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1

Scene Twenty-seven

Usually, I enjoy visiting film sets. I love the excitement of seeing so many professional people working together – at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds – to create a vision that will have begun perhaps nine or ten months ago inside my head. I love being part of it all.

But this time it was different. I'd overslept and left home in a hurry. I couldn't find my phone. I had the beginnings of a headache. Even as I got out of the car on that damp October morning, I knew that I'd made a mistake and that all in all I would have been better off staying in bed.

It was a big day. We were shooting one of the opening scenes in the seventh series of *Foyle's War* – the first appearance of Sam Stewart, Foyle's driver. Played by Honeysuckle Weeks, she had become a stalwart of the series and she was one of my favourite actors. When I wrote lines for her, I could always hear her saying them. The new season would
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find her married, out of the police force, working now for a

nuclear scientist. I had decided to give her a big entrance and I wanted to be there to show my support.

This is what I had written.

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27. EXT. LONDON STREET (1947) DAY.

SAM gets off a bus, carrying shopping. She has
just had bad news and she pauses for a moment,
thinking of the implications. She is surprised
to see ADAM waiting for her.

                SAM
        Adam! What are you doing here?

                ADAM
        Waiting for you.

They kiss.

                ADAM (CONT'D)
        Let me take that.

He takes her shopping and together they begin
to walk home.
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On paper, it may not look like much but I had known all along that it would be a major headache. My wife, Jill Green, was the producer and those two words – LONDON

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STREET – would have been enough to make her groan. Shooting in London is always a horrible business, prohibitively expensive and fraught with difficulties. It often seems that the entire city is deliberately doing everything in its power to stop the cameras turning. Planes will fly overhead. Pneumatic drills and car alarms will burst into angry life. Police cars and ambulances will race past with their sirens blaring. No matter how many signs you've put up warning people you're going to be there, someone will have forgotten to move their car or, worse still, will have left it there on purpose in the hope of being paid. There's a natural assumption that TV and film producers have deep pockets but sadly this is far from true. Tom Cruise may be able to shut down Blackfriars Bridge or half of Piccadilly without a second thought, but that's not the case for most British television where even a short scene like the one I'd written can be almost impossible to achieve.

Leaving the car, I found myself entering a time warp. This was 1947. The production had managed to get hold of two streets of Victorian houses and had worked hard to turn them into a perfect reproduction of post-war London. Aerials and satellite dishes had been covered with ivy or plastic roof tiles. Modern doors and windows had disappeared behind frames that would have been measured and constructed weeks before. Street signs and lamp posts had been camouflaged and yellow lines covered with sackloads of the powder known as Fuller's earth. We had brought in our own props: a bright red telephone box, a bus stop and enough debris to simulate

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the sort of bomb damage that would have been familiar to Londoners years after the war. Ignore the people in Puffa jackets, the lights, the dollies and the endlessly snaking cables and it was indistinguishable from the real thing.

There was a whole crowd of people standing around me, waiting patiently for filming to begin. Along with the crew there were about thirty background artists all in costume with period haircuts. I examined the action vehicles, which were being manoeuvred into position by the second assistant director. They included an Austin Princess, a Morgan 4-4, a horse and cart and, the hero of the scene, an AEC Regent II double-decker bus from which Sam Stewart would emerge. Honeysuckle was standing with her screen husband across the road and, seeing me, she raised a hand. But she didn't smile. That was when I knew things weren't going well.

I looked for the camera and saw Jill deep in conversation with the director, Stuart Orme, and the rest of the camera crew. None of them were looking very happy either. I was already feeling guilty. The script that I had written for this episode, 'The Eternity Ring', had opened in New Mexico at a test for the nuclear bomb. (Stuart had managed to shoot it on a beach at the crack of dawn, stealing the scene in the two hours before the tide came in.) From there it had moved to the Russian embassy in London, the Liverpool docks and then to Whitehall and the headquarters of MI6. It had been a huge amount to ask and Scene 27 might have been one step too far. Sam could have walked home. She could have just turned up at her front door.

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Stuart saw me and came over. He was only one year older than me, although with his white hair and white beard I found him slightly intimidating. But we had already worked together on one episode and I was glad he had come back for a second. 'We can't shoot the scene,' he said.

