

David Peace was born and raised in Ossett, West Yorkshire. He now lives in the East End of Tokyo with his wife and children. His first novel, *Nineteen Seventy Four*, was published in 1999, *Nineteen Seventy Seven* in 2000, and *Nineteen Eighty* in 2001. *Nineteen Eighty Three* first appeared in 2002 and is the final novel in his Red Riding Quartet.

Praise for *Nineteen Seventy Four*

'Peace's stunning debut has done for the county what Raymond Chandler and James Ellroy did for LA . . . a brilliant first novel, written with tremendous pace and passion' *Yorkshire Post*

'Peace's pump-action prose propels the book's narrative with a scorching turn-of-speed to an apocalyptic denouement . . . One hell of a read' *Crime Time*

'This breathless, extravagant, ultra-violent debut thriller reads like it was written by a man with one hand down his pants and the other on a shotgun. Vinnie Jones should buy the film rights fast' *Independent on Sunday*

'*Nineteen Seventy Four* takes the direct approach: straight to the heart of Ellroy-land, turning his native Yorkshire of the early seventies into a pustulant, cancerous core of complete corruption' *Uncut*

Praise for *Nineteen Seventy Seven*

'Simply superb . . . Peace is a masterful storyteller, and *Nineteen Seventy Seven* is impossible to put down . . . Peace has single-handedly established the genre of Yorkshire Noir, and mightily satisfying it is. *Nineteen Seventy Seven* is a must-read thriller' *Yorkshire Post*

'Peace's policemen rape prostitutes they are meant to be protecting, torture suspects they know cannot be guilty and reap the profits of organised vice. Peace's powerful novel exposes a side of life which most of us would prefer to ignore' *Daily Mail*

Praise for *Nineteen Eighty*

'David Peace's brand of crime fiction pulls no punches. It's in the realm of extremes where this writer believes we can see ourselves' *Sleaze Nation*

'Peace has found his own voice – full of dazzling, intense poetry and visceral violence' *Uncut*

Praise for *Nineteen Eighty Three*

'Will undoubtedly stand as a major achievement in British dark fiction... the pace is relentless, the violence gut-wrenching, the style staccato-plus and the morality bleak and forlorn, but Peace's voice is powerful and unique. This is compelling stuff that will leave no one indifferent' *Guardian*

'This is fiction that comes with a sense of moral gravity, clearly opposed to diluting the horrific effects of crime for the sake of bland entertainment. There is no light relief and, for most of the characters, no hope. Peace's series offers a fierce indictment of the era' *Independent*

'Peace is a manic James Joyce of the crime novel... jump cutting like a celluloid magus through space and time, reciting incantations and prayers, invoking the horror of grim lives, grim crimes, grim times' *Sleazenation*

'The novel's power lies in its poetic depictions of violence and in its flawless period detail, which grounds it convincingly in the Eighties. Fiction and history merge, and the personal and the political mirror each other, creating a disturbing portrait of social decay. Rarely has the crime novel managed to say something more serious and enduring than in Peace's masterful quartet' *New Statesman*

'This is the final instalment, and it is magnificent. The three years since his debut have seen Ossett-born Peace grow into one of the most distinctive and compelling crime novelists in the world... *Nineteen Eighty Three* is Peace's best yet' *Yorkshire Post*

DAVID PEACE

1974



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Foreword by Adrian McKinty

When I first encountered *Nineteen Seventy Four*, the opening novel in David Peace's *Red Riding Quartet*, in the autumn of 1999, I was in a bad place. My father had just died and I'd been so broke that for his funeral I'd bought a suit from the Belfast Marks and Spencer, wore it during the burial in an apocalyptic downpour, and spent the night aerating it with a hairdryer so that I could return it the next day. I was living in New York at the time working as a barman in the Bronx and as a shop assistant at the big 82nd and Broadway Barnes and Noble bookstore. *Nineteen Seventy Four* came in as an intriguing advance copy in the British edition published by Serpent's Tail. I was an obsessive reader of books and comic books, but I had decided a couple of years earlier that British contemporary fiction was not for me. The novels that were mostly getting shortlisted for the Booker prize and that were featured on Radio 4 and in the Sunday newspapers were all seemingly written by privately educated, very posh, very nice people who lived in leafy North London. These books about wealthy toffs and their bloody problems said (to paraphrase Morrissey) nothing to me about my life.

