Tamsin says, and there’s also a full moon which is a good thing. So tonight, after the grinding is done, she’ll drive down to Newlyn in her funny little Morris 1000 estate wagon with the polished wood trim, which is way older than me, from the Fifties, she says. She’ll scatter the powder onto the sea from the end of the ancient stone jetty that protects the anchorage, the tide will pull it out, and Captain Tregarren will be right as rain. Or at least not in fog.

I’m new at this, and I do wonder sometimes about these powders and such, but Tamsin’s been the wise-woman in St. Euny for quite some years. Her mum was the wise-woman before her and I guess she passed the knowledge on. Folks come by all the time, and not just from the village, either; from all over. Maybe they have love trouble, or have a nagging pain somewhere, or a cow that’s poorly. Sometimes they’re under a spell from someone and they want it lifted. Or the other way ‘round, though Tamsin’s not much into the darker stuff, is what she says.

Except for Desmond, Tamsin’s all alone, and I don’t really get that, because she’s really pretty. She’s got these nearly black eyes flecked with golden speckles and when you look into them it’s like looking up into the sky on a clear night, all sparkly and limitless, like you could see through them into the whole universe. She uses a lot of black mascara and liner, which really highlights those eyes in a way you can’t look away from, and I’ve asked her to show me how she does that but she says I’m too young. She says that a lot. It frosts me, but then I think, well, at least she cares. More than Mum does, that’s for sure.

 So here I am, measuring under Desmond’s glazy-eyed gaze, when out of nowhere, there’s Becca. Well, not here in the kitchen, but somewhere, and this time she’s clear as day. And naked as a babe. And she’s screaming. I can’t hear it, but I can see it in her face, in the twist of her mouth. Scares me senseless and I drop the bowl I’m filling. Desmond hisses, leaps to the stone floor, and speeds out of the room yowling. And then the phone rings.

 “I’ve got it, Tegan girl,” I hear Tamsin sing out from upstairs where she’s sorting laundry.

 And that’s how it all starts.

One

 Detective Sergeant Morgan Davies slid her white, unmarked Ford estate wagon to a stop in the yard of Trerane Farm, a few miles shy of the south-westernmost tip of Cornwall. She yanked up the emergency brake, shoved open the door, and made to get out but pulled her low-heeled navy blue pump back just before it reached the manure-splattered ground.

“Bloody hell,” she muttered.

She looked at the mess in the farmyard and at the steep climb to the top of Dewes Tor, made a face, pulled off the heels, and reached into the rear seat for a pair of black rubber Wellies.

 Several hundred feet above the farmyard, Bradley Hunter, professor of archaeology at The Pennsylvania State University, watched the new arrival beside his site manager, assistant professor Amanda Jeffers. Hunter was a slender but weathered forty-five-year-old with longish curling salt and pepper hair that danced in the wind off the Atlantic as if it had a life of its own. Amber-tinted aviator glasses hid his mahogany eyes. He wore heavy work boots, khaki shorts that revealed calves taut as knotted hawsers, a vented white safari shirt, and a multi-pocketed canvas vest more suited to fly-fishing than digging. It had belonged to his father, a digger of another sort: a Pennsylvania coal miner and avid fly-fisherman. Hunter would never admit to being superstitious, but he’d worn the vest on every successful expedition since his father had died of black lung disease a decade ago.

Behind Hunter and Jeffers, as if it had grown out of the ground, lay the stone foundations of Carn Dewes, a prehistoric walled settlement dating from the Iron Age, but which Hunter had just discovered could be far older, and far more important than a mere settlement.

#

 Three days earlier, in a bell-shaped stone chamber several feet beneath the Carn Dewes settlement, Hunter stared at the screen of his ground-penetrating radar and felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise. The equipment was aimed at a ground-level granite niche roughly two feet wide and three feet high set into the wall of the chamber. Behind the slab at the back of the niche, the screen revealed a wavy anomaly; something that should not have been there.

 Hunter scrambled through the tunnel to the surface and called out to the nearest graduate student, “Find Jeffers and get her down here!”

 Amanda ducked into the chamber just as Hunter began prying out one of the short upright stone columns at the side of the niche.

 “Jesus, Brad, what are you doing? English Heritage will have our heads!”

 “Look at the scanner’s screen,” he ordered without pausing.

 “Oh, wow.”