'What's wrong?' I asked, fighting an irrational worry that, whatever had happened, it would turn out to be my fault.

'A lot of things. We had to move two cars. We've had issues with the weather.' It had only just stopped raining. 'The police wouldn't allow us to start shooting before ten o'clock anyway. And the bus has broken down.'

I looked round. The AEC Regent II was being towed out of shot. Another bus had arrived to replace it. 'That's a Routemaster,' I said.

'I know. I know.' Stuart looked harassed. We both knew that the first Routemaster hadn't appeared on London roads until the mid-fifties. 'But that's what the agency sent round,' he went on. 'Don't worry, we can CGI it in post-production.'

Computer-generated imagery. It was very expensive but at times it could be our greatest benefactor. It gave us views of a bombed-out London. It allowed us to drive past St Paul's when we were nowhere near.

'What else?'

'Look, I've only got ninety minutes to shoot the scene. We have to be out of here by twelve and right now there are four set-ups. I can't do it. So if it's all right with you, I want to drop the dialogue. We'll just film Sam getting off

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the bus and we'll pick her up meeting Adam when she gets home.'

In a way, I was quite flattered. As I've mentioned before, the writer is the one person on a set who has nothing to do and it's one of the reasons why I usually stay away. I have a bad habit of always being in the wrong place. If a mobile goes off during filming, it will almost certainly turn out to be mine. But here was the director actually asking for my help and I saw at once that what he was suggesting wouldn't make any material difference to the episode.

'That's fine,' I said.

'Good. I hoped you wouldn't mind.' He turned and walked away, leaving me with the realisation that he had actually made the decision long before I arrived.

Even without the dialogue, though, it was going to be a close-run thing. Stuart was going to have one rehearsal and then try for the take but it was still a complicated set-up. A twenty-metre track had been built, allowing the camera to glide along the first street as the bus came rumbling towards it at right angles down a second. The bus would turn the corner and come to a halt. The camera would continue its journey, reaching the stop just as two or three passengers got out, followed by Sam. At the same time, other vehicles, including the horse and cart, would pass in both directions. Children would play on the pavements. Various pedestrians would walk past: a woman pushing a pram, a couple of policemen, a man with a bicycle and so on. It would involve

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very precise timing if it was all going to be captured in a single shot.

'Positions, everyone, please!'

The actor playing Sam's husband was sent back to his trailer, none too happy. He would have been up since the crack of dawn. The driver of the Routemaster was given his briefing. The background artists took their places. I went over and stood behind the camera, making sure I was out of the way. The first assistant director glanced at Stuart, who nodded.

'Action!'

The rehearsal was disastrous.

The bus arrived too soon and the camera too late. Sam got lost in the crowd. A cloud chose that moment to block the sun. The horse refused to move. I saw Stuart exchange a few words with his director of photography, then briskly shake his head. They weren't ready to film. They would need a second rehearsal after all.

It was already ten past eleven. That's the thing about film sets. There are great stretches of time when nobody seems to be doing anything, followed by brief bursts of highly concentrated activity when the actual filming takes place. But the clock is always ticking. Speaking personally, I find the stress almost unbearable. When Stuart said he had to be done by twelve o'clock, he meant twelve o'clock on the dot. There were two real policemen holding up the traffic at the far corner. They would want to leave. The owners of the houses had given us permission to shoot

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for an exact amount of time. The locations manager was there, looking worried. I was already wishing I hadn't come.

The AD picked up his megaphone and barked out fresh orders. 'First positions!' Slowly, stubbornly, the passengers climbed back on board and the Routemaster reversed. The children were led to their positions. The horse was given a lump of sugar. Fortunately, the second rehearsal went a little better. The bus and the camera met at the corner exactly as planned. Sam stepped down and walked away. The horse set off exactly on cue although it did rather spoil things by veering off the road and mounting the pavement. Fortunately, nobody was hurt. Stuart and the cameraman muttered a few words, then decided they were ready. Jill was looking at her watch. It was now eleven thirty-five.

Because this was a big scene with so much production value involved, we had our own stills photographer there along with a couple of journalists who were planning to interview Honeysuckle and me. ITV had sent down two senior executives who were anxiously watching over the entire operation along with health and safety people and paramedics from the St John Ambulance. In addition, there was the usual army of sparks, gaffers, first, second and third assistant directors, make-up artists, prop masters … a whole crew of them standing there, waiting to see a sequence that we now had less than thirty minutes to shoot.

