

# 1

Had they not kept Huw Llewellyn waiting he would almost certainly never have fallen for the Englishwoman's side glances. But fearful during those waiting hours of the effects of the tobacco smoke and the nervous tension on his tenor voice, he had been forced to down a good half dozen pints of draught Guinness, mindful of the similarity of depth and tone of the salubrious liquid to the wide pupils at the centre of her tartish eyes. Hadn't she moved that provocative bosom close enough for his lips to taste the delights of their white billowy satin, his eyes mentally caressing what he had to guess their two pastel rosettes.

For himself, Huw made no secret of his carnal desires.

In spite of the milling throng of revellers dressed in their low cut finery and monkey suits in the upstairs room, usually reserved for wakes and weddings, of the Tudor Mary, the languid looks poured in the direction of that mascaraed face, those black eyes, made twice as big with the shade of ultramarine known to women since the Pharaohs. But what tune to pick for his opening number would cause that English bosom to go pitter-patter? Twenty years ago it would have been Mario Lanza. Mario, as in his film, *The Great Caruso*, sleazing his way through the Neapolitan numbers, *Torna a Sorrento*, slurring the words, with his lips hardly moving. God, the jelly hit Huw's legs at the sluttish thoughts of it, and all that he was capable of after half a dozen creamy Guinnesses. He toyed with Pavarotti.

*Frank Ryan*

Old Brindisi? Brindisi my darling, which had been known to work under the right circumstance, aided by the benevolent effect of wine on a sinewy tongue. Brindisi from *Traviata* had a facility to reach the regions deep to scarlet evening satin and a diamond necklace. But then when the time came he sang the Nat Cole number, *Mona Lisa*, in a moment of sheer inspiration.

She was melting. He could feel it in a part of him that was more pertinent than his bones. In his imagination he was already feeling the swell of that pinched waist in the fold of his arm, listening to her plaintive tale of boredom with the Anglesey hills, this poor Saesnes, who had taken refuge in Beaumaris, the only town on the island with a pronounceable name, which had sheltered these poor English hearts for centuries against the Welsh tongue and the Baptist church. She was Turkish Delight on his tongue as he went into *Love is the Sweetest Thing*, his moist pout of lips transcended space to touch those blackened eyelids, he kissed them closed, his mouth turning to those hard firm dry lips, her English pretence at refusal. Ah, little chocolate-eyed Cleopatra, with dyed blonde hair, I shall nibble your armpits to make you laugh, and sing to your soul with my head at your feet and the sweet tones rising in adulation up the long interesting folds of your evening dress.

The double from Bill Rhys, the landlord and host, went down the hatch, as Huw saw her man disappear through the throng in the direction of the loo. He was by her side, her head in a pretence of aversion, as he took her hand and made suggestions, unfortunately abbreviated and therefore to the point, given the short time he had for the purpose. A time and a place, my lovely! *God!* He loved this pretence at deafness in those pink tart's *oreilles*. He had barely had time to savour this facet of the game before the unexpected fist landed on his right cheek and sent him flying through a neighbouring table amidst broken glass and the scent of port.

TIGER TIGER

“You dirty little Welsh git!”

Huw was back on his feet and he wasn't standing for any English pretentiousness here, and his best shawl-collared suit already ruined. He let the Cockney bastard have it right on the button of his nose, before another of those fists came out of nowhere and he found himself back where he had started in the broken wood and the glass and the smell of liquors, only this time he was more concerned with the fact that the room was spinning and he couldn't see anything clearly.

“Huwsie! Lord Jesus – Huwsie!”

The voice was that of Billy Rhys, only it seemed to float upon the air in an unearthly fashion, made all the more so since he could have sworn that this was out of doors and that was the starry firmament over him, and that Billy was pressing a bottle of malt into his hand.

“Pull yourself together, man. For the love of Pete. Don't you know Sandler and who the man is?”

“I don't give a shit who he is. I'm going to give it to him and that Jezebel.”

“Oh, no you're not. Now you listen to me, Huw Llewellyn. Yours is too fine a singing voice to be ruined by fighting a London gangster over his wife.”

“She's no more his wife than she is mine.”

“Now listen to me, man. Take the bottle and be well out of it.”

Huw turned to argue, but the door of the pub had been closed firmly by the departing landlord and at half past midnight, the street was in virtual darkness and he was alone.

How could he just go home after that? Overpowering resentment only bridled the unrequited lust that ached in the heart of him. And Brindisi was in his soul.

He took the Land-Rover from the car-park and negotiated a lurching journey into the hills above the town. He

*Frank Ryan*

wasn't thinking at all, just driving with the devil in him. The road swung and climbed. It was so steep in places he would have engaged low gear ratio if he had only been sober. Small trees and scrub whirled past in the headlights.

But then he recognised where he was and all of a sudden his spirits lightened. Fumbling in the shelf under the wind-screen, he found the old blue plastic torch and he practically fell out of the vehicle to where he could smell water.

How was it possible, he asked himself, patting the bottle to see it was still there in his pocket, that his feet could be numb while his brain burned? Then he lifted his feet out of the stream and threw his sodden shoes and socks over his shoulder onto the bank, and, with trousers legs turned up to his knees, he tried tickling as he had so often when he had come here as a lad. The torch was the bait and he kept his right hand under water as the trap. There was no sense of time at all, only the patient waiting until he could see the speckled back in the light, sinewy in coyness, then slowly but surely closer and closer to where the fingers stroked the heavy sensuousness, until the first finger was up the gill . . .

Up onto the bank, with you! A good two or three pounder.

It was a glorious feeling, with victory in one hand and the opened bottle in the other, as he sang his *Libiamo* with all the gusto of his injured maleness.

Never better had his voice serenaded these Welsh hills. Mother Wales would listen to this heart-song from one of her gifted sons, even if an English gangster and his busty moll were incapable of such refined appreciation.

He woke while it was still dark on the crest of a dream. The pleasant part was that a blonde who might and then might not have been Marlene, was doing things to him in the bathroom of her architect designed house. But then as if Providence felt it must take a negative hand, there was a

TIGER TIGER

loud noise, as if all of his joy were being rudely sucked away, followed by the sound of a shovel on clay.

Somebody was digging.

With his eyes closed, Huw Llewellyn was back in the Baptist cemetery, with his father's voice in his ears, only this was a younger Da, wearing grey woollen socks for the last time in living memory, saying the oration at the funeral of his mother and Huw, unable to understand such grief at the tender age of six years, watching the clay shovelled down on the coffin. But now, with his eyes open, discovering himself frozen to mother earth, with his trouser legs still above his knees and the half empty whisky bottle by his side, Huw watched the heavens whirl tumultuously about his head as he listened to that familiar sound in real time. There could be no doubt about it this time. This was no dream. Somebody, no more than fifty yards from him, was digging.