But *Nineteen Seventy Four* was different. It is the story of Eddie Dunford, a young working-class journalist for the *Yorkshire Post* who stumbles his way into a sordid conspiracy while reporting on the case of a missing girl who subsequently turns up dead with wings sewn into her back. The tale is a grim one but what exhilarated me about it was the greasy, sweaty, smoky claustrophobic feel of 1970s Britain and the urgency of the prose:

Back at the house, first things first:

Phone the office.

Nothing.

No news being bad news for the Kemplays and Clare, good news for me.

Twenty-four hours coming up, tick-tock

Twenty-four hours meaning Clare dead.

This was Peace's first novel but right out of the gate his style was confident, idiosyncratic and coherent. Peace had something to say, beyond the bare bones of the narrative, and that something was the bad news that we ordinary blokes down the pub or the bookies or the dole office are doomed, because our lives are governed by a cabal of the wealthy, the wicked and the powerful.

David Peace was born in Yorkshire in 1967 and grew up in the mining and textile town of Ossett in the West Riding. He was educated at Batley Grammar School, Wakefield College and Manchester Polytechnic. In 1991 he went to Turkey to teach English as a foreign language and in 1994 he relocated to Tokyo where he's been living on and off ever since.

Exile, as it often does for writers, has allowed Peace to refine his craft and cast back an unflinching eye on his homeland.

He followed up *Nineteen Seventy Four* in the year 2000 with the equally harrowing and dazzling *Nineteen Seventy Seven* which is a retelling of the infamous Yorkshire Ripper murders. The two main characters of *Nineteen Seventy Seven* also appeared in his earlier book: Jack Whitehead, star crime reporter, was Dunford's fairly friendly rival, while Bob Fraser, a helpful Yorkshire copper, was one of Dunford's sources. But here Fraser has become something of a thug and Whitehead is jaded and traumatised by the events of *Nineteen Seventy Four* and the Ripper years. The Ripper case damages both men and indeed everyone who comes into contact with it, like some kind of terrible flesh-eating disease. Jack sees all this near the end of the novel in a passage that has become famous among we Peaceniks:

The footnotes and the margins, the tangents and the detours, the dirty tabula, the broken record.

Jack Whitehead, Yorkshire, 1977.

The bodies and the corpses, the alleys and the wasteland, the dirty men, the broken women.

Jack the Ripper, Yorkshire, 1977.

The lies and the half-truths, the truths and the half-lies, the dirty hands, the broken backs.

Two Jacks, one Yorkshire, 1977.

In 2003 *Granta* magazine named Peace as one of Britain's best novelists under forty. But what distinguished Peace from many others on the list was his defiant *northernness*. British fiction had gone through a brief period after the Second World War when torque pulled the pole of the cultural compass north. The fictional protagonists of authors such as Stan Barstow (also from Ossett), John Braine, Keith Waterhouse, Barry Hines and Alan Bennett were moulded by the bleak moorland landscape and were always intensely aware of money, accent and class in a way that southerners were not. By the time Peace came along the north's brief flowering was done and the fictional centre of gravity had again tilted back southwards. However, instead of moving to London and writing about the capital, Peace defiantly set his fictions in the Yorkshire of Barstow, Bennett and the Brontës.

Peace too is not shy about talking about the price of a sandwich or a pint of milk. For the upper-middle classes money is a vulgar topic of conversation but when you don't have any brass the lack consumes your existence. Peace's world radiates working-class authenticity, if not quite solidarity.

By the time of the publication of the third volume in the quartet, *Nineteen Eighty*, in 2001, Peace is utterly unafraid, starting his book with a story about the 'nignogs', followed by an immediate jump cut to 'Part 1: Saint Cunt' then another jump cut to a Ballardian page of dissonance that begins: '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 in 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...'

