

CHAPTER ONE

His body, twisted and broken, was wedged between the rocks of the River Durt's flood defenses. His eyes were wide open, as was his mouth, as though frozen in mid-scream.

The man's shirt was of top quality, the unsightly tearing at the elbows due entirely to his arms having been severed there, not through any fault in the garment. The top button was fastened and the tie was silk, a trifle ragged now thanks to the nibbling aquatic life in the river. Placed near the body were the severed hands, shirt cuffs still neatly held at the wrists by silver cuff links. The forearms were missing. His shoes were black leather, and would have been shined to perfection had they not been dulled and scuffed by the water and the rocks. His socks were also black, one still pulled up to just under the knee, the other slipped down around the ankle.

From the upturned tail of his shirt to the top of his in-place sock, he was naked.

Detective Chief Inspector Emily Sanders stood less than six feet from the body, one foot in the gently lapping water at the edge of the river, the other on the flood defenses. The sun was laying low in the sky, pushing long shadows across the rocks. The light was already beginning to fade, and behind her she could hear a portable generator and spotlights being set up so that Scenes of Crime Officers could work into the night. But, despite the noise and the failing daylight, her focus remained on the body.

She felt poorly dressed in her raincoat, cream blouse, and black trousers. The man she studied had probably spent more on one suit than she made in a month, and was almost certainly younger than her forty-two years. But she had one advantage. She was alive.

A solitary raven stood on rocks at the far side of the scene. For a moment it locked stares with the detective before both turned their eyes back to the body.

"Your foot's getting wet, ma'am," said Detective Sergeant Simon Farmer, studiously avoiding the gently lapping water.

"It'll dry," said Emily. "Are ravens carrion eaters?"

"Well, I'm no expert," said Simon, with barely any hesitation. "But I always thought they ate worms and insects and stuff. My mum always put fruit out for them. They ate that too. Why?"

"No particular reason."

"So," said Simon. "You think it's the same killer?"

Emily nodded, stepping aside as SOCO, in their white coveralls, arrived to examine the area in detail.

"Third victim."

"That makes this officially a serial killer case."

Emily was distracted by the raven on the far side of the body taking flight. She watched it follow a sweeping arc in the sky, feeling, for a moment, that she was one with it. She could almost see herself on the ground below, looking upward. But then the gravity of her sergeant's statement pulled her back down to earth, and she nodded.

"I'm afraid so. Still happy you agreed to transfer onto my team?"

"Wouldn't miss it for the world, ma'am."

Emily smiled. She felt the addition of the detective sergeant to her team had made it complete. Her two detective constables were talented and hardworking, but she needed that extra person slipping into the gap between her and the DCs. Simon Farmer had been her personal choice. The whole team was her personal choice. It had been part of the agreement when she took on the role. Her department. Her people.

"Any idea why we've been called in on the third victim, ma'am?" Simon kept his voice low, to avoid being overheard.

"No more than you," said Emily, but it was a good question. The case files had been dropped on her desk, along with news of the new body. She had yet to hear the reason for the sudden transfer of an ongoing murder investigation from CID to her department. Simon had read the main points of the case aloud while she drove. It was enough to convince her that there was a connection between the three murders, but it still didn't explain why it was suddenly their responsibility.

"I heard rumors that one of the CID officers quit," whispered Simon. "And the other had gone crazy!"

"Just rumors, nothing more. Let's wait until we know the facts, shall we?"

"Perhaps you'll be told tomorrow, ma'am," said Simon, still quiet but no longer whispering. "When the DSI is back in."

"Perhaps," said Emily. "But for now I think we may as well leave SOCO to get on with their job. Tomorrow, we'll get stuck into this thing properly."

#

The raven had circled back over the water, watching the other creatures moving below. He did not know why, simply that he must.

He watched one of the creatures in particular. A female of the species, he believed. Again, he did not know why, simply that he must.

It was the same female he had watched standing over the dead one, the one he had first flown to see. Now he followed, staying up high where he would be no more than a black dot should anyone look up. He followed as the female moved away from the dead one, away from the water's edge. Then, the need to follow left him, and he was free to fly away.

He flew with assuredness, but had no idea why he flew in a particular direction. Simply that he must.

CHAPTER TWO

Windsor Gooding was one year older than his brother, Christian, and that put him in charge.