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There were final checks, glitches, a silence that seemed to stretch interminably. My palms were sweating. But at last I heard the familiar litany that comes with every shot.

'Sound?'

'Sound rolling.'

'Camera?'

'Camera rolling. Speed …'

'Scene twenty-seven. Take one.'

The snap of the clapperboard.

'Action!'

The camera began to glide towards us. The bus rattled forward. The children played. Obediently, with a spring in its step, the horse set off, pulling the cart.

And then, out of nowhere, a vehicle appeared, a modern, twenty-first-century taxi. It wasn't even a black cab, which might have been adjusted, along with the bus, using CGI. It had been painted white and yellow with an advertisement for some new app in bright red and the legend 'GET £5 OFF YOUR NEXT RIDE' across the front and back doors. Just to add to the merriment, the window was rolled down and the driver was playing Justin Timberlake at full blast on the radio. It stopped, right in the middle of the shot.

'Cut!'

Stuart Orme was usually a pleasant, easy-going man. But his face was thunderous as he looked up from his monitor to see what had happened. It was impossible, of course. The police should have blocked off the traffic. We had our own

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people at each end of the street, keeping back pedestrians. There was no way any vehicle could have come through.

Already, I was feeling sick inside. I had a bad feeling about what was about to happen.

And I was right.

The door of the taxi opened and a man got out. He seemed completely unconcerned by the fact that he was surrounded by a large crowd of people, many of them in period dress. He had a sort of cheerful self-confidence that was actually quite cold-blooded, utterly focused on his own needs at the expense of everyone else's. He was not tall or well built but he gave the impression that, by whatever means necessary, he would never lose a fight. His hair, somewhere between brown and grey, was cut very short, particularly around the ears. His eyes, a darker brown, gazed innocently out of a pale, slightly unhealthy face. This was not someone who spent a lot of time in the sun. He was dressed in a dark suit, a white shirt and a narrow tie, clothes that might have been deliberately chosen to say nothing about him. His shoes were brightly polished. As he moved forward, he was already searching for me and I had to ask myself – how had he even known I was here?

Before I could duck down behind the monitor, he found me.

'Tony!' he called out, amicably – and loudly enough for everyone on the set to hear.

Stuart turned to me, quite furious. 'Do you know this man?' he asked.

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'Yes,' I admitted. 'His name is Daniel Hawthorne. He's a detective.'

The camera crew were staring at me. The two women from ITV were muttering to each other in disbelief. Jill went over to them, trying to explain. Everyone in the street had frozen in their positions as if they had suddenly turned into one of those 'Historical London' postcards. Even the horse looked annoyed.

They did manage to do a second take before time ran out and at the end of the day they had just about enough footage to cut a sequence together. If you ever watch the scene, you can see the telephone box, the horse and cart, the two policemen (in the far distance) and Sam walking away. Unfortunately, the camera missed most of the background artists, including the woman with the pram and the man with the bicycle. Sam is carrying a shopping bag, but you don't see that either.

And in the end we ran out of money and when we got to post-production there was nothing we could do about that bloody bus.

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2
A Murder in Hampstead

I left Hawthorne in my office – actually a Winnebago trailer parked halfway up a side street – while I went to get us both coffees from the catering truck. When I returned, he was sitting at the desk, leafing through the latest draft of 'The Eternity Ring', which rather annoyed me because I certainly hadn't invited him to read my work. At least he wasn't smoking. These days, I hardly know anyone who smokes but Hawthorne was still getting through about a packet a day, which was why we usually met outside coffee shops, sitting in the street.

'I wasn't expecting you,' I said, as I climbed back inside.

'You don't seem too pleased.'

'Well, as a matter of fact, I'm quite busy … although you probably didn't notice that when you drove straight into the middle of the set.'

'I wanted to see you.' He waited until I had sat down opposite him. 'How's the book going?'

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'I've finished it.'

'I still don't like the title.'

'I'm still not giving you any choice.'

'All right! All right!' He looked up at me as if I had somehow, and for no good reason, offended him. He had mud-brown eyes but it was remarkable how they still managed to appear so clear, so completely innocent. 'I can see you're in a bad mood today, but you know it's not my fault you overslept.'

