

echo test transmission one a citizens band broadcast of pictures at an atrocity exhibition from the shadows of the sun out of the arc of the searchlight joyce jobson in halifax on friday the twelfth of july nineteen seventy four more life in a graveyard the rain keeping them in time for a look in the royal oak one more lager and then a fish supper with donald the lift home the chat the banter the chip shop shut out of the shadows the darkness he steps five foot four inches and quite good looking slightly wavy hair dark long sideboards he would not frighten anybody and says in a yorkshire way he says the weather is letting us down again and e know e am going to be in trouble severe cuts above both eyes and lacerations on the head her skull had suffered double fractures from an iron bar or hammer and for a moment the living soul is here among the dead who are suspended and soon will die get away from here intensive care just in case she had two small slashes in the small of her back each about six to eight inches long caused by a sharp instrument the clothing had first been lifted up before the marks were made then the clothing was rearranged where is kojak now he asks himself donald is it possible that you went out of the front door of your house and ran along the gardens around the side of the row of houses and waited in the dark for your wife is it possible donald it is you who out of the shadows the darkness step and attack your wife and say in a yorkshire way you say the weather is letting us down again was that you donald you have had your differences you and joyce we know and then you ran back along the gardens and sat back down in front of kojak that was you was it not the chopper man in a yorkshire way he says the weather is letting us down again and she is going to be in trouble severe cuts above both eyes and lacerations on the head her skull had suffered double fractures from an iron bar or hammer and for a moment the living soul is here among the dead who are suspended and soon will die get away from the silences in the shops the graffiti on the walls and doors the wet beds the days off work the days off school the days in the hospital the long days in the house the weather letting us down again and again and again the newspapers and the telephone calls the headaches and the pills the doctors and the police this is what the ripper has done to my wife the invisible man who put the dog hairs on her clothes who did not ladder her tights who left her white heels unmarked but still she sits in the house and gets depressed life pointless and crying out in a yorkshire way she screams the weather is letting us down again and they will put me away they will our sex life destroyed my daughters persuaded me to go out and buy clothes but e only did it to please them and they would laugh because e would never go anywhere to wear them and e used to enjoy cooking and cleaning but now e do it just to avoid sitting and thinking of chopper man a living soul here among the dead who are suspended and soon will die get away they say e could not be near a man or even look at one without feeling funny in a yorkshire way they all say the weather is letting us down again and e know it sounds horrible but sometimes e would look at my own husband sitting there the weather letting him down again and again and again my living soul here among the dead who are suspended and soon will die and e must get away from here from what ripper has done to me weather letting us down again the telephone call the silence before in a yorkshire way he says e missed you once but e will get you next time weather is letting you down again missed you once but not the next test

Chapter 1

A shot –

I'm awake, sweating and afraid.

Downstairs the telephone is ringing, before the dawn, before the alarm.

The LED display says 5:00, my head still full of murder and lies, nuclear war:

The North after the bomb, machines the only survivors.

I get out of bed and go downstairs and take the call.

I come back upstairs and sit in the cold on the edge of the bed, Joan still pretending to be asleep.

On the radio Yoko Ono is saying:

'This is not the end of an era. The 80s are still going to be a beautiful time, and John believed in it.'

After a few minutes I say: 'I've got to go to Whitby.'

'It was him then?' she asks, face still away.

'Yes,' I say, thinking –

Everyone gets everything they want.

I drive alone from Alderley Edge across the Moors, alone between the articulated lorries crawling slowly along the M62, the weather stark and grey, the landscape empty but for telegraph poles.

At 7:00 the radio breaks the news to the rest of the world:

'The Yorkshire Ripper has claimed his thirteenth victim, as police confirmed that Laureen Bell, aged twenty, was killed by the man responsible . . .'

I switch off the radio, thinking –

Murder and lies, lies and murder –

War:

It is Thursday 11 December 1980.

I arrive in Whitby at 11:00 and park in the drive of the large new bungalow, alongside three expensive cars.

There's sleet in the sea-spray, freezing gulls wheeling overhead, the wind screaming through a thousand empty shells.

I ring the doorbell.

A tall middle-aged woman opens the door.

'Peter Hunter,' I say.

'Come in.'

I step into the bungalow.

'Can I take your coat?'

'Thanks.'

'This way,' she says, leading me down the hall to the back of the house.