They stood at the entrance to one of the underpasses leading onto Bridgetown, a public housing estate built in the late 1950s, with apartment blocks and rusted playgrounds. They lived on Bridgetown, and ruled it through fear and intimidation.

Both with shaven heads, bent Roman noses, and square jaws, there was no mistaking that they were brothers. Even their muscles, pumped up by daily weightlifting and doses of steroids, seemed remarkably matched. They both wore Britain First T-shirts, jeans, and heavy boots.

Windsor, so named because of their parents' love of the royal family, watched with only mild interest as Christian, so named because of their parents' religious beliefs, turned away an old man who wanted to use the underpass. When the old man complained, Christian lunged at him menacingly, and the old man hurried away, as much as he was able, up towards the main pavements and busy roads.

Windsor glanced back over his shoulder, into the darkness of the underpass, and called out.

"Hurry up! I'm getting bored."

There was a shuffling in the underpass, a man moaning softly, and other, indistinct sounds.

Windsor sneered. He didn't enjoy listening to others getting off, but business was business.

Less than three minutes later, a middle-aged man in a smart business suit walked out of the underpass. He half nodded to Windsor, hurrying on when he got nothing but a cold stare in response.

Windsor watched him go. "Wanker," he said, feeling the man's money in his pocket, reminding himself how lucrative this part of their business was.

He turned as a young girl, sucking a mint and wiping at a stain on the lapel of her school uniform, followed the man out of the underpass. She was seventeen but looked younger, and was a sixth form student at the local high school. At school she was no longer required to wear a uniform, but the Goodings insisted she wear her old one when she worked for them.

"Told you sucking a mint afterwards would get rid of the taste," said Windsor.

"Most of it," mumbled the girl, but she knew better than to talk back too loudly to one of the Gooding brothers.

"When you get home, tell your mum it's okay for the next week or so. We'll leave her alone, thanks to your doing this little favor for us."

Windsor laughed as the girl ran off. He didn't have to pay the girls when all he had to do was promise not to extort money out of their family for a while afterwards. The loss was more than

balanced by the amount he charged the clients. They would pay a lot for a blowjob from a genuine schoolgirl. Thank God for middle-aged perverts.

CHAPTER THREE

The Canal Row Apartments, unapologetic of their modernity, squatted among the industrial past and present of Durton. The concrete and wood two story building, with a sloping roof to drain away rainwater and conspicuous solar panels glinting in what was left of the sun, lay parallel to the specially built Waterside Road, terminated at each end by the building's parking lots.

Emily turned her Land Rover Defender onto Durton Industrial Park, keeping left and following Commercial Road as it curved around the back of the factories and warehouses. She glanced incessantly at her speedometer, keeping the needle dead-on the thirty mile-an-hour limit. Traffic was light. The night shift had already begun at many of the factories, and most commuter traffic had long-since wound its way home.

Turning onto Waterside Road and heading for the left-hand parking lot, she tried to relax, to switch off the constant rattling of her brain. So much to think about. So much to do! She had always found it hard to disconnect at the end of the working day. Even before she joined the police, there were just too many thoughts fighting for a place in her head. And she could only truly concentrate on one at a time, the others temporarily silenced as she gave her full and intense attention to the one that had climbed to the top. A psychologist, way back when she was in high school, had described her attention to detail as *hyper-focus*. But knowing that didn't lessen the weight of thoughts, or the fact that, as soon as the one had been dealt with, the deafening clamor of all the rest returned.

She barely registered the fact that she had parked, climbed out of the car, and locked it.

On the far side of the apartments lay Durton Canal, which gave the block its name. This short stretch of waterway, branching off the much larger Trent & Mersey Canal, had been dug to serve Hilderton's Cotton Factory, before trains and articulated trucks stamped out the commercial canal barges. The factory closed down in the early part of the twentieth century, but its blackened brick skeleton still sat, broken and vandalized, across the other side of the canal from Canal Row Apartments.

Emily used her keycard to gain entrance to the apartment block, giving no thought at all to the history and architecture surrounding her. She was tired and focused on climbing the stairs to the second story. She needed to be in the safe familiarity of her own apartment, away from the noise and the people and the death.