 “Give me a hand here—we need to get behind the back face of the niche without causing the chamber wall to collapse. I think the lintel above will hold.”

 Together, they loosened and removed the other vertical stone and, with a short steel pry bar, inched the rear slab outward as if opening a creaky door. Three-thousand-year-old dust drifted into their hair.

“I can’t imagine why no previous researchers thought to take this niche apart,” Hunter muttered. “It’s been described as a hearth in the old literature, which is laughable…a hearth with no chimney?”

 “Maybe originally there was a hole in the peak of the chamber through which the smoke escaped, like the cone-shaped roofs of the houses in the settlement above?”

 “Think about that. This stone chamber is a dome, cruder but architecturally little different from St. Peter’s in Rome. Its structural integrity depends entirely on the keystone at the very top which directs the compressive force of gravity outward along the curve to the base, rather than straight downward. Remove that keystone and the whole chamber collapses.”

 “Right; so no hole.”

 Hunter ran his hands over his scalp and twisted his neck until she heard a cervical vertebra pop; a habit he had when he was anxious.

“The niche is an altar is what it is, raised slightly from the floor of the chamber. It’s not a hearth. And where is it situated?

“Directly opposite the chamber entrance.”

“Precisely one hundred eighty degrees around the circumference of the chamber, the space between perfectly bisected. Why? Because before the late Iron Age tunnel outside the chamber was built, this chamber’s entrance would have been set into the hillside and would have faced the very point on the horizon where the sun rises at the winter solstice, the moment of the rebirth of life, the return to the season of fertility after the season of death. At that moment, the altar would have blazed like a fire in the new light, at least for a few magical moments. That’s why the altar looks like a hearth.”

“But an altar to what?”

“I think we’re about to find out.”

Working together, they pulled aside the rear face of the niche, only to find another cavity, much smaller this time and, nestled within it, a figurine, obviously female, carved in white quartz that glittered, jewel-like, in the beam of Hunter’s flashlight, its rough surface shooting shards of light around the shallow niche.

For a moment, neither of them said a word.

“Get me latex gloves and some bubble wrap from the operations tent, would you Amanda?” Hunter finally said. “And tell no one.”

“On it,” Jeffers said, backing out.

What Hunter could not tell her, what he did not understand himself, was that the moment the back wall of the niche had been opened a charged energy had vibrated within him like a tuning fork. She apparently hadn’t experienced it. He’d read about Egyptologists experiencing something similar when opening a tomb, but this was a first for him and he tried to come to terms with it. He sensed no threat. If it was a message, he could not comprehend it.

But a part of him, a distant, primitive part of him, wished he’d never opened the niche.

#

 Detective Sergeant Davies was halfway across the farmyard and pulling on a rainproof jacket when she heard a second vehicle approaching at speed along the narrow country lane that led to the farm. Moments later, a Ford Fiesta hatchback, its side panels plastered with the neon blue and lemon yellow grid of squares emblematic of the Devon and Cornwall Police, pulled into the farmyard.

 “How did she get here before us?” Special Constable Trevor Williams asked the woman behind the wheel.

 “Always does, is what I hear,” Police Constable Teresa Bates said. “We’d better get a move on.”

 Bates stepped out, ignored the muck, smoothed her black uniform, adjusted her equipment belt, tucked her short ginger hair beneath her regulation PC’s black bowler hat with its checkered headband, and hurried to catch up with Davies. Everyone at the Penzance nick knew better than to keep DS Davies waiting. Williams followed, shrugging on his waterproof jacket which, like the Fiesta, was patched in reflective blue and yellow.

 They met the detective at an iron stile set into a stone wall at the foot of a stony footpath that climbed up the eastern flank of the tor through thickets of gorse, bracken fern, and heather.

 “You lot should have got here first,” Davies snapped.

 Bates came to attention and introduced herself and Williams. “We were on foot duty for the Golowan Festival parade, ma’am. It took us a while to get through the crowds to the Penzance BCU and requisition a car.

 “Bloody Golowan. Bunch of drunken pagans in fancy dress clogging up the streets just because it’s the longest day of the year.”

 “Actually, ma’am, it’s also the feast day of St. John,” Williams volunteered.

 Davies shot him a look that would have blistered paint and began climbing.