## 2

The three policemen, two uniformed constables he knew and a detective sergeant from Llandudno he didn't know, appeared to have been cast from the same mould. All young, in their thirties, they were large-boned six-footers, with varying shades of dark curly hair, and blue eyes in pink fleshy faces. Three pork butchers was what struck Huw Llewellyn somewhat forcibly as he watched them search the hilly spot where he had been stupid enough to sleep last night. The three-quarters empty whisky bottle lay on the clay bank much like a tombstone, if he hadn't already enough to show for the night with a black and swollen left eye – he would soon have to devote a bit of time to that for an explanation to Jess – and his monkey suit caked with that same clay.

“The sound of a man digging?” Detective Sergeant Jones asked, for the umpteenth time.

“Digging. I couldn't say it was a man, now, could I?” Huw stood up on the path and glanced back longingly towards the battered green Land-Rover, left all that way back because they couldn't bring the patrol car any further, some three or four hundred yards down the path. The detective had come up with him in the Land-Rover so he could annoy him with questions all the way, but Huw was thinking that the man could go down with the two constables in their patrol car. They hardly needed him now. His head was splitting and he had a feeling he wouldn't

TIGER TIGER

really want to be around when they discovered what they were looking for.

“When Constable Evans took the call, he said you sounded as if you had a sore throat?”

*Constable Evans is it!* Huw rubbed at his stubbled chin and looked the man direct in the eye. He wasn't going to explain that he had made his voice deliberately gruff so as to disguise who it was speaking over the telephone – only that clown, Dylan Evans, had somehow recognised the voice and asked him if he had heavy cold or something.

“Now then, Mr Llewellyn!” Heavens above, but it was Dylan, who had never called him anything other than Huwsie in his life before, Dylan Evans cool as you like, standing with one foot half way into the little Nant y Dderwen, under the shade of a hawthorn that was big enough to call a tree. He was standing balanced like a ballerina because there was only a narrow ledge between the tree and the bank of the fast-running chirruping water, and most of this area was taken up by a freshly dug grave.

“Just about big enough!” the detective sergeant nodded appreciatively.

“Right now – I'll be waiting for you lads in the vehicle,” murmured Huw, coming over queasy all of a sudden.

“I'd prefer it if you would wait here!”

Huw didn't know what he would have done if he hadn't had the earlier instinct of rescuing his bottle. He managed to slip down a couple of sly ones as they waited for one of the uniformed men to bring up two shovels. If only that confounded sergeant had not been taken with a new urgency, and had not started the damned questioning all over again.

“It was about three in the morning?”

“That's right.” Huw felt the hackles on his neck rising progressively, because he couldn't keep his eyes off the grave.

“But you didn't look at a watch, so you're just guessing?”

*Frank Ryan*

“No. I didn’t look at my watch.”

The detective sergeant was more interested in talking while the two constables, stripped to their shirtsleeves, dug methodically. It proved to be only about three feet deep and it didn’t take long to uncover the body that had been buried there. Tufts of hair began to show and Huw took an almighty swig without caring. Fingers tore at the clay until they could see more clearly. Then one of the constables laughed fit to burst and he was joined by the two others and everybody stared at the buried remains of a brown and white mongrel.

“If it was for burying a dog, why do it at three in the morning?” Huw demanded in mortified bafflement.

“C’mon, Huwsie, you were falling about here with your mouth in the air, so you wouldn’t spill any,” chortled Dylan Evans, who had returned to the first names pretty sharply.

“Listen to me, you bloody pork butchers! He – whoever it was – carries a dead mongrel three hundred yards from his car or whatever. Three hundred yards! Digs a grave in this godforsaken place – !”

A tall elderly man watched the green open-backed Land-Rover pull up the hill to the farm with his lips moving on each other as if he were rolling a bead between them. He wore baggy corduroy trousers the colour of faded green velvet held up by braces over his clean but faded collar-less red-striped shirt. On his feet were two galoshes without laces, inside which his feet were naked. Twm Llewellyn stood inside the old lichen-encrusted gateposts and glared as the Land-Rover whined through the gap and then he hurried in its wake as Huw raised two slurries behind the rear wheels, screeching to a halt in the cobbled yard to the rear of the farmhouse.

“Here, is it that I’ve got nothing better to do than to sit up for you all night!” The old man’s eyes were a disconcertingly pallid blue staring out of a morning face as dry and

TIGER TIGER

white as flour and woven with a rich complexity of wrinkles. He slammed the door shut and the latch almost broke through the restraining bent nail.

“Well, I’m a big boy now, Da. I’m forty-four years old.” Huw inspected his eye in the wall-mirror. Hawking and grimacing at the same time, he slumped down at the dining-table.

“You’ve been whoring with that Jezebel all night. Come back here this morning with a face like Caliban!”

“Make us a bit of breakfast, Da, there’s a good man and give over the old Hywel Harris preaching, will you. I need to think. Had something of a shock, I have.”

“You can make your own. And I’ll say what I like in my own house.” The old man’s eyes, when not staring, had a spectral distance in them and his prickly mane of white hair had been slicked down in the middle with spit so his head appeared to have wings. “Shock, did you say? Indeed not enough of a shock, I doubt!”

But there was the banging and the frizzle of fat in the pan, followed by the smell of the bacon and the one egg and the old voice falling into the whine under the breath, while Huw gazed with one eye much wider than the other on the bowed back, that same spider’s web of wrinkles, quite pink on the back of that awkward neck and the feet so black you’d swear he was wearing socks. *His mother’s funeral!* Lord, if he could just think . . .

“I wish you hadn’t fallen out with our Alwyn, Da. Asked him for advice, I would for certain.”

“You keep away from that boy, hear you now!”

“All the same, he has a good head on his shoulders, has Alwyn. I could have asked him for advice. And more sense than I would have ever got from you.”

“Obstinate donkey you are!” There was a loud hissing as Twm threw the halves of three tomatoes into the mess he was frying. “You with God’s gift in you. Alcohol is the demon’s breath. God save us, he throws in his line and

*Frank Ryan*

hooks two minnows on the first tug.” He talked with his back to Huw, and the smell of the bacon making Huw feel hungry despite his clangorous headache.

“Don’t you punish me with your self-righteousness, Da. Not this morning of all days.”

But the light was in the pale blue eyes and Huw groaned as the wrinkled face was overcome by the familiar gout of anguish. “We glory in tribulation because that tribulation worketh patience! Dear God, grant me that patience, in Thy divine patience, therein my hope!”

“When you gave up preaching in chapel it was to torment poor Alwyn and me. For God’s sake, Da, it was what drove Alwyn out. All the damned preaching and the whining from a man who hasn’t had a bath in forty years!”

A shower of sparks rained from the bottom of the black pan as the old man threw the contents onto the cracked white plate. “They gave you that chance with the Welsh National Opera. Anyone else would have dreamed of that chance. And you drunk your way out of it.”

Huw sprinkled salt off the blade of his knife. “I was too good for the likes of them.”

“Threw you out, they did!” Twm threw two rough-hewn slices of oatmeal bread into the pan to fry off the remainder of the dripping. “Threw you out they did! Llewellyn, the tenor voice. Drunk!”

“Forty years ago and only now I know. You went down on your knees and you prayed. You prayed for Mam and you didn’t have enough clout. Died all the same and where was the use of all that praying?”