'Who told you I'd overslept?' I asked, falling into the obvious trap.

'And you still haven't found your phone.'

'Hawthorne . . .!'

'You didn't lose it in the street,' he went on. 'I think you'll find it's somewhere in your flat. And I'll give you a word of advice. If Michael Kitchen doesn't like your script, maybe you should think about hiring another actor. Don't take it out on me!'

I stared at him, playing back what he had just said and wondering what evidence he could possibly have for any of it. Michael Kitchen was the star of *Foyle's War* and although it was true we'd had a lot of discussion about the new episode, I hadn't mentioned it to anyone apart from Jill, who knew anyway. And I certainly hadn't brought up my sleeping patterns or the fact that I had been unable to find my phone when I got up that morning.

'What are you doing here, Hawthorne?' I demanded. I had never once called him by his first name, not from the

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day I had met him. I'm not sure anybody did. 'What do you want?'

'There's been another murder,' he said. He stretched out the last word in that odd accent of his. *Another murrrr-der*. It was almost as if he was relishing it.

'And?'

He blinked at me. Wasn't it obvious? 'I thought you'd want to write about it.'

If you've read *The Word is Murder*, you'll know that Detective Inspector Daniel Hawthorne was first introduced to me as a consultant on a television series I was writing: *Injustice*. He had once worked for Scotland Yard but that had come to an end following an incident in which a suspect, a man dealing in child pornography, had taken a tumble down a flight of concrete stairs. Hawthorne had been standing right behind him at the time. As a result, he had been fired and since then had been forced to earn a living on his own. He could have gone into security like many ex-detectives but instead he'd turned his talents to helping film and television companies producing dramas about crime and that was how we met. But, as I soon discovered, it turned out that the force hadn't quite finished with him after all.

He was called in when the police got what they called a 'sticker' – that is, a case which presented obvious difficulties from the start. Most murderers are brutal and unthinking. A husband and wife have an argument. Perhaps they've been drinking too much. One of them

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picks up a hammer and – bang – that's it. With fingerprints, blood splatter and all the other forensic evidence, the whole thing will be solved within twenty-four hours. And these days, with so much CCTV, it's hard even to escape a crime scene without leaving a cheerful snapshot of yourself behind.

Much rarer are the premeditated murders, where the perpetrators actually put a bit of thought into their crimes, and curiously, perhaps because they rely so heavily on technology, modern detectives find these much harder to solve. I remember a clue I put into an episode of *Agatha Christie's Poirot* when I was writing it for ITV. A woman's glove embroidered with the letter H is left at the crime scene. Modern detectives would be able to tell you where and when it was made, what fabric was used, what size it was and everything it had touched in the last few weeks. But they might not recognise that the H was actually the Russian letter for N and that it had been deliberately dropped to frame somebody else. For these esoteric insights, they needed someone like Hawthorne.

The trouble was, they didn't pay him a great deal and after we had finished *Injustice* he got in touch with me, asking me if I would be interested in writing a book about him. It was a straightforward commercial proposition. My name would go on the cover but we would share the proceeds fifty-fifty. I knew from the start that it was a bad idea. I make up stories; I prefer not to follow them around town. More to the point, I like to be in control of my books. I had no

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wish to turn myself into a character, and a secondary one at that: the perennial sidekick.

But somehow he persuaded me and even though, quite literally, it had almost killed me, the first book was now finished, although it had yet to be published. There was a further issue. My new publisher – Selina Walker at Random House – had insisted on a three-book contract and, urged on by my agent, I had agreed. I think it's the same for every writer, no matter how many books they have sold. A three-book contract represents stability. It means that you can plan your time, knowing exactly what you're going to be doing. But it also means you're committed to writing them. No rest for the insecure.

Hawthorne knew this, of course, so all through the summer I had been waiting for the telephone to ring, at the same time hoping that it wouldn't. Hawthorne was undoubtedly brilliant. He had solved the first mystery in a way that made it seem child's play even though I had missed every one of the clues that had been presented to me. But on a personal level I found him extremely trying. He was dark and solitary, refusing to tell me anything about himself even though I was supposed to be his biographer. I found some of his attitudes disconcerting to say the least. He swore all the time, he smoked and he called me 'Tony'. If I had chosen to pluck a hero from real life, it certainly wouldn't have been him.