#

Thanks to the Golowan celebration, which drew hundreds of pagans to Penzance, Davies had had the gloriously empty CID office to herself. Given Golowan, she might have been out on the streets managing crowds like the rest of the Force, but Morgan detested the Golowan revelries. The event, the dancers, the musicians, the fancifully-constructed giant paper and wire creatures, and the crowds that thronged the streets of Penzance on Golowan weekend were, as far as she was concerned, ardently to be avoided.

Instead, she’d been going over, yet again and just as fruitlessly, the case files on the murders of two very young prostitutes in nearby Newlyn, the fishing port immediately adjacent to Penzance along the broad sweep of Mount’s Bay. Both had been strangled (apparently in the throes of sex, given the forensic evidence) and then dumped, two weeks apart, like so much rat bait in the maze of cobbled alleys that climbed the hill above the port. So far, and despite door-to-door inquiries, Morgan had got no closer to a perpetrator. And the other Toms catting around the port were keeping mum. So when the emergency call about the Carn Dewes find came in from Comms, Davies welcomed the distraction.

Minutes later she was blasting south along the A30 in her staff car. At Drift, she veered right onto the minor road through Sancreed and headed up into the high moors. The entire trip took twenty minutes, half of it extracting herself from the one-way traffic pattern in Penzance.

#

 “This is going to shut us down, dammit,” Hunter mumbled as he watched the police ascend the tor.

 If Penn State’s highly-regarded archaeology department had a “star,” Brad Hunter was it, though he would have rejected the label. He was known as a mesmerizing lecturer and a caring mentor. He was also uncommonly successful in his expeditions. His reputation pulled in streams of talented graduate students. But, in his field, that reputation was only as good as the latest find. Now he had a new one, a stone figurine that could rewrite the history of the Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron ages in Britain. But a second discovery now threatened to bring his dig to a halt.

 The trouble had begun less than two hours earlier.

Hunter had been in the operations tent poring over data on Neolithic figurines on his laptop when he caught sight of his second in command pounding across the gently sloping ground within the settlement’s inner ramparts. An athletic brunette just turned thirty, Amanda Jeffers had the honed frame of the distance runner she proved herself to be early each morning, arriving long before the rest of the crew and racing over the moorland paths. She ran effortlessly, her body fluid, like water flowing. Not for the first time did he consider what that athlete’s body would be like unadorned by her usual uniform of Vibram-soled work boots, olive drab multi-pocket expedition trousers, khaki spaghetti-strap knit cotton shirt, and muddy gray rain jacket; a beauty in mufti, but one who signaled “Keep Your Distance” as if in blinking neon.

“Brad!” she yelled. “Something you need to look at. Now!”

Hunter had never quite got used to the curiously commanding nature of his assistant. Her clipped attitude ruffled feathers among his graduate students and the internal tension at the dig would have been lessened by her absence, but he respected Amanda’s professionalism. She wasn’t autocratic, just focused and precise. In that regard, at least, they were well-matched.

 Jogging to keep up, he followed Jeffers across the settlement. To his surprise, she carried on right out through the only gap in the Iron Age walls. Beyond the entrance, a narrow path led through wind-stunted gorse and dense heather thickets across a finger ridge that ran southwest from the hilltop. Roughly two hundred yards along stood Dewes Quoit. A hulking Neolithic stone structure far older than the settlement, the quoit looked out toward the seething Atlantic a mile or so to the west and far below. Three massive, five-foot-high granite megaliths stood like the legs of an elephantine tripod, and atop them lay a two-foot-thick granite capstone crudely shaped in an elongated oval. Roughly twelve feet long and eight feet wide at its widest point, the almost unimaginable mass of this capstone was perfectly balanced across its uprights.

There were quoits like this one crowning hilltops elsewhere in West Cornwall, as well as Ireland, Wales, and Brittany in France. They were thought to have been tombs for revered Stone Age chieftains and would originally have been covered in earth after being erected. But thousands of years of weathering by Cornwall’s relentless storms had eaten away at the soil and rubble cover and left the great support stones exposed. Obvious as the naked monuments were upon the skyline, all had long since been plundered for whatever artifacts or grave goods might have been interred with the chieftains. They remained today simply as engineering marvels, silently bearing witness to the skills of a primitive civilization in a mysterious, ancient time. No one fully understood how the great capstones, weighing tons, had been placed so precisely that, millennia later, they remained in place. Given the absence of sophisticated tools in the Neolithic, the quoits beggared explanation.