“Get out of my way, Lucifer’s minnow!” He picked the bread out of the pan with his fingers and threw it onto Huw’s plate.

“Ah, look now, Da. I’m sorry. I am, honest to God. I didn’t mean to say that. My head is inside out. Now look here – you sit down here. I’ll make us both a good strong mug of coffee.” Huw rubbed at his head and physically

TIGER TIGER

pushed the resisting old man into the brown leather arm-chair that was hollowed in the seat to fit the familiar bottom. He put the pot on the stove and stood with his hands stretched to either side of it.

“Why should somebody dig a hole up there and bury a dog in it at three in the morning – tell me the answer to that one, Da?”

“Talk like that in your mother’s memory – ! If you ever – ! Oh, let you so much – by heaven, I’ll do it. I will, bad back or no! Out you’ll go! Out, out of this house!”

“That’s what those pork butchers tried to tell me. And I asked them – at three in the morning?”

“Oh, yes, and I mean it truly. Malice and hypocrisy and evil-speaking. And even though my back is broken, I tell you now. It isn’t just the sciatica, my poor old back is falling in on itself.”

“A six foot hole for a two foot dog?”

“Oh, you drunkard, look at the state of you! Your dinner suit is ruined. Look at the sleeve!”

“Never mind my dinner suit. Here you are – a nice mug of hot black coffee, Da.”

“You’re not going out and leaving me again? I forbid it. Do you hear – I forbid it, absolutely.”

“I am. I’m going back up that bloody mountain. And I’ll take my own bloody shovel with me this time.”

The sun was almost directly overhead and the light came down through the young oaks like a living punishment for a man with migraine. He had to dig a while, rest a while, but he was determined. Maybe it was because this was a special place, like those old Celts, the spirits not in grand masonry or statues, but by fairy places, pools and rippling water, that Huw felt so outraged. Not because they, somebody, a man with a shovel in the dead of night, the police, his father, *they*, had made a fool of him, but everything. There had been sacrilege here.

*Frank Ryan*

Poor brute! He lifted it back out of its hole in the pink clay and brushed the muck off its fur with his fingers. “Made that same old fool of you too, cariad!”

He inspected it all over, lying there on the bank of the Derwen. It was hardly stiff even. Not so very long in the ground. And healthy, not an old dog at all, with good strong muscles and a full belly. The neck flopped against his hand when he tested it and there was a smudge of blood and broken bone where something had struck it just above the left ear. *Did that to you, did they! And do you know why? Why, because they just wanted to make a fool of me, that was their only reason, my friend!*

He carried the dog back with him and put it into the Land-Rover. Then, with one eye half closed against the migraine, and coatless, with his shirtsleeves turned up above the elbows, armed with a good walking stick, he started back up the hill. He began to search once more, through young trees and bracken, ignoring the recently filled in hole. Yet the soil and clay seemed undisturbed wherever his eyes peered. Following a path of sorts, he zigzagged along the banks of the stream up towards the man-made reservoir on its higher reaches, Llyn Derwen, from where, looking downwards, there extended a panoramic view of the valleys, westwards towards the heart of Anglesey and eastwards towards the sea. Nothing!

He removed his sunglasses, wiped his forehead, gazed down into the reservoir which had given its name to the stream.

More slowly now, he took careful steps over the pink clay along the circumference of the water, striking out at cow-parsley, crushing the aniseed scented leaves, with his ears strangely magnifying the sounds of the water so that it became a roaring torrent.

He had been searching for almost two hours when he slumped on the bank. Overhead, gannets and gulls wheeled, from their heights within vision of the sea. After a rest, he

#### TIGER TIGER

followed the bank along a difficult slope but in a direction that would complete the circle, so he would be back onto the path with the waiting Land-Rover. Tiredness had replaced that initial anger. Then his eyes picked out the metallic glint of rubbish, thrown into the reservoir at a point not a hundred yards from the path, but in the opposite direction to the one he had first taken. An old wheel, chromium plated. Only it couldn't be that old, could it?

Furiously, he was inching his way down the incline. There was a big rut in the clay, a rut where the wheels had bitten into the surface, not washed away by the rain – and it had rained only three or four days ago.

A bike all right. A big one. And he could remember something, like a sense of *déjà vu*. A roaring sound: a sound like thunder in his dream. With pounding heart, he peered with his face almost touching the surface. He could make out the shape now quite clearly even in eight feet of water. A big clean-looking motor bike. It wasn't chrome at all but stainless steel on the two wheels that was glinting back at him like a pair of giant eyes even at that depth.

Huw jumped to his feet, whooping like a savage. "Right, you three bloody pork butchers! Tell me that mongrel rode up the hill on that fancy machine, threw it into the water and then buried himself with a broken neck!"

### 3

“You don’t mind if I record our conversation, Mr Llewellyn?”

Judging from the expression on the man’s face, he minded a great deal, but he said, “No, go ahead.”

In fact Huw Llewellyn hardly registered the black pocket recorder in the policeman’s hand. He was so intrigued with the scene by the banks of the Llyn Derwen, which had been transformed in twenty-four hours from utter loneliness to a hive of activity. There were policemen, both uniformed and plain clothes, of all sorts of ranks. And frogmen! Two of them now, in bright orange rubber suits, sitting on the edge and preparing to slip into the depths directly under the gib of the pick-up crane.

His witness’s distraction afforded Chief Inspector Sandy Woodings the opportunity of a curious scrutiny. A man slightly older than himself, mid forties, taller than average but he still needed to stand on the higher ground to come to eye level with the athletically built detective. Huw Llewellyn’s hair would have been very fair as a child but it was now turned to a muddy straw, the colour of a long-thatched roof, proliferating in generous waves over an equally generous face, sporting its recent bruises and one very prominent black eye.

“This isn’t a formal statement. A matter of collecting information together so I can understand just how you came to discover the motor-cycle. Feel free to speak openly.”

TIGER TIGER

A sudden revving of the engine of the pick-up raised a squall of dust, which caused those mischievous blue eyes to squint. "But you'll probably put it all together and then ask me it all over again and then it will be a statement?"

"I won't deny that possibility. But we'll play fair with you. When that time comes you'll be properly informed and it will be entirely voluntary."

Eyes Welsh but not the mouth, thought Sandy Woodings. Those lips were too full for a man, too vigorously articulate altogether, but on a woman – !

"Good job for you I was persistent," Huw insisted, as if somehow he felt the need to be on the defensive.

"Yes, Mr Llewellyn?"

Huw glanced in absolute fascination in the direction of the mobile crane; the divers had just disappeared trailing a steel chain. "I can't believe it, you see. That only yesterday . . ."

"We've been waiting for something like this for some weeks now."

"The bike?"

"That, together with its rider." When the detective smiled, his blue eyes looked disarmingly friendly.

"Hell of a job trying to tell them here and they wouldn't believe me."