In *Nineteen Eighty* Assistant Chief Constable Peter Hunter has been asked to head a taskforce to look into the Ripper investigation. It is, as the Leeds fans chant at home games, 'Ripper 13, police nil' and Hunter is under considerable pressure to get results. As his wife suffers miscarriage after miscarriage Hunter makes himself a deal with God: if he can catch the Ripper, they will have a child. Meanwhile Britain is reeling from John Lennon's murder, strikes, Mrs Thatcher and the IRA.

As in all really good detective stories the detective mustn't just solve the case but the case must also solve the detective. The nominatively determined Hunter suffers epistemic overload throughout the narrative as he looks at brutal crime scene photographs and interviews the dead girls' relatives; and by the end, of course, he is a fundamentally changed man if indeed he is still a man at all.

Nineteen Eighty Three, the fourth and final volume in the quartet, which was published in 2002, begins backstage before a police press conference on Friday, May 13th 1983. Ten-year-old Hazel Atkins has disappeared on her way home from school. 'No more dead dogs and slashed swans for us,' Detective Dick Alderman mutters gleefully in the wings. Three characters from the previous books come back again here: the decent local lawyer Big John Pigott, Maurice Johnson the dirty cop whose Machiavellian rise has set much of the clockwork turning, and BJ the rent boy from *Nineteen Seventy Four*. The slow-motion car crash of these three disparate individuals will bring to an end Peace's scalding portrait of Yorkshire in this decade. As usual *Nineteen Eighty Three* is a potent mix of prejudice, aggression, horror and surprising black humour. Don't expect closure or happy endings but there is a forbidding satisfaction spending time in the company of an author at the top of his game.

The *Red Riding* books can be read as a series, or, as standalones unified by geography and thematically linked by murder, corruption, impotence and despair. Whether the *Red Riding Quartet* is David Peace's masterpiece is a question that is still too early to answer. Peace has written several superb, spare Japanese-focused crime novels and his two football books *The Damned United* and *Red or Dead* have become instant classics. These football novels (like the *Red Riding Quartet*) are working class, northern, socialist and the love of the game is sincere, communitarian and quasi-religious – a million miles removed from the sophisticated, ironic, metropolitan stance of, say, Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*.

Throughout *Red Riding*, Peace isn't just spinning us yarns, he's also trying to teach us a new way of telling stories: his use of leitmotif and repetition, the power of terse one- and two-word sentences, terrifying interior monologues, the blending of the real

world with a violent dreamscape signify a striking and important new voice in English fiction.

The *Red Riding Quartet* is a compelling alternative history of Yorkshire from 1974–1983 that mirrors James Ellroy’s *Underworld* trilogy as an alternative history of Los Angeles 1958–1972. Ellroy and Peace, through the medium of crime fiction, have created a paranoid, brilliant, nightmare vision of the place where they grew up.

Not everyone will be as fortunate as I was discovering David Peace for the first time at my lowest ebb on the non-reclining bereavement-fare seat on the flight from Belfast to JFK. Peace reads just as well in more comfortable circumstances but don’t expect to remain comfortable for long. These are tough, hard uncompromising books set in a world of rain and moors and not much sunlight.

*'The only thing new in this world is the
history you don't know.'*

– Harry S. Truman

Beg

Christmas bombs and Lucky on the run, Leeds United and the Bay City Rollers, The Exorcist and It Ain't Half Hot Mum.

Yorkshire, Christmas 1974.

I keep it close.

I wrote lies as truth and truth as lies, believing it all.

I fucked women I didn't love and the one I did, I fucked forever.

I killed a bad man but let others live.

I killed a child.

Yorkshire, Christmas 1974.

I keep it close.

Part 1

Yorkshire wants me

Chapter 1

'All we ever get is Lord fucking Lucan and wingless bloody crows,' smiled Gilman, like this was the best day of our lives:

Friday 13 December 1974.

Waiting for my first Front Page, the Byline Boy at last: Edward Dunford, North of England Crime Correspondent; two days too fucking late.

I looked at my father's watch.

9 a.m. and no bugger had been to bed; straight from the Press Club, still stinking of ale, into this hell:

The Conference Room, Millgarth Police Station, Leeds.