And here he was, stalking me again just weeks after I had finished writing *The Word is Murder*. I hadn't shown

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it to him yet and he didn't know what I'd written about him. I had decided to keep it that way for as long as possible.

'So who's been murdered?' I asked.

'His name is Richard Pryce.' Hawthorne stopped as if he expected me to know who he was talking about. I didn't. 'He's a lawyer,' he went on. 'A divorce lawyer. He's been in the papers quite a bit. A lot of his clients have been well known. Celebrities … that sort of thing.'

As he spoke, I realised that I did know the name after all. There had been something about him on the radio as I was being driven to the set but, half asleep, I hadn't really listened. Richard Pryce lived in Hampstead, which is somewhere I often go when I'm walking the dog. According to the report, he'd been attacked in his own home, hit with a wine bottle. And there was something else. He'd had a nickname. Was it 'Steel Magnolia'? No. That was Fiona Shackleton, who had famously represented Sir Paul McCartney in his acrimonious split from Heather Mills. Pryce was known as 'the Blunt Razor'. I had no idea why.

'Who killed him?' I asked.

Hawthorne looked at me sadly. 'If I knew that, mate, I wouldn't be here.'

He was right about one thing. I was overtired. 'The police want you to look into it?' I asked.

'That's right. I got the call this morning. And immediately I thought of you.'

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'That's very kind of you. But what makes it so special?'

To answer my question, Hawthorne pulled a stack of photographs out of his inside jacket pocket. I steeled myself. I've often seen crime-scene images as part of my research and I can never quite get over how shockingly violent they are. It's the artlessness of them, the fact that everything is presented without any sensitivity. There's something about the lack of colour too. Blood looks even more horrible when it's dark black. The dead bodies you see on a television screen are just actors lying on their side. They have almost nothing in common with real corpses.

The first picture was all right, though. It was a posed, portrait shot of Richard Pryce taken while he was still alive and showed a handsome, rather debonair man with an aquiline nose and long, grey hair sweeping back over a high forehead. He was wearing a jersey and half smiling as if he was pleased with himself, and certainly had no inkling that he was about to find himself the subject of a murder investigation. His left hand was folded over his right arm and I noticed a gold band on his fourth finger. So, he was married.

In the next shots, he was dead. This time his hands were stretched out over his head as he lay on a bare wooden floor, contorted in a way that only a corpse can be. He was surrounded by fragments of glass and a large quantity of liquid that looked too thin to be blood and which would turn out to be blood mixed with wine. The photographs had been taken from the left and from the right and from above, leaving nothing to the imagination. I moved on to the other

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images: jagged wounds around his neck and throat, staring eyes, claw-like fingers. Death close up. I wondered how Hawthorne had got them so quickly but guessed that he had been sent them electronically and had printed them at home.

'Richard Pryce was struck with a full wine bottle on the forehead and frontal area of the skull,' Hawthorne explained. It was interesting how quickly he slipped into officialese. 'Struck' instead of 'hit', for example. And that 'frontal area', which could have come straight out of a weather forecaster's lexicon. 'There are severe contusions and a spiderweb fracture of the frontal bone, but that wasn't what killed him. The bottle smashed, which means that some of the energy was dispersed. Pryce fell to the ground and the killer was left holding the jagged glass neck. He used it as a knife, stabbing at the throat.' He pointed at one of the close-ups. 'Here and here. The second blow penetrated the subclavian vein and continued into the pleural cavity.'

'He bled to death,' I said.

'No.' Hawthorne shook his head. 'He probably didn't have time. My guess is he suffered an air embolism in the heart and that would have finished him.'

There was no pity in his voice. He was just stating the facts.

I picked up my coffee meaning to take a sip but it was the same colour as the blood in the picture and I put it down again. 'He was a rich man living in an expensive house. Anyone could have broken in,' I said. 'I don't see what makes this so special.'

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'Well, quite a few things, actually,' Hawthorne replied cheerfully. 'Pryce had been working on a big case ... a £10 million settlement. Not that the lady in question got very much of it. Akira Anno. Ring any bells?'