It was obvious who this was directed at, since they had just been joined by Detective Sergeant Jones, who looked back sheepishly at Huw, but also by Jim Boyce, who had done well for himself, now a full Detective Inspector at Colwyn Bay but had the perversity to still live here in Beaumaris.

The Yorkshire detective calmly but incisively interrupted Huw's consideration of Boyce. "What was it you tried to tell them?"

"That nobody is going to come up here at three in the morning to bury a mongrel – especially not a mongrel with a broken neck!"

*Frank Ryan*

The chief inspector was the only one to smile. "Let's start with the evening of Friday July thirteenth. You were hired to sing at a function?"

"Have to take what I can get these days."

"But you were hired – ?"

"Hired, yes. But didn't get much opportunity to sing!"

"What do you mean?"

"Far too busy lubricating their gullets. These Saeson shopkeepers wouldn't know an aria from an arsehole!"

"Saeson?"

"English businessmen. Good old Round Tablers and such nobility."

"You were involved in a brawl."

"I can't see what all this has to do with finding the bike."

"I just want to get a more complete picture. Don't worry. I'll weed out what is relevant from what isn't."

"That English bitch – she led me on, you know."

"Who led you on?"

"Calls herself Mrs Sandler."

"Calls herself?"

"Because if she's married to that bastard, I'm a Dutchman!"

"After the shindig, you left the Mary Tudor?"

"Tudor Mary – from the Welsh translation, if we are to be accurate – but that's right. But it wasn't a fight, really, you know, more like a difference of opinion. Only Billy Rhys – "

"Billy Rhys?"

"The belly-crawling, self-opinionated landlord who couldn't tell a snail's willy from a quaver, let him get out of it while he had a slight edge and yours truly was left out in the cold, holding the booby prize."

"Which was?"

"A bottle of Bells!"

"And what time would this be?"

"I have to admit it might have been a bit on the late side."

TIGER TIGER

“We’re not interested in drinking hours, Mr Llewellyn. You have the inspector’s word on that.”

All four men watched a diver surface, give the thumbs-up to the man in the cab of the crane. “It might have been close to midnight, perhaps.”

“I understand it was closer to 1.00 a.m.?”

“Well – okay. Nobody was clockwatching. But I’m sure there will be plenty who could more accurately pinpoint it.”

“And you drove up here straight away?”

“Well, you see, I hadn’t actually had that much to drink, personally speaking. A half or two, maybe. You know, the business about driving. Not to mention keeping the old voice in trim. The alcohol does it no good at all.”

Sandy Woodings watched the eyes open theatrically wide with excitement, as Huw Llewellyn heard the crane whine and as he saw the steel chain jerk taut.

“Why come here on your own at that time of night?”

“Well – I mean to say – ” Huw ogled the lifting cable, with his mouth open and scratching his chin.

Sandy Woodings waited patiently.

Huw returned his attention. “On impulse I suppose it was.”

“You would have got here, perhaps at 1.15 a.m. or thereabouts, driving at an ordinary speed – that is if you came here direct from the pub?”

“Well, give or take – you know!”

“And then what?”

“I had a wallop at the bottle.”

“You drank three quarters of it?”

Huw reasoned that this Yorkshire character would have had a go at Evans and company first. Lucky for him he had picked up the bottle when he had had the chance or they’d have packed it off in one of their brown paper bags.

“Not just then. I might have sipped about half – and slowly mind. Over a period of time, if you get me. It was after I woke up in my dream – ”

*Frank Ryan*

Huw's attention was riveted, his heart pounding, on the rear mudguard and then the alloy wheel trim, which had just appeared at the end of the cable. "Jesus," he declared, "but that machine looks brand spanking new."

"Something woke you?"

"I wasn't sure. Now I think it might have been the sound of the bike. Christ, but it's hardly even dirty!"

"You heard the engine coming along the dirt track?"

"Like thunder, it was. A sound like thunder in my ears." That prominently chiselled, almost voluptuous, lower lip quivered, as the machine was manoeuvred onto its side on the level part of the embankment. "My God, will you look at that!"

Chief Inspector Sandy Woodings did just that. He inspected the bike closely on his haunches. It was, as he had expected, a BMW-K 100. He walked round it and wiped a little adherent muddy shingle from the front number plate and nodded as if to confirm in his own mind it was what he had been looking for. He seemed unusually withdrawn for several seconds.

Then he returned to Huw, as if nothing had interrupted them, but his voice was more urgent in its tone.

"You heard a noise, which might have woken you. In retrospect you think it might have been the engine of a motor-cycle?"

"A big bike."

"Then what?"

"I might have had a little nip, I think – in fact I'm pretty certain – I fell asleep again. Until the digging!"

"The digging?"

"That's right. I know I heard that. I heard somebody only about fifty yards away from me and the bugger was digging."

"What reaction did you have to this?"

"Well, under these circumstances you think you might be still dreaming."

TIGER TIGER

Sandy Woodings waited.

“I think I might have shouted at whoever it was.”

“Shouted?”

“Either I dreamt I shouted or I did just that. I damn well shouted.”

“Shouted what?”

“Well, you know – who the hell is that? Words to that effect.”

“And did you get any reply?”

“Not that I can recall, no.”

“That was when you had the third quarter of the bottle?”

“A sip or two, I’ll have to confess,” said Huw, with a great sigh of uncertain significance.

“And this was about 3.00 a.m.?”

“Only guessing, mind you.”

“And you had had several drinks already in the pub.”

“Oh, a few halves. You can take my word on that.”

“Followed by three quarters of a pint bottle of whisky.”

“I can take my drink, let me assure you.”

“I believe you can. Thank you, Mr Llewellyn. You’ve been most cooperative. We’ll come back to you in due course, if and when we need you.”

Cooperative is it! Huw felt a wave of panic weaken his knees, as he was already beating a hasty retreat in the direction of his Land-Rover.

When he had gone, Sandy Woodings had a curt laugh with Boyce, the detective inspector who was based in Colwyn Bay but who apparently lived here in Anglesey.

“What now?” Boyce’s smile was short-lived.

The smile had also left the deep blue eyes of Sandy Woodings. “Get the divers to move along the reservoir. Look only in near water, no further from the side than ten feet.”

Huw was well aware that the lovely Siobhan – a red-haired re-incarnation of the delectable writer, Colette, his first love

*Frank Ryan*

and erotic totem of adolescence – was in Jess’s cottage, because the sun-flower decorated Citroën 2cv was parked twenty yards back up the lane. Nevertheless, nosing his face round the door to the white-washed cottage, with his hair standing on end and an unshaven chin, like an inquisitive tramp, he pretended to be completely taken by surprise at the sight of the two women cooking in the dining kitchen.

“Jess – Jessie, sweetheart – guess who has discovered a dark, dark secret!” he pouted his lips at Jess, who took one look at the black eye and then took a swing at his face on the other side, which he only just managed to catch.

Placing himself securely with the big butcher’s table between himself and his angry Jess – God didn’t he fancy her all the more when she was mad – he opened his bulbous eyes pleadingly towards Siobhan’s girlish face, with its wispish titillation of copper fringe over the magnificent high forehead, lowering his face so it was roughly on a level with hers, at present supported by her elbows on the dining table and with her chin propped on the palms of her hands. “Siobhan – my princess! By the Lord Harry – what’s that delicious smell?”