 “I was just policing the quoit,” Jeffers called over her shoulder as Hunter caught up. “Walkers like to picnic up here…”

They squeezed beneath the hulking mass of the quoit and in the dim light, Hunter saw it: the curled first two segments of a skeletal finger rising from the ground. Working with a bristle brush from Amanda’s tool belt, it took him only a moment to conclude the bones could not possibly be ancient. The site had been excavated more than once at least a century earlier and the soil around the exposed finger wasn’t compacted enough to be even that old. It was everything he could do to keep from unearthing more of the remains. Instead, he had Jeffers call the police from her mobile.

#

 DS Davies arrived atop the summit ridge flushed, sweating, and disgusted. She hadn’t planned on mountain climbing this particular Saturday afternoon—or any afternoon, for that matter. On any other off-duty Saturday, she’d be at home watching some romantic old black and white movie and nursing a vodka tonic. Bodies, she grumbled to herself, showed up in the most inconvenient places—reservoirs, mountaintops. Inconvenient.

Handsome in a strong, Katherine Hepburn sort of way, albeit with a bit more heft, Davies was as fit as any largely desk-bound detective might be, but lately she had begun feeling her forty-five years. When PC Bates reached the summit ridge behind Davies she grabbed Williams’s coat and waited while Davies, pretending to take in the view, caught her breath. The afternoon was waning and the western light had reached that burnished gold peculiar to higher latitudes in high summer.

After a moment, Davies turned, approached the archaeologists, and flashed her warrant card.

“What have you got?” Morgan Davies wasn’t long on pleasantries.

Hunter pointed to the quoit. “You’d better have a look,” he said, leading her there.

Holding on to one of the upright megaliths, Davies lowered herself to her knees and peered into the shadowy space beneath the capstone. Hunter was beside her, his sunglasses removed. In her twenty-five years of service in the force, she’d seen her share of bodies, but this—this single skeletal finger, curled as if desperately clawing its way free of the earth—raised the hackles at the back of her neck. She shook the feeling away.

“Who’s the fool’s been digging under here?” she demanded.

“That would be me,” Hunter said.

“SOCOs won’t be pleased,” she said as she backed out and stood. She steadied herself on one of the uprights. Davies hated confined spaces.

“SOCOs?”

“Scene of Crime Officers. You’ve mucked up their site.”

Davies turned to Special PC Williams and barked, “Get Ms. Jeffers away from here, take a statement, and caution her about saying anything about this to anyone else.”

Williams nodded sharply and marched the unwilling young professor across the ridge toward the settlement and the dig’s operations tent.

“I’m issuing you the same caution,” she said turning to Hunter, “and I want you to give the same instructions to anyone else who’s working with you here. Got that?”

Hunter nodded.

Davies smiled. What she saw was a man accustomed to controlling events but for whom events had suddenly spun out of control, a man of certainty newly faced with uncertainty. He was also arrestingly handsome in a weathered sort of way. On another day, in a different situation, she would have fancied him. Any woman would.

“A word, then, if you don’t mind…” She took his elbow and led him a short distance along the ridge from the quoit, leaving Bates at the quoit and out of hearing.

“You’re in charge here, I gather?”

“Yes, it’s my project, sanctioned by English Heritage and the Duchy of Cornwall.”

“Means sod all to me, professor. Look, I’m a detective; you’re an archaeologist. What I want to know is what do you make of this?”

“The bones can’t be ancient; that’s why I had my assistant call 999.”

“Why not?”

“Okay, the bones are already skeletonized, but that’s not surprising; the conditions up here are brutal. If I had to guess I’d say this body—if it is a body and not just a hand—has only been in the ground, shallowly buried, between one and two years. The soil is too loose for it to be much older. But I’m no forensic expert.”

“You’ll do in a pinch. And for what it’s worth, since I am even less of an expert, I tend to agree with you, based on other cases. I appreciate your expertise.”

As if clicking off a switch, she turned and left him, rummaged in her shoulder bag, pulled out her mobile, and clumped off along the ridge toward the settlement. He watched her go with a curious combination of awe and interest. He’d seldom met a more compelling woman; tough-minded, bordering on belligerent. Not his type at all. And yet…

Davies leaned against one of the granite megaliths flanking the entrance to the settlement and described the situation to the on-duty senior investigating officer at the Bodmin police hub, who turned out this day to be her former superior in Penzance, Detective Chief Inspector Arthur Penwarren.

