

A VERY  
PRIVATE GRAVE

BOOK 1: THE MONASTERY MURDERS

Donna Fletcher Crow

MONARCH  
BOOKS

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*For this corruptible must put on incorruption,  
and this mortal must put on immortality.  
So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,  
and this mortal shall have put on immortality,  
then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,  
Death is swallowed up in victory.  
O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:53–55

**For the real life Father Dominic  
and  
For our own Dominic Ambrose**

Every book is a team effort and I am so grateful to my team:  
Father Lee Kenyon, for his research help;  
Janet Benrey, my agent, for her faith in this work;  
Tony Collins of Monarch Books for his vision;  
Jan Greenough, editor extraordinaire, for her care and patience.

## TIME LINE

### *AD*

- 633 Oswald becomes king of Northumbria
- 635 Aidan establishes monastery on Lindisfarne
- 636 Cuthbert born
- 651 Cuthbert enters Melrose Monastery
- 654 Benedict Biscop's first journey to Rome
- 664 Synod of Whitby
- 673 Bede Born
- 687 Cuthbert dies
- 700 Lindisfarne Gospels produced
- 793 Danes sack Lindesfarne
- 797 Cuthbert's Folk begin journey with his body
- 883 Cuthbert's body rests in Chester-le-Street
- 925 Aethelstan crowned king over all England
- 995 Cuthbert's body taken to Durham
- 1083 Medieval cell re-established on Lindisfarne
- 1104 Cuthbert relics translated to new cathedral
- 1538 Durham Monastery dissolved by Henry VIII
- 1827 Cuthbert relics re-examined

# Prologue

20 March, the year of our Lord 698

The Holy Isle of Lindisfarne

*Hands folded, heads bowed, the black-robed brothers gathered in the front of their monastery church. The candles glowed beside the rough stone altar, casting flickering shadows on the hard-tamped earthen floor, marking the spot where their beloved Cuthbert had lain for eleven years.*

*Now the brothers must perform their solemn task. Eleven years was the prescribed period. Eleven years buried in the earth. Plenty of time for worms, rot and decay to have done their work. Plenty of time for the body of the holy Cuthbert to achieve the end of all mortal flesh. The prior, presiding in the absence of the abbot, who was on retreat, read out the solemn words, “Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”*

*And the brothers replied, “All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.”*

*The prior strengthened his voice, “The Lord knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”*

*Again the reply, “All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.”*

*“All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. The dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”*

*“All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.”*

*Their brief litany ended, the brothers set about their task, digging in the consecrated ground. A few feet down their shovels hit the lid of the stone sarcophagus. They dropped to their knees and did the rest of the digging with their hands, brushing the dirt*

from the stone until they could grasp the handles on each end and lift the hewn stone box from the soil. Now the precious bones could be washed clean and enshrined above ground in order to be more accessible to the steady stream of pilgrims who made their way to Lindisfarne to pray at the holy man's grave.

The brothers knelt around the coffin while the prior led in a prayer of petition for rest to attend the soul of their dear departed. "May light perpetual shine upon him."

"And may he rise in Glory," the brotherhood replied. The prior sprinkled the coffin with holy water and blessed it with incense. Then, the two strongest brothers lifted the heavy stone lid.

All held their breath as stone grated on stone. The cloud of incense cleared, and the brotherhood crept forward to view the remains.

One brother fainted. Another shrieked. Several fell back, crossing themselves. The prior began babbling.

There before them was not the skeleton they had expected. The casket which had been buried in the earth, untouched, beside their own altar for eleven years held a fresh, fully intact body. Cuthbert looked more like a man who had been asleep for eleven hours than one who had been buried for eleven years. Even his vestments were clean and fresh, unstained by water, mud or worms.

One brother kilted his robe to enable him to run to the shore. The tide was in, so he was obliged to shout across the neck of water to the abbot, who was making retreat on tiny Hobthrush Island, just beyond the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne. The abbot paddled over in his tiny coracle and brought order to his astonished, agitated community.

He gave precise orders: dress the uncorrupted body in fresh vestments; place it, along with Cuthbert's portable altar and other holy objects, in the wooden coffin already prepared, and proceed with the elevation ceremony. God had spoken clearly.

Cuthbert was a saint.

## Chapter 1

Felicity flung her history book against the wall. She wasn't studying for the priesthood to learn about ancient saints. She wanted to bring justice to this screwed up world. Children were starving in Africa, war was ravaging the Middle East, women everywhere were treated as inferiors. Even here in England—

She stopped her internal rant when she realized the crash of her book had obscured the knock at her door. Reluctantly she picked up the book, noting with satisfaction the smudge it had left on the wall, and went into the hall. Her groan wasn't entirely internal when she made out the black cassock and gray scapular of her caller through the glass panel of the door. She couldn't have been in less of a mood to see one of the long-faced monks who ran the College of the Transfiguration which she had chosen to attend in a moment of temporary insanity. She jerked the door open with a bang.

"Father Dominic!" Felicity was immediately sorry for her surly mood. Father Dominic was an entirely different matter. She was always happy to see him. "I didn't realize you were back from your pilgrimage." She held the door wide for him as he limped down the hall to her living room.