“Black-eyed bean curry.”

“You’ll have us all gone strictly vegetarian.” Huw chanced a quick poke of his head over the pans which occupied all four burners. “Red cabbage! Lovely grub!” Moving back into a position of relative safety, he asked the down-turned mop of Jess’s brown curls, “Aren’t you even curious to know all of the demoniacal strategies your prince and warrior has been up to in the latter hours of the night?”

“The whole town knows what went on in that pub last night!” declared Jess, slamming pots decorated with mauve flowers onto the table and refusing to look at him.

“If they do, then not a blessed soul amongst them has heard my side of it.” Huw leaned over the table, close enough to touch with the pulp of one index finger the soft red hair, which cascaded all over the wood, while he took

TIGER TIGER

the opportunity of smiling fleetingly into those coquettishly friendly green eyes – God, but didn't she somehow make herself appear ten years younger than Jess, when there wasn't more than twelve months in it – only Jess took unfair advantage of this tiny moment of childish innocence to slap a pile-driver into his right cheek.

“God almighty, Jess!”

Siobhan, the little darling, kissed his injured eye and sat on the bench next to him. “Ah, you explain to me, Huwsie.”

“As a woman?”

“I mean, these diabolical machinations you've been up to all night.”

“I tell you, girl, that even with six pints of draught Guinness inside me, I know when some Saesnes is goblinizing me with her furry brown eyes!”

“She might have been looking at you out of simple curiosity?”

“Studying him more likely,” agreed Jess curtly. “Remarking how that face matches the baboon's bottom.”

“Waiting,” Huw guided Siobhan's fingers more accurately to the area where Jess's thump had left a numb tingling on his cheek, “for yours truly to be given the chance to tune up, against the nicotined air and fifty drunken sods who have more money than aesthetic appreciation.”

“Felt a bit horny, did you?” Jess looked a bit dangerous, feeling at the weight of the big pan of simmering red cabbage – health food from the vegetable garden of the caravan people.

“Ah, you know the animal means nothing, Jess. For me to feel attracted to a woman, it has to come from the heart. Siobhan understands, don't you, sweet little girl-creature?”

When Siobhan laughed like that – God, couldn't he just imagine how that old blackguard Prince with the Llewellyn name could have risked all Wales for a twelve year old nymph with that promise in her woman-bud eyes.

“Naked ladies in wet mackintoshes!” the words of Dylan

*Frank Ryan*

Thomas just slipped unconsciously from his lips and Huw had to throw himself on the floor under the table as the washing up brush splattered its wet suds over the wall just over his head.

“For God’s sake!” he whined like a dog, and with the kitchen smells he was really starving like one too. “I’m willing to sing for my supper, Jess, my dark Celtic angel.”

“Sing off. I’m not feeding you, you rutting blackguard.”

The patent truth was that the time just wasn’t right, no more than it would have done the old voice credit, eaten by hunger and the diaphragm cramped against the two inches of solid wood.

“Oh, let the little thrush sing,” purred Siobhan, stroking his wild thatch, which just poked above the level of the table top.

Huw kissed Siobhan’s ankle, which was as high as he could find of bare skin under the ethnic dress. “How’s this for a bargain, Jess, my love. For a plate of black-eyed beans and some nice sweet cabbage, I’ll trade in the secrets of the two giants’ eyes that looked up at me from the mysterious depths of Llyn Derwen?”

The first indication that Chief Inspector Sandy Woodings had of success was the diver’s finger and thumb breaking water, the two digits apposed to form a circle, about ten feet from the bank. The wrist followed, wearing an enormous black watch, then the man’s face, triumphant. He took a moment to get his breath, after detaching the mouthpiece, then shouted, “Got it! But I’ll need some help. Throw us a rope, will you, and pull when I give three sharp tugs.”

The silence was startling, after the man had submerged. Sandy Woodings stared at the widening circles on the water in a growing company, the detective sergeant, who was called Roddy Jones, the detective inspector called Boyce, several constables one of whom was the Scene-of-Crime man, a pathology chief technician, and the forensic scientist

## TIGER TIGER

who had arrived all the way from the laboratory in Lancashire. It was the sea-gulls who broke the silence first, wheeling about inquisitively, then Boyce seemed to relax for the first time since Woodings had met him. “Eerie, isn’t it? Something to do with the water, you know. I grew up breathing salt water. The name Derwen – means oaks.”

The spot was about a quarter of a mile above where they had pulled out the motor-cycle. From here they could see the draining river make a reversed ‘C’, meandering downhill from the lake, with the oaks from which it derived its name looking smokey in the late afternoon light. Three sharp tugs on the rope: Sandy Woodings left the constables to do the pulling while he performed a three hundred and sixty degree turn.

Anglesey already intrigued him. No matter which direction one faced, there was something definably queer and ancient about it. Funeral barrows from the stone age. Deep shade with running water, the kind of places druids made holy. He thought he saw something . . .

“Look!” he pointed to Boyce. “Up there – about a mile distant.”

“Binoculars?”

“Get one of the constables up to check it.”

“Not worth it, really. Probably a reporter. News travels fast in this kind of community.”

Sandy Woodings looking enquiringly into the brown eyes of the inspector. This was not Sandy’s patch and he had just been reminded of the fact. Boyce behaved as if he didn’t notice, or didn’t care, inclining his balding head to see what exactly was at that very moment breaking water. Sandy Woodings gazed reflectively on the other man’s inclined face, not more than late forties, very dark straight hair, a pointed inquisitive face, with big smoothly rounded temples much wider than the cheeks beneath them.

“It’s a body all right.”

Sandy Woodings watched in silence.

*Frank Ryan*

It was the forensic pair who now pulled the heavy bundle in to the bank and manoeuvred the wrapped shape out of the water, lifting the dripping cylinder with their arms held awkwardly distant from their nice clean suits, until they had it on a dry level area, about ten feet from the edge. In size, the body was right for a male slightly above average height, wrapped in a big sheet of opaque plastic and tied at three different places with a strong nylon rope. It had been weighted by a large bench vice, the nylon binding at the foot end of the body looped through the closed jaws of the vice.

The police photographer, who had been sitting on a stone, came across and took his pictures. They allowed him time to get shots at various angles and some close-ups of the vice, weighting down the legs.

“Open it up at the head end,” Woodings nodded to Boyce.

“Better kept intact until we get it back to the mortuary!”

“We know it’s been less than twenty-four hours in the water.”

It was with reluctance that Boyce agreed to a limited examination. He nodded. “Go ahead, Roddy.”

The detective sergeant cut the nylon so as to preserve the triple knot for forensic examination. Even then the polythene was stiff and difficult to prise away sufficiently for a clear view of the face and he had to hold it apart with firm pressure for Sandy Woodings to peer inside the wrappings.

“Well?” Was Boyce actually irritated for some reason?