The corridor was long and straight and well lit, giving clear views in front and behind as she walked, with an unhurried step, to her door. The same keycard she had used outside the building now gave access to her apartment, and it was with a sense of relief and release that she closed the door behind her and kicked off her shoes, deliberately ignoring the off-white tide mark on the right one. She hoped to ignore the serial killings too, but she knew herself better than that. The most she could hope for would be a short reprieve before the case notes, the images, and the on-scene memories began swirling around in her head, regardless of whatever else

she was doing. It was always the same when she was on a case. She wouldn't want it any other way.

Simon did not, in any way, feel resentful because he lived on the Coronation Gardens public housing estate, southwest of the town center and across the far side of the River Durt as it swept around the west side of the town. He had grown up in public housing, and when he wanted to find a place of his own, the council list was his first port of call. It had taken some years, but he had made it to the top eventually.

Jen would be waiting for him. Tonight was one of those they'd agreed would be a stayover night. Three times a week. The other nights, Jen stayed at home with her widowed mum. She didn't feel quite ready to leave her mum on her own just yet, she said. Simon suspected her mother did what she could to keep it that way, but he dared not say anything. He'd suggested it once, and Jen hadn't spoken to, or seen him, for almost two weeks before she finally calmed down, and he reluctantly apologized.

He also felt no resentment at using public transport to get to and from work. The force could not afford to provide vehicles for any but the top staff. Even his boss drove her own car.

The bus dropped him at the edge of Coronation Gardens, and he walked quickly down the footpath and into dark shadows. The council was saving money by turning off every other street-lamp. It made for deep pools of darkness on the path winding through the small, cramped houses.

It was called Coronation Gardens because it had been built in 1953, the same year Queen Elizabeth II was crowned. Perhaps back then it did, indeed, have gardens somewhere on its acreage. But if so, they had been built on since. Now, with the exception of a small children's rubber-surfaced play area and a few potted plants here and there, the estate was concrete. Dirty, spat on, urinated on, tagged, concrete. And yet he was not resentful, just a little nervous.

Half way down Elizabeth Road was his house, a semi-detached, two story, two bedroom building of rust colored brick. Jen, who had been watching for him out of the upstairs bay window, descended the stairs and opened the door before he reached it. She smiled broadly.

"Welcome home, Simon," she said, standing aside to let him pass. "Dinner's almost ready."

Simon smiled in return, and they exchanged a brief kiss.

As he closed the door and watched Jen walking, almost skipping, towards the kitchen, he wondered at the unusual display of domesticity. Jen, like himself, worked full time. Quill's Estate Agents paid her a decent salary and provided a company car, currently parked on the road outside his house. But her job was nine to five, only rarely running into overtime, whereas his erratic and subject-to-sudden-change work day meant that he could not say when he would be home until he was actually sitting on the bus. And yet, remarkably, Jen did not seem to mind. On the nights she stayed over, she would let herself into the house with her spare key and patiently wait for him to get home. But she was rarely as domesticated as she seemed this night, and for her to cook dinner was even more rare. He was almost disappointed. He enjoyed their take-out together. But more importantly, *why* was she cooking? He began to feel a little apprehensive about the coming evening.

Outside of town, some distance from both Emily and Simon, a man drove his dark blue van through an open farm gate and pulled to a dusty stop near the farmhouse. A few chickens in a nearby coop complained of the noisy disturbance, and further over, the pigs began to gather, knowing it would be feeding time soon.

The farm was typical of the area, if a little more neglected than most. There had been no rain for some time, and the wide pathway up to the house had dried out, the raised shoulders of the wheel ruts hard and difficult to drive over. The farmyard was also dry and rutted, and was edged by several brick stalls, the remains of long abandoned stables, a wooden and corrugated iron barn, a lean-to shelter roofed with more corrugated iron, and the farmhouse. The only animals were the chickens and pigs, although there were indications—rusted machinery in the barn—that it had once been a dairy farm. It was evident the place had fallen on hard times.

The driver exited the van and walked towards the back. He paused for a moment, looking into the sky, watching a black dot circling high above, before opening the rear doors and pulling out a body, wrapped in an off-white sheet and secured with strip after strip of duct tape. Shivers of movement beneath the sheet, and the almost inaudible, muffled cries for help and mercy, showed the trapped person to be alive, but the man seemed oblivious. Grimacing with the effort, he tugged and half lifted the body across the dry farmyard and into the farmhouse.

#

In the sky, a raven wheeled lazily, circling the farm buildings until it was certain the man was not about to show himself again any time soon. Then, it effortlessly turned and flew away over the fields, not at all sure why it had remained over the farm for such a long time when there was no food to be had.