The whole bloody pack sat waiting for the main attraction, pens poised and tapes paused; hot TV lights and cigarette smoke lighting up the windowless room like a Town Hall boxing ring on a Late Night Fight Night; the paper boys taking it out on the TV set, the radios static and playing it deaf:

'They got sweet FA.'

'A quid says she's dead if they got George on it.'

Khalid Aziz at the back, no sign of Jack.

I felt a nudge. It was Gilman again, Gilman from the *Manchester Evening News* and before.

'Sorry to hear about your old man, Eddie.'

'Yeah, thanks,' I said, thinking news really did travel fucking fast.

'When's the funeral?'

I looked at my father's watch again. 'In about two hours.'

'Jesus. Hadden still taking his pound of bloody flesh then.'

'Yeah,' I said, knowing, funeral or no funeral, no way I'm letting Jack fucking Whitehead back in on this one.

'I'm sorry, like.'

'Yeah,' I said.

Seconds out:

A side door opens, everything goes quiet, everything goes slow. First a detective and the father, then Detective Chief Superintendent George Oldman, last a policewoman with the mother.

I pressed record on the Philips Pocket Memo as they took their seats behind the plastic-topped tables at the front, shuffling papers, touching glasses of water, looking anywhere but up.

In the blue corner:

Detective Chief Superintendent George Oldman, a face from before, a big man amongst big men, thick black hair plastered back to look like less, a pale face streaked beneath the lights with a thousand burst blood vessels, the purple footprints of tiny spiders running across his bleached white cheeks to the slopes of his drunken nose.

Me thinking, *his face, his people, his times.*

And in the red corner:

The mother and the father in their crumpled clothes and greasy hair, him flicking at the dandruff on his collar, her fiddling with her wedding ring, both twitching at the bang and the wail of a microphone being switched on, looking for all the world more the sinners than the sinned against.

Me thinking, did you do your own daughter?

The policewoman put her hand upon the mother's arm, the mother turned, staring at her until the policewoman looked away.

Round One:

Oldman tapped on the microphone and coughed:

'Thank you for coming gentlemen. It's been a long night for everyone, especially Mr and Mrs Kemplay, and it's going to be a long day. So we'll keep this brief.'

Oldman took a sip from a glass of water.

'At about 4 p.m. yesterday evening, 12 December, Clare Kemplay disappeared on her way home from Morley Grange Junior and Infants, Morley. Clare left school with two classmates at a quarter to four. At the junction of Rooms Lane and Victoria Road, Clare said goodbye to her friends and was last seen walking down Victoria Road towards her home at approximately four o'clock. This was the last time anyone saw Clare.'

The father was looking at Oldman.

'When Clare failed to return home, a search was launched early yesterday evening by the Morley Police, along with the help of Mr and Mrs Kemplay's friends and neighbours, however, as yet, no clue has been found as to the nature of Clare's disap-

pearance. Clare has never gone missing before and we are obviously very concerned as to her whereabouts and safety.'

Oldman touched the glass again but let it go.

'Clare is ten years old. She is fair and has blue eyes and long straight hair. Last night Clare was wearing an orange waterproof kagool, a dark blue turtleneck sweater, pale blue denim trousers with a distinctive eagle motif on the back left pocket and red Wellington boots. When Clare left school, she was carrying a plastic Co-op carrier bag containing a pair of black gym shoes.'

Oldman held up an enlarged photograph of a smiling girl, saying, 'Copies of this recent school photograph will be distributed at the end.'

Oldman took another sip of water.

Chairs scraped, papers rustled, the mother sniffed, the father stared.

'Mrs Kemplay would now like to read a short statement in the hope that any member of the public who may have seen Clare after four o'clock yesterday evening, or who may have any information regarding Clare's whereabouts or her disappearance, will come forward to assist us in our investigation. Thank you.'

Detective Chief Superintendent Oldman gently turned the microphone towards Mrs Kemplay.

Camera flashes exploded across the Conference Room, startling the mother and leaving her blinking into our faces.

I looked down at my notebook and the wheels turning the tape inside the Philips Pocket Memo.