“He’s grown a beard since I last saw him but it is Paul Thorpe.”

“You’re certain?”

“Absolutely!”

Boyce had a quick glance between the wrappings before ordering the body to be moved.

But the image of that young bearded face remained in Sandy Woodings’ vision, like a stigmata. And in his mind he

#### TIGER TIGER

recalled his interviews with Paul Thorpe's mother, a small woman with brown eyes in a face prematurely lined and with straggly hair parted without a trace of fashion. *He had to be tougher than the others . . . Children conscious of things . . . At school, never having any money . . .*

Poverty, peer rivalry, envy. A young man from a small South Yorkshire village, led into drugs, then to drug running and finally to murder. And the trail of that murder committed two months earlier had brought Sandy Woodings here and now in front of him that same boy lay, himself the victim of murder.

Without realising it, Detective Chief Inspector Woodings' eyes had become hard and staring, his teeth clamped tight together.

## 4

The view, seen through the nervously darting eyes of Geraint Nisbet, was one of a serene pastoral beauty, if nevertheless one that he was personally incapable of appreciating. Today was Monday, July 16th. The time was 7.00 a.m. precisely and he was pacing the verandah of his hill-top farmhouse. Below him and falling away on every side of the house were the rolling Welsh hills, mixed oak and beech woodland, merging down into green fields in the valley, and then up onto the adjacent hill in a carpet work of drystone-walled sheep land, this hill capped by the Llewellyn farm, some three miles away. The view, beautiful in its very nature at any time of day and any season, now lay at its most tranquil. A completely blue sky canopied it. The sun, a good hour and a half above the horizon, brought out the lively greens of full summer, about which the morning mist flowed dream-like, almost white, a delicate wave-less tide.

Unrequited romance was however more important than the view to Geraint Nisbet, more important by far as he rocked backwards and forwards in the warming air, his mind in a turmoil because of the stupid ramblings of that so-called clairvoyant down there in the backstreet of Menai Bridge.

Taurus man meets Virgo woman. Damnation! Had he not gone to a great deal of trouble on her behalf? Neatness.

Virgos were fussy about that. So he had had a special container made so that the sight of his dustbins would not displease her pretty green eyes. Too busy earning money!

## TIGER TIGER

Too busy – ! Confound the woman. Nisbet's sharp eye caught the path of the idiot, running with his newspaper and his two oatmeal baps. His square plump hand stroked the missing hair from his bald scalp, then scratched at its shiny surface, waiting until the very last moment before pressing the security button so that the gate opened and Del scurried in.

“Hello, morning, Gwil!”

He had a good look into the bag to make sure the idiot hadn't taken a bite from one of the baps, and then he sent him back on his way. “I'll give you some money tomorrow. Don't bother me today, Del, lad.”

But the idiot still stood there with his hand out.

“Tomorrow! Tomorrow! Shoo now! Out you go!” Nisbet ushered the heavily resisting body out of the gate, tripping in the process on those big platforms of shoes which served to raise his height from five foot three and a half to something approximating five foot six inches.

With the gate securely closed again, he could see the smoke curling out of the groundfires of the early risers. His gaze swept fleetingly over the community of caravans that disfigured his farm. *Bloody boy scouts!* Pah! His old man, Gwilym Edwart Nisbet, had thought he had brains turning these poor fifty-five acres to pigs and forest but he, Geraint Gwilym, had discovered the gold lay in the culture and the harvesting of nincompoops.

She lurched up the uneven ground from the dairy in that dinky car of hers at 7.30, punctual as clockwork.

“Morning, Mr Nisbet.”

“Well now, it is a lovely morning. Yes, lovely it is, indeed!” Still it was the *Mister* was it! His plump fingers fussed clumsily with the lock in the gate, instead of using the electrical gadget.

He went so far as to hold the gate open for the disgustingly pink car with its orange flowers, and when she had driven through, he shut the gate and hurried in her

*Frank Ryan*

wake, so he could open her door for her after she had parked it next to the house. Then, following her onto the patio, he took his place as usual, from where he could get a good look at her, rocking backwards and forwards on his high-heeled shoes, with the rolled up newspaper clasped behind his back and in spite of the sweat of anxiety, managing a new height of appreciation for her voluptuous bottom, not to mention the slender swan's neck, as she leaned over the round metal table and spread the accounts book on its white-painted surface.

"There's nothing wrong, Mr Nisbet?" she looked at him brightly. The mane of red hair was rolled up on top of her head and fixed with a bronze pin.

"What could be wrong?" he asked her, suspiciously.

"On a morning like this – nothing!" she smiled, gazing away, he noticed, it was in the direction of Llewellyn's hill.

"There's been someone murdered, you know." He jumped back a fraction himself as he told her.

"Murdered?"

Gods, but the way her eyes opened wide like that, it caused a kind of sensation at the pit of his belly which he savoured a few seconds before the panic stations took a hold of him and with a trembling hand he shook the newspaper at her.

"Look you there!" His head was shaking and his legs almost turned him round in a complete circle. "A young man!" his finger poked at the bent-over headline. "A young man pulled out of Llyn Derwen. And a big motor bike."

How could she just keep so calm like that. She had just put the paper down on the round table next to the books and now she was sniffing again at whatever it was in the air that interested her.

"Oh, I shouldn't think this has any bearing on our situation here – surely not."

"Surely not?" Nisbet's eyes were opened even wider than hers, as if they were vying with each other for the most convincing show of naivety. "Listen to me, Siobhan," he

TIGER TIGER

grabbed the paper and jabbed in the direction of the approach road in a wrath of passion. "I tell you that there will be pigs' cars up here by the dozen. Believe you me, pigs crawling all over the damn place asking questions."

SUBJECT: white male. AGE: approximately late teens to early twenties. DATE AND TIME PATHOLOGIST CONTACTED. DATE AND TIME ARRIVED. OFFICER IN CHARGE AT SCENE OF CRIME. DECEASED LAST SEEN ALIVE. RECTAL TEMPERATURE. SUMMARY OF LESIONS . . .

Sandy Woodings paused there. He stopped reading the report altogether. The standard in cases of murder, the pathologist's sixteen pages of detail.

He stopped reading because he did not need to read any further. He knew the details by heart. Subject, Paul Thorpe. Aged twenty. Murdered. It was all there in the report, which was dated yesterday. He had watched the postmortem, which had been performed by a Doctor Racine within an hour of the body arriving in the Colwyn Bay mortuary and the rest of the forensic material, the polythene wrapping which had shrouded the body, the nylon rope, the heavy vice, had just as efficiently been transferred to the forensic science lab in Lancashire.

It would be another hot day. There was a cloudless blue sky through the window of Inspector Boyce's office, not in Colwyn Bay, but slightly nearer to Anglesey, at Llandudno.

He didn't know why he started to read again. There would be nothing here he had not seen, nothing the pathologist had not painstakingly demonstrated at the postmortem proper. But his fingers moved restlessly through the pages, as if some chapter had only begun with the finding of Paul Thorpe's body and now there must be something new.