CHAPTER FOUR

"I love the smell of a pathologist in the morning," said Emily, smiling as she entered the local state morgue.

Doctor Graham Turoff, State Registered Pathologist, was dressed in scrubs and preparing to start his second autopsy of the day, but he nevertheless smiled and responded.

"My wife might complain."

"Bring her along, the more the merrier," said Emily.

Some distance behind Emily came Simon, his slight reluctance to enter obvious in his slow step.

"I see you've brought a date," said Doctor Turoff.

"This is Sergeant Simon Farmer," said Emily. "He's a little new at this."

"As you can see, I'm a bit busy," said Doctor Turoff, standing before one of several stainless steel trolleys, each with a body on it covered by a white sheet. His morgue attendants were moving purposefully around the room, preparing equipment and bodies for autopsy. "And please tell your sergeant not to vomit in here. There are toilets through the doors."

"He'll be fine," said Emily, glancing back at Simon and noting the greyness of his face. "Hopefully."

"My guess is you're here about the murder victim by the river yesterday?" said Doctor Turoff, a slight impatience beginning to show on his face in place of the genial smile. "You'll be pleased to know I rushed it through and did the autopsy first thing this morning."

"Anything significant?"

"Beyond the obvious? Not much, I'm afraid. He died from shock brought on by severe blood loss. From that I'm sure you can surmise that the amputation of the arms was done while the victim was still alive. On first look, the weapon was most likely a heavy blade, like an axe or a chopping knife of some kind. There's no evidence of serrations. It certainly doesn't look like the arms were taken off with a saw."

"And the hands?"

"Almost certainly the same, or the same kind, of weapon."

"So he just took the forearms."

"I can see why you're a detective."

Emily ignored the sarcasm. They'd known each other a long time.

"Was he marked?"

“Upper right thigh. Permanent marker. It’s crude, but it could be a bird, or a plane.” He shrugged.
“Or a random collection of lines.”

“Just like the first two.”

“Exactly.”

“Anything else?”

Doctor Turoff shook his head. “Nothing out of the ordinary. No major damage to the internal organs. Stomach contents have been sent off for analysis, but it looked like he’d not eaten anything for a while. There’s evidence of sexual activity, anal, and the penis has faint bite marks.”

“Enough for identification?” said Emily, now ignoring her pale sergeant and focused completely on what Doctor Turoff was saying.

“Unlikely.”

Emily sighed. “Was the sex forced?”

“Well, it was rough, certainly. But it’s difficult to say at the moment whether it was forced or just...enthusiastic.”

“Drugs?”

“No needle tracks, no damage to the nasal area, and no undigested pills in the stomach. He seems clean, but the toxicology results will tell us for certain what’s in his blood and urine.”

“When they get back,” said Emily.

“Exactly.” Doctor Turoff looked over Emily’s shoulder to where Simon was a little unsteady on his feet. “I think, perhaps, you’d better get your colleague out of here, DCI Sanders, before he ruins our scrupulously cleaned floor.”

“Thank you for your time, Doctor,” said Emily, smiling again. “Send me the full report when it’s done.”

“Of course,” said Doctor Turoff, watching the policemen exit.

A morgue technician approached from behind. “The body is ready, Doctor.”

With a slight sigh, Doctor Turoff turned to the next job on his list.

#

“Just breathe,” said Emily, watching Simon intently as they stood by her car outside the city morgue.

Some color returned to Simon's face as he took her advice. He was embarrassed by his reaction inside the morgue. The sight of death had never bothered him unduly, but that place was different.

"It's the smell," he said, still breathing heavily. "Not the dead bodies lying around, but the smell of the place."

"I know," said Emily, trying to instill her voice with some sympathy, but struggling. It did not come naturally to her. "It's a unique blend of scooped out bodies, opened up digestive tracts, chemicals, and cleaning fluids. There's nothing else quite like it. But believe me, you do get used to it."

"Hard to believe just at the moment," said Simon, "but I believe you."

Emily looked closer, noting the returned color in his cheeks and the alertness back in his eyes. "You're looking better," she said. "Ready to get on with the day?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Simon, straightening up and exhibiting the formal professionalism he had momentarily lost in the morgue. "Have we learned anything new?"