"Just returned, my dear. Just returned." As he spoke, he smiled with a twinkle in his eyes that belied his eighty-five years, but he couldn't quite suppress a small sigh as he lowered himself stiffly onto her sofa.

"I'll put the kettle on." Felicity turned toward her small kitchen. "I'm so sorry I don't have any scones."

"No, no. Just tea today—black."

She looked at him, puzzled for a moment, then remembered.

Oh, yes—today was Ash Wednesday. Solemn fast and all that. Felicity mentally rolled her eyes as she filled the kettle with water and clicked it on.

A few minutes later she filled his cup with a steaming, amber stream of his favorite Yorkshire Gold tea. A year or two ago, the Community had started serving a cheaper blend of tea, and donating the money saved to the African Children's Fund Father Dominic chaired—a worthy cause, but the tea was dreadful.

He raised his cup. "Oh, who could ask for more? The nectar of the gods." Still, she knew he was missing her scones, for which he sometimes provided little jars of quince jam from the Community kitchen. And at Christmas he had brought her favorite—slices of dark, rich fruit cake encased in marzipan an inch thick.

And yet today she wondered if he noticed what he was or wasn't eating at all, he was so animated with his plans for the major funding drive the Children's Fund was set to launch. "If one puts together abortion, infant mortality, AIDS and traumatic deaths, South Africa's daily death toll is appalling. Thousands die in a matter of months. If this were a war, such troop casualties would not be acceptable. The entire future of that nation—the whole continent, really—is at stake. They simply cannot afford to lose so many of their people—especially the children who are the future. If you don't maintain health and keep order, instability, violence and poverty tear a country apart."

Felicity nodded vigorously. *Yes, this was more like it. This was what she wanted to hear about, not some useless church history nonsense.* Father Dominic had spent his life working in South Africa, and today his passion made every word strike her heart. "And it isn't just South Africa, the rest of the continent looks to them—to us—for stability. If South Africa fails, millions of Africans will curse us—we who stand by and let it happen."

Still, there was hope; Dominic had talked to key people while on pilgrimage and had secured a source for a vast amount for the fund, although he didn't say what that source was. "This will be enough to build a first-rate hospital for AIDS babies in



Africa and fund a research wing for prevention and cure. There are good leaders in the government. There are people working for justice. If we can just give the people hope to hold on—”

His eyes took on a dreamy look and a little smile played around his mouth. “Hope. That’s what it’s always been about. Through the centuries... At last, the treasure to be put to a truly worthy use...” He ducked his head and took a quick sip of tea. “Forgive me, I’ve said too much.” He became suddenly thoughtful and lapsed into a most uncharacteristic silence. All Felicity’s best efforts couldn’t coax any more stories from him. Perhaps it was just the solemnity of the day, but Felicity did miss his stories—even the ones she had heard multiple times.

He drained his cup and set it down. “Ah, thank you my dear. Always a pleasure to be in your bright company. But now I must be getting back up the hill. Father Superior has asked me to do the ashing at mass, so I must prepare.” He struggled to his feet, his broad-shouldered, once-muscular frame revealing gauntness under the weight of his black woolen cassock, as did the folds of flesh that hung beneath his square jaw.

“Oh, I almost forgot.” He patted the canvas scrip which hung at his side from a strap slung across his chest. “I thought this might interest you.” He held out a small parcel wrapped in brown paper and tied up with old-fashioned string. His hand shook ever so slightly as Felicity took it from him. The gesture was so endearing; his shyness charming; his eagerness humbling. If the circumstances had been vastly different, he could have been a suitor offering jewels to his beloved, or perhaps in an earlier age a troubadour bestowing an ode to his lady. And, oddly enough, Felicity had the distinct impression that he hadn’t at all forgotten, but rather that delivering this small package had been the sole object of his visit. One might almost say his mission.

Felicity couldn’t help herself. She stepped forward and kissed him on his cheek. “Thank you, Father.”

Unexpectedly he placed his hands on each side of her forehead. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.” She felt a warmth from his hands that infused her whole head and radiated toward her body, as if she were being bathed in warm oil. She almost fancied a faint scent of spice as he made the sign of the cross over her.

Moving inside a bubble of hushed awe, she held the door for him and he walked out slowly, as if reluctant to leave, stepping carefully to avoid limping. “I’ll see you at mass, Father.”

She shut the door behind him and turned to the window to watch his slow progress down the uneven sidewalk, his gray scapular blowing in the wind. Somehow she wanted to call out to him, to cling to the moment, but already it was passing, the normality of the day moving in on a holy moment. Yet even as she turned away from the window, the warmth of his touch remained on her head. She turned back one last time, holding her hand out instinctively – but he’d gone. Only a fleeting shadow brushed the corner of her eye. She shivered.