He stared again at the formal page, half scripted, the lower half left blank for a careful drawing of the bank of the reservoir. If there had been blood, it would have been hatched in red. LAST SEEN ALIVE . . .

*Frank Ryan*

Nothing. Mostly the details were missing. EXTERNAL EXAMINATION. Height – five feet ten inches. Weight 175 lbs. Generally fit young man of unusually powerful physique. Black curly hair. Pale blue eyes. No tattoos or distinguishing marks. MARKS OF VIOLENCE . . .

Pages five to fifteen were occupied by marks of violence. Spaces for verbal description, diagrams of the body, front and back, a special page all to itself for head, face and neck, another special page for the hands, also for the pathologist's special anatomical dissection of the throat, finally the inside of the skull and the brain.

At 8.40 a.m. Sandy Woodings' eyes glazed as he thought back to the precise nature of the injuries. Three or possibly four deep lacerations to the back of the scalp and neck. Two broken and lacerated fingers on the right hand, the defence wounds. The skull fractured by each of the heavy blows . . .

"Finished?" Inspector Boyce's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"I've read as much as I need, yes."

"So, what do you think?" Boyce had already read through the report and he had been standing by the window, through which the view could only be described as pleasant.

"A clumsy way to kill somebody."

"What would you think was the weapon?"

"I think it was a spade. The blade of a spade."

Boyce had a curiously direct way of asking questions and an equally direct manner. He had turned and was looking Sandy Woodings in the eyes. "Seems your man-hunt is over then."

What was the matter with the man? Something showed in the almost cadaveric face, a glow of animosity in the eyes: but for what possible reason . . . ?

"Huw Llewellyn – did you swallow his story?"

"Yes." Sandy replied calmly; in contrast with the relative coldness in the other's man voice, he spoke courteously.

"The pathologist had difficulty with the precise timing of death – because of the immersion. But nevertheless no

TIGER TIGER

more than a day or so. Which would precisely fit with what Llewellyn told us.”

“I agree, yes.”

Boyce had no need to speak his thoughts at that moment: Sandy read the implication.

“It seems that somebody else caught up with him before me.”

“Exactly what line of business was Thorpe in?”

“Drug running. Cocaine certainly. We believe a Liverpool to Yorkshire connection.”

“But the manhunt was for murder.”

“We wanted him for murder.”

“So why Anglesey? Why should anyone have killed him here in Anglesey?”

“You have a drugs problem here?”

“No more than anywhere else in Britain these days.”

Sandy Woodings was silent for a moment, thinking. “What do you intend to do?”

“We’ll search the bank. Also the dog’s grave. We’ve included the dog’s body with the stuff we sent to the Lancashire forensics lab. The bike – might be of some assistance. If he was killed here, it’s odds on he’s been riding here ever since the start of your manhunt. Somebody must have seen the bike. We’ll put it in the newspapers and on the local television.”

Sandy had crossed the room to take a look through the window. The Great Orme was visible, at the west end of the wide sweep of bay. He could see people in the distance, the early comers, alighting from the cars along the front and stepping onto the promenade to cross it and climb down onto the beach.

“Something is bothering you. What is it?”

“The clumsiness.”

“Because if it were a drugs connection you’d have expected a contract killing?”

“Drugs – very big money. Big money could afford to hire

*Frank Ryan*

somebody who would do a decent job. You thought of that too.”

“Yet the site would suggest it was all carefully thought out.” Sandy tried to imagine somebody else getting up there, to that spot. Either on foot – unlikely with the heavy vice, shovel, et cetera. Then a four wheel drive vehicle, something similar to Llewellyn’s Land-Rover.

“Any other thoughts?” Boyce’s intense face suddenly shifted away from him: again that feeling of something not spoken, but a definite sense of tension between them.

“What about the contents of his stomach?”

Boyce had sat down at his desk and was toying aimlessly with a bronze paperweight. “A vegetable curry. Eaten only a very short time before death.” Boyce moved the paperweight over the desk’s leather inset like a boy playing with his favourite toy. “Condemned man eats a hearty meal.”

“Come on then – out with it!” Woodings’ voice was even but insistent.

“I want to ask you a favour.”

“You want me to clear off home and leave the case to you.”

“I’d be obliged to have your help with the Yorkshire link. But I want to be in charge of the investigation here. I couldn’t work with a chief looking over my shoulder.”

Sandy Woodings turned to face the window again. More families had arrived. It was the attraction of the sunshine. The home resorts would do very well this summer. “I have no jurisdiction here.”

“No offence. Just that – well maybe it fits with one or two threads I’ve been investigating.”

“I’m not offended.”

Turning sharply, Sandy Woodings allowed himself to be shaken by the hand. It seemed slightly overdone. Yet he had the impression of either a deep relief or an equally deep satisfaction in the Welsh inspector at the thoughts of his leaving.

## 5

This was the latest novelty in the relationship between Sandy and his four children, the game of looking after him and today more particularly cooking for him. Something which had evolved rapidly in the short time since the divorce, it was an attitude of caring that had to be interpreted in the spirit rather than the performance, because of the rivalry and bickering it engendered. He had to suppress a smile as his youngest daughter, Marty, came into his living-room from the kitchen area to inform him with sorrowful eyes, that both her elder twin sisters, Jennie and Zoe smelled.

“Smell of what?” he sat back in his chair and regarded her very seriously.

“I don’t know what. Only they smell the same. Isn’t that funny, Dad, how they’re twins and they smell the same.”

“It’s only because she wants to put the herbs in the tomato sauce for the pizza and we won’t let her!” exclaimed Jennifer, darting her delicately elongated face – the twins resembled Sandy more than Julie – round the door.

Marty looked stubbornly into her father’s smiling blue eyes.

“I hate you. I hate the whole world.”

“I’ll take you for a walk to Beauchief Abbey, if you like?”

“I don’t want to go on your stupid walk.” Still they

*Frank Ryan*

regarded one another. Gerry, his son, with flour about his already pale cheeks, highlighting Julie's solemn brown eyes, said, "Take no notice of her, Dad."

"You know what sign you were born under, Marty?"

"Libra," she declared.

"And I'm a Leo. Do you know what they say about a Leo-Libra relationship?"

"I don't care what they say," she murmured truculently, but still she stood her ground and watched him.

"Leo is ruled by the sun and Libra ruled by Venus."

"Venus is just a silly name for a star or something."

"Venus is the goddess of love."

"I don't love – I hate the whole world."

"It will be my birthday in a week's time."

"I know it will be your birthday."

"They say that Librans love to argue." He grinned suddenly. "There's nothing a Leo loves more than birthday presents, especially early ones. And right now I would really love a special cup of coffee."

This was to be the pattern for this strange week, summery hot, carrying a distracting physical and mental listlessness. Even the unexpected interruption of two days of a peculiar misty rain that took a long time falling and hardly seemed to wet the surfaces it touched, only added to the mysterious sense of disquiet.

9.00 a.m. sharp on Wednesday 18th July, he found himself sitting in the office of Meadows, the Assistant Chief Constable, with Superintendent Georgy Barker and Inspector Tom Williams also in attendance. He had explained the situation in Anglesey and watched Meadows' eyes for his reaction.