For reasons that will become apparent further down the line, I've had to change her name, but I knew her well enough. She was a writer of literary fiction and poetry, a regular speaker at all the main festivals. She had been twice shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and had actually won the Costa Book Award, the T. S. Eliot Prize, the Women's Prize for Fiction and, most recently, a PEN/Nabokov Award for achievement in international literature, citing 'her unique voice and the delicacy of her prose'. She wrote – mainly on feminist issues and sexual politics – for the *Sunday Times* and other broadsheets. She was often on the radio. I had heard her on *Moral Maze* and *Loose Ends*.

'She poured a glass of wine over Pryce's head,' I said. That story had been all over social media and I remembered it well.

'She did more than that, mate. She threatened to hit him with the bottle. It was in the middle of a crowded restaurant. Lots of people heard her.'

'Then she killed him!'

Hawthorne shrugged and I knew what he meant. In real life, it would have been obvious. But in the world that Hawthorne inhabited – and which he wanted me to share – an admission of guilt might well mean the exact opposite.

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'Does she have an alibi?' I asked.

'She's not at home at the moment. No one's quite sure where she is.' Hawthorne took out a cigarette and rolled it between his fingers before lighting it. I slid my polystyrene cup towards him. It was still half full of coffee and he could use it as an ashtray.

'So you've got a suspect,' I said. 'What else is there?'

'I'm trying to tell you! His house was being redecorated and there were a whole lot of paint pots in the hall. Of course, he didn't go in for ordinary stuff like Dulux or anything like that. He had to have those poncey colours from Farrow & Ball. Eighty quid a tin with names like Vert De Terre, Ivy and Arsenic.' He spat out the names with evident distaste.

'You made up the Arsenic,' I said.

'No. I made up the Ivy. The other two are on their list. The paint he had chosen was actually called Green Smoke. And here's the thing, Tony. After the killer had bludgeoned Mr Pryce and left him bleeding on his posh American oak floor, he picked up a brush and painted a message on the wall: a three-digit number.'

'What three digits?'

He slid another photograph forward and I saw it for myself.

'One eight two,' Hawthorne said.

'I don't suppose you have any idea what that means?' I asked.

'It could mean lots of things. There's a 182 bus that runs in north London, although I don't suppose Mr Pryce was the sort who had much time for public transport. It's the

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name of a restaurant in Wembley. It's an abbreviation used in texting. It's a type of four-seater aircraft—'

'All right,' I stopped him. 'Are you sure it was left by the killer?'

'Well, it might have been the decorators but I doubt it.'

'What else?'

Hawthorne stopped with the cigarette halfway to his mouth. His dark eyes challenged me. 'Isn't that enough?'

'I don't know,' I said.

That was true. I was already looking at the murder of Richard Pryce from a writer's perspective and the awful truth was that, at this stage anyway, I wasn't sure I cared who had killed him. Akira Anno was obviously the prime suspect – and that was interesting because although I hadn't ever managed to read any of her books, I was aware of her name. What mattered more, though, was this. If I was going to write a second book about Hawthorne, it would need to run to at least eighty thousand words and I was already wondering if there would be enough material. Akira had threatened him with a bottle. He had been killed with a bottle. She did it. End of story.

It also troubled me that it was a divorce lawyer who had been killed. I've got nothing against lawyers but at the same time I've always done my best to avoid them. I don't understand the law. I've never been able to work out how a simple matter – a trademark registration, for example – can end up eating months out of my life and thousands of pounds. Even making my will was a traumatic experience and there was

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considerably less to leave to my children once the lawyers had finished with me. I had enjoyed writing about Diana Cowper, the blameless mother of a famous actor, but what sort of inspiration would I get from Richard Pryce, a man who made his living out of other people's misery?

'There is one other thing,' Hawthorne muttered. He had been watching me closely as if he could see into my thoughts – which, as he had already demonstrated, he actually could.

'What's that?'

'The bottle of wine. It was a 1982 Château Lafite Rothschild, Pauillac.' Hawthorne spoke the foreign words as if each one was an insult. 'Do you know anything about wine?'

'No.'

'Me neither. But I'm told this one would have cost at least two thousand quid.'

'So Richard Pryce had expensive tastes.'

Hawthorne shook his head. 'No. He was a teetotaller. He never drank alcohol at all.'

I thought for a moment. A very public threat from a well-known feminist writer. A mysterious message in green paint. An incredibly expensive bottle of wine. I could just about see all that on the inside flap. And yet …

'I don't know,' I said. 'I am quite busy at the moment.'