She knocks on a door, opens it, and gestures for me to go inside.

Three men are sat on the sofa and chairs, grey skin and red eyes, silent.

Philip Evans stands up: 'Peter? How was the drive?'

'Not so bad.'

'What would you like to drink?' asks his wife from the doorway.

'Coffee would be nice.'

'Have to be instant, I'm afraid.'

'Prefer it,' I say.

'Ever the diplomat,' laughs Evans.

'Everyone else OK?'

The other two men nod and she closes the door behind her.

'Let's get the introductions out of the way and then we can get on,' smiles Philip Evans, the Regional Inspector of Constabulary for Yorkshire and the North East.

'Gentlemen,' he says, 'This is Peter Hunter, Assistant Chief Constable of the Greater Manchester force. Peter, this is Sir John Reed, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary.'

'We've met before,' I say, shaking his hand.

'A long time ago,' says Sir John, sitting back down on the sofa.

'Of course,' nods Philip Evans. 'And this is Michael Warren, from the Home Office.'

'Nice to meet you,' I say, shaking the thin man's hand.

Evans points to a big chair with wide arms: 'Sit down, Pete.'

There is a soft knock on the door and Mrs Evans brings in a tray, setting it down on the low table between us.

'Help yourself to milk and sugar,' she says.

'Thank you.'

There's a pause, just the wind and Mrs Evans talking to a dog as she retreats back into the kitchen.

Philip Evans says: 'We've got a small problem.'

I stop stirring my coffee and look up.

'As I mentioned on the phone, there's been another murder. A nurse, twenty years old, outside her halls of residence. Leeds again.'

I nod: 'It was on the radio.'

'Couldn't even give us a day,' sighs Evans. 'Well anyway, enough is enough.'

Michael Warren sits forward on the sofa and places a small portable cassette recorder beside the plastic tray on the coffee table.

'Enough is enough,' he echoes and presses play:

A long pause, tape hiss, and then:

'I'm Jack. I see you are still having no luck catching me. I have the greatest respect for you George, but Lord! You are no nearer catching me now than four years ago when I started. I reckon your boys are letting you down, George. They can't be much good can they?

'The only time they came near catching me was a few months back in Chapeltown when I was disturbed. Even then it was a uniformed copper not a detective.

'I warned you in March that I'd strike again. Sorry it wasn't Bradford. I did promise that but I couldn't get there. I'm not quite sure where I'll strike again but it will be definitely some time this year, maybe September, October, even sooner if I get the chance. I am not sure where, maybe Manchester, I like it there, there's plenty of them knocking about. They never learn do they George? I bet you've warned them, but they never listen.'

Thirteen seconds of hiss, then:

'Take her in Preston, and I did, didn't I George? Dirty cow. Come my load up that.

'At the rate I'm going I should be in the book of records. I think it's eleven up to now isn't it? Well, I'll keep on going for quite a while yet. I can't see myself being nicked just yet. Even if you do get near I'll probably top myself first. Well it's been nice chatting to you George. Yours, Jack the Ripper.

'No use looking for fingerprints. You should know by now it's as clean as a whistle. See you soon. Bye.

'Hope you like the catchy tune at the end. Ha. Ha.'

Reed leans forward and switches off the cassette just as *Thank You for Being a Friend* starts.

'As you know that was June last year,' says Warren. 'What you won't know is that Home Secretary Whitelaw immediately approved the use of the Police National Computer to back up covert surveillance operations of vehicles in the West Yorkshire area, to use birth and school registers to cross-reference these against all males born in Wearside since 1920. He also secretly approved the release of DHSS records to trace all males who have lived or worked in Wearside in the past fifty years. So far they've interviewed and eliminated 200,000 people, done over 30,000 house to house searches, taken over 25,000 statements, and spent the best part of four million pounds.'

'And most of it on bloody publicity,' says Sir John Reed.

'*Flush out the Ripper,*' whispers Philip Evans.

Sir John snorts: 'Some bloody plan that was. 17,000 fucking suspects.'

'Some bloody plan,' repeats Michael Warren, putting in another cassette tape, pressing play again:

'Every time the phone rings I wonder if it's him. If I get up in the middle of the night I find myself thinking about him. I feel after all this time, I feel that I really know him.'

I look across at Reed, the grey skin and red eyes.

He's shaking his head.