'I would like to appeal to anybody who knows where my Clare is or who saw her after yesterday teatime to please telephone the police. Clare is a very happy girl and I know she would never just run off without telling me. Please, if you know where she is or if you've seen her, please telephone the police.'

A strangled cough, then silence.

I looked up.

Mrs Kemplay had her hands to her mouth, her eyes closed.

Mr Kemplay stood up and then sat back down, as Oldman said:

'Gentlemen, I have given you all the information we have at the moment and I'm afraid we haven't got time to take any

questions right now. We've scheduled another press conference for five, unless there are any developments before then. Thank you gentlemen.'

Chairs scraped, papers rustled, murmurs became mutters, whispers words.

Any developments, fuck.

'Thank you, gentlemen. That'll be all for now.'

Detective Chief Superintendent Oldman stood up and turned to go but no-one else at the table moved. He turned back into the glare of the TV lights, nodding at journalists he couldn't see.

'Thank you, lads.'

I looked down at the notebook again, the wheels still turning the tape, seeing any developments face down in a ditch in an orange waterproof kagool.

I looked back up, the other detective was lifting Mr Kemplay up by his elbow and Oldman was holding open the side door for Mrs Kemplay, whispering something to her, making her blink.

'Here you go.' A heavy detective in a good suit was passing along copies of the school photograph.

I felt a nudge. It was Gilman again.

'Doesn't look so fucking good does it?'

'No,' I said, Clare Kemplay's face smiling up at me.

'Poor cow. What must she be going through, eh?'

'Yeah,' I said, looking at my father's watch, my wrist cold.

'Here, you'd better fuck off hadn't you.'

'Yeah.'

The M1, Motorway One, South from Leeds to Ossett.

Pushing my father's Viva a fast sixty in the rain, the radio rocking to the Rollers' *Shang-a-lang*.

Seven odd miles, chanting the copy like a mantra:

A mother made an emotional plea.

The mother of missing ten-year-old Clare Kemplay made an emotional plea.

Mrs Sandra Kemplay made an emotional plea as fears grew.

Emotional pleas, growing fears.

I pulled up outside my mother's house on Wesley Street,

Ossett, at ten to ten, wondering why the Rollers hadn't covered *The Little Drummer Boy*, thinking get it done and done right.

Into the phone:

'OK, sorry. Do the lead paragraph again and then it's done. Right then: Mrs Sandra Kemplay made an emotional plea this morning for the safe return of her daughter, Clare, as fears grew for the missing Morley ten-year-old.

'New para: Clare went missing on her way home from school in Morley early yesterday evening and an intensive police search throughout the night has so far failed to yield any clue as to Clare's whereabouts.

'OK. Then it's as it was before . . .

'Thanks, love . . .

'No, I'll be through by then and it'll take my mind off things . . .

'See you Kath, bye.'

I replaced the receiver and checked my father's watch:

Ten past ten.

I walked down the hall to the back room, thinking it's done and done right.

Susan, my sister, was standing by the window with a cup of tea, looking out on the back garden and the drizzle. My Aunt Margaret was sat at the table, a cup of tea in front of her. Aunt Madge was in the rocking chair, balancing a cup of tea in her lap. No-one sat in my father's chair by the cupboard.

'You all done then?' said Susan, not turning round.

'Yeah. Where's Mum?'

'She's upstairs, love, getting ready,' said Aunt Margaret standing up, picking up her cup and saucer. 'Can I get you a fresh cup?'

'No, I'm OK thanks.'

'The cars'll be here soon,' said Aunt Madge to no-one.

I said, 'I best go and get ready.'

'All right, love. You go on then. I'll have a nice cup of tea for you when you come down.' Aunt Margaret went through into the kitchen.

'Do you think Mum's finished in the bathroom?'

'Why don't you ask her,' said my sister to the garden and the rain.

Up the stairs, two at a time like before; a shit, a shave, and a shower and I'd be set, thinking a quick wank and a wash'd be better, suddenly wondering if my father could read my thoughts now.

The bathroom door was open, my mother's door closed. In my room a clean white shirt lay freshly ironed on the bed, my father's black tie next to it. I switched on the radio in the shape of a ship, David Essex promising to make me a star. I looked at my face in the wardrobe mirror and saw my mother standing in the doorway in a pink slip.