His face fell. 'What's the matter with you, mate? I thought you'd be jumping at this one.'

'Can you give me time to think about it?'

'I'm heading over there now.'

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I let that hang in the air for a moment.

'I was just wondering,' I muttered, almost to myself. 'All that stuff you just said. About Michael Kitchen – and my phone. How did you know?'

He saw which way I was going. 'That was nothing.'

'I'm just interested.' I paused. 'If there's going to be another book …'

'All right, mate. But it couldn't be simpler.' I wasn't moving and he knew it. 'You got dressed in a hurry. The second button of your shirt is tucked into the third buttonhole, which is sort of classic, really. When you shaved this morning, you left a bit of hair under your nose. I can see it right there, next to your nostril, and it doesn't look very nice, to be honest with you. You've also got a smudge of toothpaste on your sleeve, meaning you got dressed *before* you went into the bathroom. So you woke up, jumped out of bed and got dressed straight away, which sounds to me like your alarm didn't go off.'

'I don't have an alarm.'

'But you've got an iPhone and you might have set it if you had an important meeting – like a set visit – but for some reason you didn't use it.'

'It doesn't mean the phone is lost.'

'Well, I rang you twice to tell you I was coming today but there was no answer. Also, if you had your phone, your driver would have been able to ring you to say he was on his way or he was waiting outside and you wouldn't have been in such a panic. Nobody else answered it, by the way,
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although it didn't go straight to voice message so that means

it's still turned on. The chances are it's on silent and you'll find it somewhere at home.'

Hawthorne hadn't been on the set when I arrived. He couldn't possibly have known how I'd got there. 'What makes you think I had a driver?' I demanded. 'I could have just taken the Tube.'

'You're a big-shot writer on *Foyle's War*. Of course they'd send someone. Anyway, it was pissing down this morning until just an hour ago, but you're bone dry. Look at your shoes! You haven't walked anywhere today.'

'And what about Michael Kitchen? Have you been talking to him?'

'I didn't need to.' He tapped his fingers on the script, which he had closed when I came in. 'The pink pages are the latest revisions, aren't they? I just had a quick glance through and every single one of them relates to scenes that he happens to appear in. It looks like he's the only one who's not happy with your work.'

'He's perfectly happy,' I growled. 'I'm just fine-tuning.'

Hawthorne glanced in the direction of my waste-paper basket, which was piled high with balls of crumpled paper. 'That's quite a bit of fine-tuning,' he remarked.

There was no reason to hang around the set. And after what had happened, I didn't want anyone seeing Hawthorne and me together.

'All right,' I said. 'Let's go.'

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3
Heron's Wake

Richard Pryce's home was in Fitzroy Park, one of the most exclusive streets in the whole of London, nestling on the edge of Hampstead Heath. Actually, it hardly looks like a street at all. When you enter it from the Heath, particularly during the summer months, you pass through an old-fashioned gate that could have come straight out of Arthur Rackham, with so much vegetation on all sides that it's hard to believe you're anywhere near the city. Trees, bushes, roses, clematis, wisteria, honeysuckle and every other climbing plant fight for space in the north London equivalent of Never Land and the very light is tinted green. The houses are all detached and make a point of bearing no resemblance to each other at all. They range in style from mock Elizabethan to art deco to pure Cluedo – all chimneys and sloping eaves and gables – with Colonel Mustard mowing the lawn and Mrs Peacock taking tea with Reverend Green.

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As if to contradict all this, Pryce's house was aggressively modern, designed perhaps by someone who had spent too much time at the National Theatre. It had the same brutalist architecture, with stretches of prefabricated concrete and triple-height windows more suited to an institution than to somebody's home. Even the Japanese-style bulrushes in the front garden had been planted at exact intervals and grown to the same height. There was a wood-fronted balcony on the first floor but the wood was Scandinavian pine or birch, unrelated to any tree growing in the immediate area.

The house wasn't huge – I guessed it would have three or four bedrooms – but the way it was constructed, all cubes, rectangles and cantilevered roofs, made it seem bigger than it was. I wouldn't have wanted to live there. I've got nothing against modern architecture in places like Los Angeles or Miami but in a London suburb, next to a bowling club? I felt it was trying too hard.