'If we do get him, we'll probably find he's had too long on the left breast and not enough on the right. But I don't regard him as evil. The voice is almost sad, a man fed up with what he's done, fed up with himself. To me he's like a bad angel on a mistaken journey and, while I could never condone his methods, I can sympathise with his feelings.'

Warren presses stop.

'You know who that was?'

'George Oldman?' I say.

Philip Evans is nodding: 'That was Assistant Chief Constable Oldman talking to the *Yorkshire Post* last week.'

Warren: 'Thank Christ they called us.'

Silence.

On the dark stair, we miss our step.

Sir John Reed says: 'Sixteen hours a day, six – sometimes seven – days a week.'

I shrug: 'I'm afraid I don't know much about it.'

'What do you know?'

'About?'

'About the whole bloody farce?'

'Not much more than I've read in the papers.'

'I think you're being modest, Mr Hunter. I think you know a lot more,' winks Reed.

I start to speak, but he raises his hand: 'I think like most senior detectives in this country, I think you feel West Yorkshire have lost the plot, that the *Ripper Tape* is bollocks, that he's laughing at us, the British Police, and that you'd like nothing more than to have a crack.'

I return his stare: 'So is it bollocks? The tape?'

He smiles and turns to Philip Evans, nodding.

There's a pause before Evans says: 'There'll be a press conference later today and Chief Constable Angus will tell them that Oldman's out.'

I say nothing now, waiting.

'Peter Noble's been made Temporary Assistant Chief Constable with sole responsibility for the hunt.'

Again I say nothing, waiting.

Michael Warren coughs and leans forward: 'Noble's a good man.'

Nothing, just waiting.

'But there are already calls for outside help, a fresh perspective etc., so Angus is also going to announce the formation of a *brains trust*, a *Super Squad* if you like, to advise Noble's team,' continues Warren.

Nothing, waiting.

'This Super Squad will be Leonard Curtis, Deputy Chief Constable, Thames Valley; William Meyers, the National Coordinator of the Regional Crime Squads; Commander Donald Lincoln, Sir John's Deputy; Dr Stephen Tippet from the Forensic Science Service; and yourself.'

Waiting.

Sir John Reed lights a cigarette, exhales and says: 'So what do you think now?'

I swallow: 'We are to advise?'

'Yes.'

'For how long?'

Michael Warren says: 'Two or three weeks.'

Reed is staring at the end of his cigarette.

I say: 'May I speak frankly?'

'Of course,' says Philip Evans.

'As a public relations exercise I think we might have some success in diffusing the undoubted criticism the Yorkshire force is going to face over the next week but, as for any practical use we might have, I think we'll be distinctly limited.'

The whole room is smiling, grey skins and red eyes shining.

'Bravo,' claps Sir John Reed.

'We called you here today,' says Evans, handing me a thick red ringbinder. 'Because we would like you to head up a covert Home Office inquiry into these murders, working under the guise of this Super Squad. You'll be able to handpick up to seven officers to work with you; based in Leeds, you will be reporting only to myself here in Whitby. Your brief is to review the case in its entirety, to highlight areas of concern, should any arise, to determine strategies, to pursue all avenues.'

'And to catch the cunt,' spits Reed.

I wait, eyes on the prize.

Philip Evans says: 'Questions?'

Quietly: 'Why covert?'

Evans is nodding: 'The public is unlikely to accept two simultaneous investigations. Secondly, nor will the West Yorkshire lads. Thirdly, we don't want to wash our dirty linen in public etc., should there be any. Morale being what it is these days.'

I look around the room.

Sir John Reed says: 'So go on, ask?'

'Ask what, sir?'

'Why me? That's what you want to know, isn't it? That's what I'd want to know.'

'OK. Why me?'

Reed nods at Michael Warren.

'Primarily your work with A10,' says Warren. 'And the fact that you've previously been involved with investigations into the West Yorkshire force.'

'With all due respect, one investigation was over five years ago and failed to reach any conclusion, aside from making me possibly the most unpopular copper in the North. And the second one was over before it began.'

'Eric Hall,' Evans says to the other two.

I look down at the cup of cold instant coffee on the table before me, the light reflecting in its black surface.

'Hunter the Cunt, they call you,' laughs Sir John Reed.

I look up at him.

'That bother you, does it?' Reed asks.

'No,' I say.