“All right, Morgan. You know the drill. Get the response unit to cordon off the site until the SOCO people arrive. Comms called West just after they called you. Knowing the way he drives, he’ll only be minutes away by now. Wait for him, will you? I’ll notify Penzance their constables will be there a while. We’ll have a Major Crime Investigating Team meeting first thing tomorrow: eight o’clock, Camborne nick.”

Davies rang off and found Bates at attention behind her. Discipline and intelligence radiated from the young woman’s eyes. Her body language said, *I await your orders.* Davies liked that she’d said nothing yet.

“I’m guessing, Constable, that you’re the one with brains here…”

“PC Williams is a novice Special, ma’am; a new volunteer. Just a bit green is all.”

“Very charitable, but you’re confirming that he doesn’t know what he’s doing, so I’m putting you in charge. The SIO’s already on to Penzance. Cordon off the scene; keep others out. After that, I’m afraid you and Williams will be here all night.”

“Nature of the job, ma’am.”

“Hours of boredom punctuated by moments of bloody terror, that’s us,” Davies said. Bates smiled and nodded in a way that said she relished the task.

 Then, as if controlled by wires, the two women’s heads suddenly pivoted east at the sound of another approaching car, this one’s engine deep-throated and roaring. Almost immediately a big Volvo estate wagon executed a perfect four-wheel power slide and came to a halt in the farmyard at the base of the tor next to Morgan’s car.

 Davies shook her head, smiling. “West.”

 “Ma’am?” Bates asked.

 “Calum West, SOCO crime scene manager and would-be race car driver. And, as he’s also part of the national anti-terrorism unit, he gets issued that fire-breathing Volvo: top cruising speed one hundred forty. Thank god he’s a brilliant driver is all I can say.

“While I wait for him here, tell the professor I’ll want to take formal statements in Penzance as soon as possible from him, his assistant, and anyone else involved in this discovery. Have him dismiss the rest of his people.”

 “Ma’am.”

 Davies watched Bates stride across the summit toward the operations tent. It was like watching a shade of herself, twenty-five years earlier. But it was a bittersweet image. She had learned so much since then, been through so much. She remembered her optimism, her sense of mission, her passion to make the world, or at least a small part of it, safer, more secure. A quarter century later, she knew the best one could hope for was to beat back the forces of chaos to a stalemate.

#

 Crime scene manager Calum West, lugging a pre-packed SOCO kit, took his time ascending. A balding, genial middle-aged chap, quick to smile, West was at the top of his game, but lately his heart had taken to fluttering like a very small bird trying to escape his ribcage. He’d told no one. But Davies noticed he was pacing himself.

 “Ah, this is indeed my lucky day,” he crowed as he reached the ridge-top and caught his breath. “Human remains *and* the ever-lovely and talented Morgan Davies!”

 “You’re lightheaded from the climb.”

 “And you’re so gracious in accepting compliments. Where’s the body?”

 “Finger.”

 “One is ever hopeful.”

 They regarded each other for a moment and Davies finally smiled. She led West across the ridge to the quoit and filled him in en route. When they reached the site, West climbed into a white Tyvek jumpsuit he pulled from his kit bag and put paper booties over his shoes. Then, stepping only where others had, he entered the space beneath the giant capstone and examined the exposed finger. He took several digital record photos of it and the rest of the dim interior which he’d later download to the laptop in his car. Then, he slipped a clear plastic bag over the exposed bone and backed out.

 “Have you spoken to Mister?” he asked as he shed the coverall. Davies nodded. “Mister” was what they all called DCI Penwarren, at least in private. The chief inspector was admired by everyone in the force except those who resented his complete disinterest in the politics of the Devon and Cornwall Police. He was a detective and he liked being one. He hadn’t sought promotion; he’d been elevated to DCI for the simple reason that his accomplishments could no longer be ignored.

 “Major Crime Investigation Team meeting tomorrow morning. Camborne,” Davies said.

 “Well then, much as I may wish to tarry with you in this scenic spot, Morgan, I’d better line up the experts.”

 “Duncan’s already been notified.”

“Our best pathologist by far, but we’ll also need a forensic anthropologist and a forensic archaeologist. I’ll call them in from the Penzance BCU. Long night; even longer for those two PCs you’ve got up here, poor devils. Creepy place, you want my opinion.”

 “Mine, too; not fit for man nor beast.”