'I put a clean shirt and a tie on the bed for you.'

'Yeah, thanks Mum.'

'How'd it go this morning?'

'All right, you know.'

'It was on the radio first thing.'

'Yeah?' I said, fighting back the questions.

'Doesn't sound so good does it?'

'No,' I said, wanting to lie.

'Did you see the mother?'

'Yeah.'

'Poor thing,' said my mother, closing the door behind her.

I sat down on the bed and the shirt, staring at the poster of Peter Lorimer on the back of the door.

Me thinking, ninety miles an hour.

The three car procession crawled down the Dewsbury Cutting, through the unlit Christmas lights in the centre of the town, and slowly back up the other side of the valley.

My father took the first car. My mother, my sister, and me were in the next, the last car jammed full of aunties, blood and fake. No-one was saying much in the first two cars.

The rain had eased by the time we reached the crematorium, though the wind still whipped me raw as I stood at the door, juggling handshakes and a cigarette that had been a fucker to light.

Inside, a stand-in delivered the eulogy, the family vicar too busy fighting his own battle with cancer on the very ward my

father had vacated early Wednesday morning. So Super Sub gave us a eulogy to a man neither he nor we ever knew, mistaking my father for a joiner, not a tailor. And I sat there, outraged by the journalistic licence of it all, thinking these people had carpenters on the bloody brain.

Eyes front, I stared at the box just three steps from me, imagining a smaller white box and the Kemplays in black, wondering if the vicar would fuck that up too when they finally found her.

I looked down at my knuckles turning from red to white as they gripped the cold wooden pew, catching a glimpse of my father's watch beneath my cuff, and felt a hand on my sleeve.

In the silence of the crematorium my mother's eyes asked for some calm, saying at least that man is trying, that the details aren't always so important. Next to her my sister, her make-up smudged and almost gone.

And then he was gone too.

I bent down to put the prayer book on the ground, thinking of Kathryn and that maybe I'd suggest a drink after I'd written up the afternoon press conference. Maybe we'd go back to hers again. Anyway, there was no way we could back to mine, not tonight at any rate. Then thinking, there's no fucking way the dead can read your thoughts.

Outside, I stood about juggling another set of handshakes and a cigarette, making sure the cars all knew the way back to my mother's.

I got in the very last car and sat in more silence, unable to place any of the faces, or name any of the names. There was a moment's panic as the driver took a different route back to Ossett, convincing me I'd joined the wrong fucking party. But then we were heading back up the Dewsbury Cutting, all the other passengers suddenly smiling at me like they'd all thought the exact same thing.

Back at the house, first things first:

Phone the office.

Nothing.

No news being bad news for the Kemplays and Clare, good news for me.

Twenty-four hours coming up, tick-tock.

Twenty-four hours meaning Clare dead.

I hung up, glanced at my father's watch and wondered how long I'd have to stay amongst his kith and kin.

Give it an hour.

I walked back down the hall, the Byline Boy at last, bringing more death to the house of the dead.

'So this Southern bloke, his car breaks down up on Moors. He walks back to farm down road and knocks on door. Old farmer opens door and Southerner says, do you know where nearest garage is? Old farmer says no. So Southerner asks him if he knows way to town. Farmer says he don't know. How about nearest telephone? Farmer says he don't know. So Southerner says, you don't know bloody much do you. Old farmer says that's as may be, but am not one that's lost.'

Uncle Eric holding court, proud the only time he ever left Yorkshire was to kill Germans. Uncle Eric, who I'd seen kill a fox with a spade when I was ten.

I sat down on the arm of my father's empty chair, thinking of seaview flats in Brighton, of Southern girls called Anna or Sophie, and of a misplaced sense of filial duty now half redundant.

'Bet you're glad you came back, aren't you lad?' winked Aunty Margaret, pushing another cup of tea into my palms.

I sat there in the middle of the crowded back room, my tongue on the roof of my mouth, trying to move the stuck white bread, glad of something to clear out the taste of warm and salty ham, wishing for a whisky and thinking of my father yet again; a man who'd signed the Pledge on his eighteenth birthday for no other reason than they asked.