'So there's your answer.'

'Thank you.'

'I make spies of them despite themselves,' he smiles.

'General Napier,' I say.

Sir John Reed has stopped smiling: 'You know your history.'

'Yes,' I say. 'I know my history.'

Outside it's snowing.

There is blood on my windscreen, a dead gull on the lawn.

I switch on the windscreen wipers and drive back alone across the M62, alone between the articulated lorries crawling slowly along, the weather stark, the landscape empty –

Just murder and lies, lies and murder:

'The Yorkshire Ripper has claimed his thirteenth victim, as police confirmed that Laureen Bell, aged twenty, was killed by the man responsible . . .'

It's after 8:00 when I get home.

Joan is watching *TV Eye*.

'They're repeating that *Mind of the Ripper*,' she says.

I sit in front of the TV, watching the faces swim by.

I am forty years old, Joan thirty-eight.

We have no children.

I can't sleep –

I never can.

My back bad, getting worse and worse, day by day.

Always awake, sweating and afraid, eyes wide in the dark beside Joan.

The radio on –

Always on:

Hunger strikers near death, thirty-two murdered in one LA weekend;

Gdansk, Tehran, Kabul, the Dakota;

The North of England –

No law.

I get out of bed and go downstairs.

I can hear the rain against the window pane, behind the curtains.

I go into the kitchen and put the radio on and wait for the kettle to boil.

The rain against the pane, a song on the radio:

'Don't be afraid to go to hell and back –'

I open my briefcase and take out the red ring-binder, the red ring-binder they gave me:

Murders and Assaults upon Women in the North of England.

The kettle's boiling, whistling:

Everyone gets everything they want.

I unlock the back door and take the tea and the red ring-binder out into the black garden and the rain. I walk down the side of the garage to the shed I built at the back. I take the key from my dressing gown pocket and unlock the door to the shed.

I am cold, freezing.

I go inside, lock the door behind me and put on the light.

My room –

One door, one light, no windows; the smell of earth and damp, old exhaust fumes and ageing gardening gloves; a long desk across the length of the back wall, two grey metal filing cabinets standing guard on each of the side walls. Between them, on top of the desk, a computer and keyboard, a black and white portable television, a CB radio, a cassette recorder and a reel to reel, a typewriter. Under the desk, across the floor, wires and cables, plugs and adapters, boxes of paper, stacks of magazines and newspapers, tins and jars and pots of pens and pencils and paperclips.

I perch the tea on top of the red ring-binder on the corner of the desk and I switch on the two-bar electric heater and the computer –

Anabasis:

The bastard bits of an Acorn with Memorex RAMpacks, pirated parts from Radionics and Tandy, an unopened ZX80 still in its box, the whole machine covered in cassette tapes and blu-tack.

I sit down at the desk and stare at the wall above *Anabasis*:

At one map and twelve photographs –

Each photograph a face, each face a letter and a date, a number on each forehead:

<i>Theresa Campbell</i>	<i>a</i>	6-6-75	3.
<i>Clare Strachan</i>	<i>b</i>	20-11-75	2.
<i>Joan Richards</i>	<i>c</i>	6-2-76	4.
<i>Marie Watts</i>	<i>d</i>	28-5-77	0.
<i>Rachel Johnson</i>	<i>e</i>	6-7-77	0.
<i>Janice Ryan</i>	<i>f</i>	5/12-6-77	1.
<i>Elizabeth McQueen</i>	<i>g</i>	20-11-77	2.
<i>Tracey Livingston</i>	<i>h</i>	7-1-78	3.
<i>Candy Simon</i>	<i>i</i>	27-1-78	0.
<i>Doreen Pickles</i>	<i>j</i>	27-5-78	5.
<i>Joanne Thornton</i>	<i>k</i>	18-5-79	0.
<i>Dawn Williams</i>	<i>l</i>	9-9-79	0.

I take the tea off the red ring-binder and open the first page:

Contents:

Divided by the years:

1974:

Joyce Jobson, attacked Halifax, July 1974.

Anita Bird, attacked Cleckheaton, August 1974.

1975:

Theresa Campbell, murdered Leeds, June 1975.

Clare Strachan, murdered Preston, November 1975.

1976:

Joan Richards, murdered Leeds, February 1976.

Ka Su Peng, attacked Bradford, October 1976.