Emily climbed into the driver's seat of her Land Rover, and waited while Simon walked around and opened the passenger door. "Nothing new," she said. "But a few things have been confirmed."

"What's our next move?" said Simon, settling in the passenger seat and fastening his seatbelt. "Let's start by taking a closer look at those first murders," said Emily, starting the car. "And maybe try and find out why they were dropped by the original team, and handed over to us."

#

The man had slept well. He had not dreamed, or at least he didn't remember any dreams. That was good. But what he really worried about were his *waking* dreams. That was when he would hear the voice, telling him what was needed.

It was always the same voice, distant, distorted and vaguely feminine, or effeminate. The words were always clear in his mind though, sharp and easily understood. From that he had known what to do. And he knew what to do this morning. The drawer in the old, worm-eaten chest of drawers in the basement was full of carving knives, meat cleavers, and any other implement he might want. And the person who would provide what was needed was securely strapped to the equally old kitchen table, also in the basement. Everything was ready to go. As was he. Right after some breakfast.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jarvis Wickstrom was not long out of uniform, still finding his feet as a detective constable. It felt odd, introducing himself as a policeman when he was dressed in his own suit. He was still prone to forget to show his warrant card, unless prompted by disbelief on behalf of the member of the public, faced with a young, slightly overweight man dressed in a cheap, off-the-peg suit, and with the rosy blush of embarrassment on his clean-shaven cheeks. He blushed a lot. He had been teased about it in school. Perhaps as he grew older, more world-weary, more experienced in the job, he would lose the slight embarrassment he felt whenever announcing himself. However, it was taking longer than he was comfortable with.

In contrast, Meggan Parry, who had been in his class during training and had progressed to detective constable alongside him, showed no signs of embarrassment or awkwardness when displaying her warrant card. Although a year younger than him, she exuded confidence, and with a wide and pleasant smile, seemed to have no difficulty in persuading members of the public of her official position. He didn't envy her, but he did admire her. And he liked her. While they had not been close friends during training, they had spoken often and, he believed, had some mutual respect for each other's abilities. When teamed together in an exercise they worked well, and he felt this was one of the reasons they had been selected by Emily Sanders to be part of the Department Of Special Investigations.

#

"Good morning, people!"

Emily arrived at the office in a good mood, thanks to her brief meeting with Doctor Turoff.

Simon, following, gave a brief smile and hurried to his desk.

"Are you okay, Sergeant?" said Meggan, sitting at the desk opposite Simon. "You look a little pale."

"I'm fine, thanks."

"Simon has had a bit of a trying morning at the morgue," said Emily, not seeing any reason to be secretive about it. "So be a little gentle with him until it passes, will you? If not, one of you will be cleaning up after him."

Both Meggan and Jarvis smiled, but Simon did not seem inclined to follow suit. Some color had returned to his cheeks, however. A pale glow of pink.

"Now," said Emily. "Jarvis, Meggan, I want you two to go through the list of all the people interviewed during the investigation into the first two murders. Contact them. Make sure they're still around, and then we'll share out some informal chats to get started with."

"Yes, ma'am," said the two DCs in chorus.

"Simon, you start getting the board set up. All three murders. It might not be officially acknowledged yet, but I've no doubt in my own mind that they're connected."

“Yes, ma'am,” said Simon, immediately standing and crossing to the large white board that almost filled the far wall of the office.

Emily hesitated for a moment, watching her team at work. Jarvis and Meggan were already on the phones, taking alternate names from the list of interviewees in the original notes. Simon was sorting through the mass of paperwork on the victims, preparing to start building the board, which just might show them a pattern they would otherwise miss. And she was sure there *was* a pattern.

The first victim’s hands had been removed, and never found. With the second victim, it was the feet. This third time, the forearms. All cuts were made by the same, or a similar, weapon, and all victims had a crude drawing somewhere on their bodies. She believed it was a poor attempt at a bird, but DI Rogers, from CID, had decided it was nothing more than a few abstract lines. She knew either interpretation could be right, or both could be incredibly wrong.

Turning away from her team, she entered her own, small office. It was really nothing more than an alcove in the main room, with a prefab wall for some privacy, the top half glass, the lower MDF. There was also a door, but so far it had never been closed. Emily was uncomfortable with secrets, and knew she was not good at keeping them in confidence. She didn’t mean to tell, but she seemed incapable of stopping herself, or of seeing, at the time, that she was doing anything wrong. The social niceties of conversation were often a complete mystery to her. She said what she thought, regardless of the situation. It was something she was working on changing, but the concentration required was hard. In the office she preferred to keep the door open, in the hope that it would, in turn, lead to an openness within her small team. It also saved her from feeling claustrophobic, trapped in the small alcove-office.