"So Thorpe is dead." Even Meadows implied something less than a finality with the tone of the statement.

"Murdered."

TIGER TIGER

“And this Inspector Boyce?”

“He seemed to know what he was doing.”

“Nothing more for us to do but to cooperate from this end.” Meadows tapped with his ballpoint on the head of Sandy’s report and he looked from one of the faces to another.

“That seems to be it,” Sandy glanced away from Meadows to the window. Sunshine, but already cooling, it had hardly felt hot on his face thirty minutes earlier on his arrival.

“Something wrong, Woodings?” he heard Meadows voice.

“I’m just a little uneasy, I suppose.”

“Uneasy about what?”

“I don’t know.” He wasn’t able to explain to Meadows that it was just the vaguest of feelings. Something in that reaction of the Welsh Inspector. Boyce had been a fraction too eager.

Paperwork occupied him and Tom Williams for the rest of the morning and the entire afternoon was passed with the prosecuting barrister, discussing the minutiae of evidence for a pending murder trial. Sandy must have surprised the man with his attempts to explain the human reasons; certainly the barrister took the view that he was too much inclined towards the accused and not enough towards the victim, but then the Hawksworth murder had been very unusual. And then Tom appeared to burst into Gilbert and Sullivan whenever the mood took him.

“So who is she then?”

“Who’s who?”

Tom grinned smugly to himself down the line of his long ski-lift nose into his lunch of pork chop and chips.

“When a man takes to wearing carnival ties and singing to himself at work, there’s a woman involved. Come on, Tom. You can trust me to keep a secret.”

*Frank Ryan*

“Trust theesen’ and there’s nobody but theesen’ to blame!”

It was just one more thing out of the ordinary. Tom, aged forty-five, always the inveterate bachelor – Sandy would have gone so far as to accuse him of being a misogynist – and now the ties and the arias! How did you come to understand people? And so many hundreds of times since the day, he remembered Julie’s face peering out of her red anorak on that night at the Guy Fawkes bonfire, on a night memorable only for rain and broken promises. *I want a divorce, Sandy*. It had terrified him then and yet, thanks to Josie and the support of the kids, it had not proved as painful as he had feared.

First thing on the Monday, he sent a complete copy of Paul Thorpe’s file onto Boyce, via the Colwyn Bay CID headquarters. He expected nothing for a day or so in return from Anglesey. By Thursday he was beginning to realise there would be nothing at all, not even a simple acknowledgement. And so his unease grew.

Even the television news ignored the body dragged out of Llyn Derwen: Paul Thorpe’s death had not made the national headlines. The week appeared to be one for children’s certificates, the twins scoring credits in the third grade piano exams, Marty winning a prize in tap-dancing and Gerry passing his diploma at swimming. Sandy called Anglesey on the Friday morning and left a message, which was answered after an hour or so by Sergeant Jones. Jones was apologetic about the lack of liaison. But he assured Sandy that the murder enquiry was continuing normally. Sandy couldn’t speak directly to Inspector Boyce because he was doing fieldwork.

“On his own?” Sandy thought to enquire.

“Got a bee in his bonnet about this one, I’m afraid, sir.”

He finished work at lunch-time on Saturday and met up

#### TIGER TIGER

with Josie to spend the entire afternoon shopping. She visited numerous antique shops – reminding him, with her familiarity with the dealers, that her late husband had been a very successful dealer himself – but only made a single excellent purchase. They celebrated with a stroll about the city centre, where Sandy enjoyed an ice-cream on the pedestrianised precinct of The Moor and listened to the brass band, while Josie still had the energy to forage amongst the big shops, have her nails manicured, and emerge to join him with a nervous collection of daring fashions.

They returned to her apartment at the end of a long afternoon, with Josie pleased with her day's spending, especially so with the silver plated Victorian electrotype of Diana pursuing a stag, with water nymphs holding back the death stroke from the unfortunate stag up to its shoulders in foamy brine.

Sandy was given the job of polishing up the silver plaque until it gleamed with voluptuous shapes, while Josie showered and tried some of the new fashions in private, popping into the lounge for his inspection at intervals, in between putting the bottle of champagne on ice and the two steaks under the grill.

In fact there was an interesting resemblance to Diana in Josie's latest hair-style, with the dyed blonde waves built into a cascade at the back with combs, and she had eventually settled for a baggy shirt in pink, white and blue stripes, with white pantaloon trousers, while Sandy felt himself the poor relation in his charcoal grey short-sleeved shirt, blue jeans and sandals.

After the meal, they sat out on her balcony and she played verbal games with him. It wasn't yet love between them, she confessed, in a husky whisper. A man might find difficulty in differentiating love from what was as yet only a deep and erotic friendship. With this explanation, she adopted a certain look of radiance, which made him laugh.

*Frank Ryan*

Altogether, he felt happier than he had ever felt since the trauma of the divorce.

The telephone call had the grace to wait until two in the morning and Sandy picked the receiver up smartly in the vain hope of not waking Josie. Maybe he should have been surprised to hear the Assistant Chief Constable's voice, but he wasn't surprised at all.

"News from Anglesey?"

"Bad news. To be frank, it's a bit of a shocker – !"

Sandy simply waited, while the curtains stirred in the warm breeze through the open window and he knew that Josie was glaring daggers into his back.

"This man – the local detective inspector you mentioned?"

"Boyce? Inspector Boyce – " Sandy's gaze moved from the window to the white melamine units with the Watteau vignettes.

"I'm afraid he's been found dead."

"How do you mean, dead?" He knew he must have sounded stupid. He also realised now it had been a mistake to just leave Anglesey as he had left it. A mistake to have agreed with Boyce so readily.

"Looks like suicide. Blew his brains out with a shotgun, from the sounds of it." Meadows hesitated once more. "Are you still there, Woodings?"

"Yes, sir, I'm here."

"Peculiar circumstances. Money in his pocket. Several thousand pounds . . ."

Josie was pinching a fold of skin off his back.

"What significance are the local people attaching to . . . ?"

"Corruption, of course."

"I don't know what to say. I don't think I can believe it. Not that man."

"It was a mistake your coming back so soon. I want you to go back there."

TIGER TIGER

“Surely they will want to take this over themselves.”

“I don’t give a damn what they want. Something nasty, Woodings. I can scent it and I don’t like it. A detective inspector. Don’t like it at all. I’ve already had words with the ACC to the North Wales region. We’re agreed – neither of us like it.”

“I don’t know, sir!”

“What are you saying – that you don’t want to go?”

“If you send me and they want me, I’ll go. Certainly I’ll go.”

“Meet me in my office at nine prompt tomorrow morning.”

He turned to look at her, at the round blue eyes watching him wordlessly.

“I’m sorry, Josie.”

“Being sorry isn’t good enough.”

Curious how it wasn’t real anger at all. He laughed and suddenly put his arms round her. It was just the tail end of this strange week, that look of fright in Josie’s eyes.