1977:

Marie Watts, murdered Leeds, May 1977.

Linda Clark, attacked Bradford, June 1977.

Rachel Johnson, murdered Leeds, June 1977.

Janice Ryan, murdered Bradford, June 1977.

Elizabeth McQueen, murdered Manchester, November 1977.

Kathy Kelly, attacked Leeds, December 1977.

1978:

Tracey Livingston, murdered Preston, January 1978.

Candy Simon, murdered Huddersfield, January 1978.

Doreen Pickles, murdered Manchester, May 1978.

1979:

Joanne Thornton, murdered Morley, May 1979.

Dawn Williams, murdered Bradford, September 1979.

He's already written the next chapter:

1980:

Laureen Bell, murdered Leeds, December 1980.

My chapter –

The last chapter.

I close the red ring-binder, the red ring-binder they gave me –

Nothing new.

I look up at the wall, the map and the photographs, the letters and the dates, the numbers:

Seven years, thirteen dead women, seven of them mothers, twenty orphaned children.

Reed's voice echoing around the shed:

'What do you know?'

My words echoing back:

'Not much more than I've read in the papers.'

Echoing back round my head, this shed, this room –

My room –

The War Room –

My obsessions:

Murder and lies, lies and murder –

See them, smell them, taste them.

The War Room –

My War:

Motherless children, childless mothers.

I am forty years old, Joan thirty-eight.

We have no children, we can't.

Somewhere back on the Moors, the visibility down to yards,
I'd made that deal again:

*I catch him, stop him murdering mothers, orphaning children, then
you give us one, just one.*

transmission two in cleckheaton on cumberland avenue attractive anita bird on monday the fifth of august nineteen seventy four day clive had hidden every pair of my shoes grabbed my head and plunged it into a bucket of cold water he was a mental man who had been advised to keep away from women for at least five years but he had bought me a colour television and we made up but e was frightened of him and feeling a bit tearful playing crying in the chapel as e brought in the sheets from outside and folded them in the kitchen the kitten missing so e went to look for it and out of shadows the darkness he steps well dressed he was and smelt of soap a good looking waiter italian or greek he wanted to come in for a cup of tea his racing eyes and dainty hands and in a yorkshire way he says do you fancy it not on your life e say and then the hammer comes down one two three times and he pulls down her panties and he raises her blouse and slashes her stomach and wants to stab but then the light goes on and the man is asking what is going on who is out there who is making all that noise come on what is going on out there nothing to worry about you go back inside everything is all right now are you sure yes nothing to worry about but she will need a twelve hour operation to remove the splinters of brain from her skull the last rites to live behind wires and alarms alone with her cats and her pictures of christ and david soul and khalid aziz the three inch dents in her head and the hair she cuts herself crying in the chapel e am in my own world the curtains pulled in a housecoat with her cats walking in the middle of the road scared of the shadows and the men behind her when six months before the mystery man had come to the corner shop and left messages every day for a week would she go out with him for an evening for a few drinks and spot of supper and he drove her into bradford to a city centre restaurant and she cannot remember which but she knows all waitresses wore black long skirts and he was friendly in a yorkshire way and he knew all about her even though they had never met before and he said his name was michael gill or was it gull a doctor gull he lived with his grandmother who was old and ill and that he also had a cat they finished their meal and he drove her home to cleckheaton and no he would not come in for a coffee because he had to go home to put grandmother to bed and he did not even give her a kiss on the cheek and she never saw him again and six months later she lay in the street the blows from cuban heeled boots and the lacerations across her stomach the kind that west indian boyfriends like her clive inflict upon girlfriends who have been unfaithful do you fancy it not on your life and then the hammer comes down one two three times he pulls down her panties and he raises her blouse slashes her stomach and she is not anita now she is anna and she will never be anita again cos anita died that night on cobblestones and times e wish e had not had that operation e wish e had died with her on cobblestones for then e would have known nothing but the blackness and nothing more for if e had known what lay ahead for me e would have refused what they term a life saving operation for my life is not saved it is lost so e have had fifteen thousand pounds compensation no amount of money can give me back my anonymity can give me back my boyfriends no money can remove the stigma of the ripper can give me back my doctor gull or was it gill michael gill fifteen thousand pounds compensation to live behind wires and alarms with my cats and pictures of christ scared of the shadows and the men behind me alone do you fancy