The phone on her desk rang. She grabbed it before it reached the third ring.

“DCI Sanders,” she said, and then fell silent, listening. After a few seconds she said, “Yes, sir,” and returned the phone to its base.

Detective Superintendent Collins McVeigh had requested her presence in his office as soon as possible. Everyone who knew DSI McVeigh knew that meant immediately, if not sooner.

CHAPTER SIX

Christian Gooding watched as his brother sold the bags of H, meth, and Special-K.

The last one always amused and confused Christian. Why anyone would want to take ketamine was beyond him. It was for animals, for fuck's sake! So many available drugs, and they choose the animal one. But people were willing to pay for it, and that meant he and his brother were willing to sell it. Plus, it was one of the easier drugs to get hold of. There were enough vets and stables in the area that stealing, or even buying, stock was simple. Most of all, it amused him because the nickname was the same as his morning cereal.

He was in his usual role, on watch for police and discouraging people who might want to walk by. The people were generally more of a problem than the police. You didn't see many police on the Bridgetown estate. It wasn't safe for them.

The streets were quiet. People who lived on the estate knew to avoid the brothers whenever they were busy, and there weren't many visitors to the area. The only thing that unnerved Christian was the black bird sitting on a nearby wall, staring at him. He couldn't say why it bothered him. It was just a bird. But the way it sat, so still, just staring. And it was big, too.

He had made several half-hearted attempts to shoo it away, but it hadn't moved. As Windsor closed down dealing for the day, Christian grabbed up a large stone from the ground and threw it at the bird. The stone clattered against the wall, but the bird had already gone, darting up into the overcast sky.

"What the fuck are you doing?" snapped Windsor, turning sharply towards his brother.

"It was a bird," said Christian, more defensively than he would have liked. It sounded weak. "I didn't like it."

"You didn't like it? A bird?" Windsor shook his head as the last of his customers walked off, deeper into the estate. "Don't go losing it on me, brother. We've got this estate tied up tight. I don't want anyone thinking they see some weakness in us."

"It just pissed me off, is all," said Christian. "Nothing weak in that."

High above, the raven circled, the mind within a mind watching.

CHAPTER SEVEN

He had never understood the need for the exact placement of the body. He found it strange that the voice would tell him where the victim's remains should be disposed of. What would happen if he dumped the body elsewhere? Would the voice be angry? Could the voice hurt him in any way? Would it send the dark ones for him? He didn't know, and he was too afraid to find out. So he followed the voice's instructions, just as he followed them for the required mutilation of the victim. But he did not consider himself a slave to the voice. He had options. He had choices.

He chose the gender of the victim, most often on a whim. He chose to have sex with them, male or female. He chose to perform the mutilations while they were still alive. And he chose to mark them with the physical medium of the voice. Each time, he drew it a little stronger, a little clearer.

This new victim's requested body parts had been carefully wrapped in bubble-wrap and plastic bin-liners, and deposited, as instructed, in a skip behind the carpet warehouse on the industrial estate. The rest of the body, also in bin-liners, rolled about in the back of his van as he headed south, out of town and into the countryside. Some small distance ahead was a field, a particular field, and he was to deposit the remains in a ditch on the east side.

He didn't understand why. He didn't need to. He obeyed the voice through compulsion, and because of the pleasure he got from the sex and the death that followed. The voice gave a direction, a purpose, however unknown, to his darkest fantasies. His biggest fear was not discovery or his own death, but that the voice would disappear as suddenly as it had arrived. Without the voice he had nothing, like an addict deprived of his cigarettes, his alcohol, his drugs. Without the voice, he would return to being a nobody, who dreamed of murder but never had the guts to act on it. The voice had, literally, made his dreams come true.

With the calm conviction that he was doing what he had always been meant to do, he drove within the speed limit, not even glancing at a police car as it passed by on the other side of the road, heading into town. His was just another vehicle in the scattered line of traffic. Anonymous. Uninteresting. The body in the back would not be discovered until it had been placed where it was meant to be discovered. It would always be so. The voice was infallible.