'Well now, would you look at this.'

I was miles and years away and then suddenly aware my hour was at hand, feeling all their eyes on me.

My Aunty Madge was waving a paper around like she was after some bluebottle.

Me sat on the arm of that chair, feeling like the fly.

Some of my younger cousins had been out for sweets and had brought back the paper, my paper.

My mother grabbed the paper from Aunt Madge, turning the inside pages until she came to the Births and Deaths.

Shit, shit, shit.

'Is Dad in?' said Susan.

'No. Must be tomorrow,' replied my mother, looking at me with those sad, sad eyes.

'Mrs Sandra Kemplay made an emotional plea this morning for the safe return of her daughter.' My Aunt Edie from Altrincham had the paper now.

Emotional fucking pleas.

'By Edward Dunford, North of England Crime Correspondent. Well I say,' read Aunt Margaret over my Aunt Edie's shoulder.

All around the room everyone began assuring me how proud my father would have been and how it was just such a pity he wasn't here now to witness this great day, my great day.

'I read all stuff you did on that Ratcatcher bloke,' Uncle Eric was saying. 'Strange one that one.'

The Ratcatcher, inside pages, crumbs from Jack fucking Whitehead's table.

'Yeah,' I said, smiling and nodding my head this way and that, picturing my father sat in this empty chair by the cupboard reading the back page first.

There were pats on the back and then, for one brief moment, the paper was there in my hands and I looked down:

Edward Dunford, North of England Crime Correspondent.

I didn't read another line.

Off the paper went again round the room.

I saw my sister across the room sat on the windowsill, her eyes closed, her hands to her mouth.

She opened her eyes and stared back at me. I tried to stand, to go over to her, but she stood up and left the room.

I wanted to follow her, to say:

I'm sorry, I'm sorry; I'm sorry that it had to happen today of all days.

'We'll be asking him for his autograph soon, won't we,' laughed Aunt Madge, passing me a fresh cup.

'He'll always be Little Eddie to me,' said Aunt Edie from Altrincham.

'Thanks,' I said.

'Doesn't look so good though does it?' said Aunty Madge.

'No,' I lied.

'There's been a couple now, haven't there?' said Aunt Edie, a cup of tea in one hand, my hand in the other.

'Aye, going back a few years now. That little lass over in Castleford,' said my Aunty Madge.

'That is going back a bit, aye. There was that one not so long ago mind, over our way,' said Aunt Edie, taking a mouthful of tea.

'Aye, in Rochdale. I remember that one,' said Aunty Madge, tightening her grip on her saucer.

'Never found her,' sighed Aunt Edie.

'Really?' I said.

'Never caught no-one either.'

'Never do though, do they,' said Aunty Madge to the whole room.

'I can remember a time when these sorts of things never happened.'

'Thems in Manchester were the first.'

'Aye,' muttered Aunt Edie, letting go of my hand.

'Evil they were, just plain bloody evil,' whispered Aunty Madge.

'And to think there's them that'd have her walking about like nowt was wrong.'

'Some folk are just plain daft.'

'Short memories an' all,' said Aunt Edie, looking out at the garden and the rain.

Edward Dunford, North of England Crime Correspondent, out the door.

Cats and bloody dogs.

Motorway One back to Leeds, lorry-thick and the going slow. Pushing the Viva a hard sixty-five in the rain, as good as it got.

Local radio:

'The search continues for missing Morley schoolgirl Clare Kemplay, as fears grow ...'

A glance at the clock told me what I already knew:

4 p.m. meant time was against me, meant time was against

her, meant no time to do background checks on missing kids, meant no questions at the five o'clock press conference.

Shit, shit, shit.

Coming off the motorway fast, I weighed up the pros and cons of asking my questions blind, right there and then at the five o'clock, with nothing but two old ladies behind me.

Two kids missing, Castleford and Rochdale, no dates, only maybes.

Long shots in the dark.

Punch a button, national radio: sixty-seven dismissed from the *Kentish Times* and the *Slough Evening Mail*, NUJ Provincial Journalists set to strike from 1 January.