Hawthorne and I had taken a taxi from Bermondsey, climbing up Hampstead Lane towards Highgate before suddenly turning off and heading steeply down and away from reality into this fantastical *rus in urbe*. The hill brought us to a crossroads with a sign pointing to the North London Bowling Club straight ahead. We turned right. Pryce's house was called Heron's Wake and it was easy enough to spot. It was the one with the police cars in front of it, the plastic tape across the front door, the forensic officers
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dressed in white moving in what looked like slow motion

around the garden, the uniformed policemen and the gaggle of journalists. Fitzroy Park had no pavements and no street lights. Several of the houses had burglar alarms but there were surprisingly few CCTV cameras. All in all, you could hardly have chosen a better location to commit murder.

We got out and Hawthorne instructed the driver to wait for us. We must have made an odd couple. He was looking smart and professional in his suit and tie while it was only now that I realised I had come from the set and that I was wearing jeans and a padded jacket with FOYLE'S WAR embroidered on the back. A couple of the journalists glanced my way and I was afraid I would end up on the front page of the local newspaper so I went in sideways, keeping the back of my jacket away from them, wishing I'd had time to change.

Meanwhile, Hawthorne had forgotten me, marching up the driveway as if he were a long-lost son returning to the family home. Murder always had this effect on him, drawing him in to the exclusion of everything else. I don't think I'd ever met anyone quite so focused. He stopped briefly to examine two cars, parked side by side. One was a black S-class Mercedes coupé; a solid, executive car. The other, sitting there like a younger, snappier brother, was a classic MG Roadster, dating back to the seventies. It was a collector's car: pillar-box red with a black hood and gleaming wire wheels. I saw him place a hand on the bonnet and hurried over to join him.

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‘It hasn’t been here long,’ he said.

‘The engine’s still warm …’

He nodded. ‘Got it in one, Tony.’

He glanced at the passenger window, which was open a couple of inches, sniffed the air, then continued towards the front door of the house and the constable who was guarding it. I thought he would go straight in but now his attention was drawn to the perfectly rectangular flower beds beside the entrance. There were two of them, one on each side, with bulrushes standing dead straight, like soldiers on parade. Hawthorne crouched down and I noticed that, to the right of the door, a few of the plants had been broken, as if someone had stumbled and stepped on them. The killer? Before I could ask him, he straightened up again, gave his name to the constable and disappeared into the building.

I smiled vaguely, nervous that I would be stopped, but the policeman seemed to be expecting me too. I went in.

Heron’s Wake wasn’t built like an ordinary house. The main rooms weren’t divided by walls and doors. Instead, one area seemed to morph into another with a wide entrance hall opening into a state-of-the-art kitchen on one side and a spacious living room on the other. The back wall was made almost entirely of glass, giving lovely views of the garden. There were no carpets; just expensive rugs of various sizes artfully strewn over American oak floors. The furniture was modern, designer-made, the art on the walls mainly abstract. It was obvious that a great deal of care had been lavished on the interior, even if the overall impression was one of

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simplicity. All the door handles and light switches, for example, were brushed steel, not plastic, and whispered of Paris or Milan. I could imagine them being carefully chosen from catalogues. Most of the house was white but Pryce had recently decided to add a few splashes of colour. There were paint pots and brushes arranged on dust sheets in the hall. An open doorway led into a cloakroom that had become an eye-catching canary yellow. The windows in the kitchen were now framed in terracotta red. I had assumed that the lawyer was married, but the house had the feel of a very expensive bachelor pad.

I caught up with Hawthorne just as a large, unattractive woman appeared, elbowing her way out of the kitchen, dressed in a bright mauve trouser suit with a black polo-neck sweater. What made her unattractive? It wasn't her clothes or her size, although she was overweight with round shoulders and a face that was thick and fleshy. No. It was mainly her attitude. She hadn't spoken a word to us but she was already scowling. Either her spectacles were too big or her eyes were too small, but she had managed to make herself look mean and hostile, peering at the world with a malevolence that she wore like mascara. What struck me most about her, though, was her hair. I'm sure it was real but it resembled one of those cheap wigs worn by department-store mannequins, jet black and as glossy as nylon. It didn't seem to belong to her head. She had a gold necklace around her neck and below that a lanyard resting horizontally on an ample chest identified her as DI

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