Edward Dunford, Provincial Journalist.

Long shots kick de bucket.

I saw Detective Chief Superintendent Oldman's face, I saw my editor's face, and I saw a Chelsea flat with a beautiful Southern girl called Sophie or Anna closing the door.

You might be balding but it's not fucking Kojak.

I parked behind Millgarth Police Station as they were packing up the market, gutters full of cabbage leaves and rotten fruit, thinking play it safe or play it scoop?

I squeezed the steering wheel, offering up a prayer:

LET NO OTHER FUCKER ASK THE QUESTION.

I knew it for what it was, a prayer.

The engine dead, another prayer from the steering wheel:

DON'T FUCK UP.

Up the steps and through the double doors, back into Millgarth Police Station.

Muddy floors and yellow lights, drunken songs and short fuses.

I flashed my Press Card at the desk, the Sergeant flashed back a mustard smile:

'Cancelled. Press Office rang round.'

'You're joking? Why?'

'No news. Nine o'clock tomorrow morning.'

'Good,' I grinned, thinking no questions asked.

The Sergeant winced.

I glanced around, opened my wallet. 'What's the SP?'

He took the wallet out of my hand, plucked out a fiver, and handed it back. 'That'll do nicely, sir.'

'So?'

'Nowt.'

'That was a fucking fiver.'

'So a fiver says she's dead.'

'Hold the fucking Front Page,' I said, walking back out.

'Give my best to Jack.'

'Fuck off.'

'Who loves you baby?'

5.30 p.m.

Back in the office.

Barry Gannon behind his boxes, George Greaves face down on his desk, Gaz from Sport talking shit.

No sign of Jack fucking Whitehead.

Thank Christ.

Shit, so where the fuck was he?

Paranoid:

I'm Edward Dunford, North of England Crime Correspondent and it says so on every fucking *Evening Post*.

'How did it go?' Kathryn Taylor, fresh curls to her fringe and an ugly cream sweater, standing up behind her desk and then sitting straight back down.

'Like a dream.'

'Like a dream?'

'Yeah. Perfect.' I couldn't keep the grin off my face.

She was frowning. 'What happened?'

'Nothing.'

'Nothing?' She looked utterly lost.

'It was cancelled. They're still searching. Got nothing,' I said, emptying my pockets on to her desk.

'I meant the funeral.'

'Oh.' I picked up my cigarettes.

Telephones were ringing, typewriters clattering.

Kathryn was looking at my notebook on her desk. 'So what do they think?'

I took off my jacket and picked up her coffee and lit a

cigarette, all in one move. 'She's dead. Listen, is the boss in a meeting?'

'I don't know. I don't think so. Why?'

'I want him to get me an interview with George Oldman. Tomorrow morning, before the press conference.'

Kathryn picked up my notebook and began spinning it between her fingers. 'You'll be lucky.'

'Will you speak to Hadden. He likes you,' I said, taking the notebook from her.

'You're joking?'

I needed facts, hard fucking facts.

'Barry!' I shouted over the telephones, the typewriters, and Kathryn's head. 'When you've got a minute, can I have a quick word?'

Barry Gannon from behind his fortress of files, 'If I must.'

'Cheers.' I was suddenly aware of Kathryn's eyes on me.

She looked angry. 'She's dead?'

'If it bleeds, it leads,' I said, walking over to Barry's desk and hating myself.

I turned back. 'Please, Kath?'

She stood up and left the room.

Fuck.

Tip to tip, I lit another cigarette.

Barry Gannon, skinny, single, and obsessed, papers everywhere, covered in figures.

I crouched down beside his desk.

Barry Gannon was chewing his pen. 'So?'

'Unsolved missing kids. One in Castleford and one in Rochdale? Maybe.'

'Yeah. Rochdale I'd have to check, but the one in Castleford was 1969. Moon landings. Jeanette Garland.'

Bells ringing. 'And they never found her?'

'No.' Barry took the end of the pen from his mouth, staring at me.

'Police have anything at all?'

'Doubt it.'

'Cheers. I'd better get to it then.'

'Mention it,' he winked.

I stood up. 'How's Dawsongate?'