“Right. Back to the real world.” Felicity spoke aloud to make herself focus. She looked longingly at the small brown package in her hand. It felt like a book. A very slim volume. Had Father D found a publisher for his poetry? Her fingers plucked at the string. No. If this was a collection of her friend’s poetry, perusing it must not be rushed. Reading it would be her treat when she finished the work she had set for herself for the day. Lectures had been cancelled to mark the solemnity, but essays would still be due when they were due. With a sigh she slipped the gift into one of the copious patch pockets of her skirt, and returned to the tome on the Anglo-Saxon church Father Antony had assigned, forcing herself to concentrate on its obscure irrelevancies.

That had been the hardest thing she had found about adjusting to her first year at theological college—the constant pressure of work, the lack of time to pursue her own interests—and that in a monastery, even. You really would think, living with a bunch of monks and future priests, you’d have all the time in the world. Felicity shook her head.

And besides that, there was no margin for error on her part. As one of only four women among the student body of forty-some—and the only American—Felicity felt a double burden to reach the highest standard possible. This was the first year the Anglo-Catholic College of the Transfiguration had accepted women as ordinands, although they were still housed off campus, awaiting alterations to the dormitories. Before “the Great Change” a few women enrolled as students, but were not allowed equal status with the male ordinands. Last year, however, the college had submitted to the winds of change and the powers that be, so now the women had full status—and double pressure.

Felicity, however, was never one to let such obstacles discourage her. She could rise to any challenge, and her determination to succeed in this male-dominated world knew no limits. Anyway, she had few complaints. She had been warmly welcomed—by most. A handful of ordinands, and perhaps two or three of the monks or lay teachers, were less warm—because she was female or because she was American, she wasn’t sure.

Two hours later, the insistent ringing of the Community bell called her back from her reading just in time to fling a long black cassock over her Shetland sweater and dash across the street and up the hill to the Community grounds. Her long legs carried her the distance in under three minutes—she had timed herself. Once inside the high stone wall enclosing the Community, she slowed her pace. It never failed. No matter how irritated she became with all the ancient ritual and nonsense of the place, there *was* something about the storybook quality of it all that got through to her in her quieter moments.

The spicy scent of incense met her at the door of the church. She dipped her finger in the bowl of holy water and turned to share it with the brother just behind her. Shy Brother Matthew extended a plump finger without meeting her eyes. They each crossed themselves and slipped into their seats in the choir.

“*Miserere mei, Deus...*” The choir and cantors had practiced for weeks to be able to sing Psalm 51 to the haunting melody

composed by Allegri. The words ascended to the vaulted ceiling; the echoes reverberated. Candles flickered in the shadowed corners. She had been here for six months—long enough for the uniqueness of it all to have palled to boredom—but somehow there was a fascination she couldn't define. "Mystery," the monks would tell her. And she could do no better.

What was the right term to describe how she was living? Counter-cultural existence? Alternate lifestyle? She pondered for a moment, then smiled. Parallel universe. That was it. She was definitely living in a parallel universe. The rest of the world was out there, going about its everyday life, with no idea that this world existed alongside it.

It was a wonderful, cozy, secretive feeling as she thought of bankers and shopkeepers rushing home after a busy day, mothers preparing dinner for hungry schoolchildren, farmers milking their cows—all over this little green island, the workaday world hummed along to the pace of modern life. And here she was on a verdant hillside in Yorkshire, living a life hardly anyone knew even existed. It was a very "Harry Potter" experience.

She forced her attention back to the penitential service with its weighty readings, somber plainchant responses and minor key music, set against purple vestments. Only when they came to the blessing of the ashes did she realize Father Dominic wasn't in his usual place. Her disappointment was sharp. He had definitely said he was to do the imposition of the ashes and she had felt receiving the ashen cross on her forehead from that dear man would give the ancient ritual added meaning. Instead, Father Antony, one of the secular priests who lectured at the college, not even one of the monastic Community, stood to hold the small pot of palm ashes while Father Anselm, the Superior of the Community, blessed them with holy water and incense.

Felicity knelt at the altar rail. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The ashes were cold, a sooty mark of grief, gritty on her forehead.

"Amen," she responded automatically.

She was back in her seat, turning ahead to the final hymn, “Forty Days and Forty Nights” when she heard the soft slapping of sandals on the stone floor. *Oh, there’s Father Dominic!* She relaxed at the thought, putting away her worries that he had suddenly been taken ill. But her relief was short-lived when Father Clement, the principal of the college, and Jonathan Breen, a scholar making a retreat at the monastery, slipped to the altar for their ashes.

The final notes of the postlude were still echoing high overhead when Felicity rose from her seat and hurried outside. Dinner, a vegetarian Lenten meal, would start in the refectory almost immediately and it wouldn’t do to be late. If she hurried, though, she could just dash back to her flat and pick up a book of Latin poetry for Father Dominic. She had a new volume of Horace, and she knew Father D loved the Roman’s half-Stoic, half-Epicurean philosophy. He would have time to enjoy what he called his “guilty pleasure” while he recuperated from his indisposition.

She bounded up the single flight of stairs, flung open her door and came to a sudden halt. “Oh!” The cry was knocked from her like a punch in the stomach. She couldn’t believe it. She backed against the wall, closing her eyes in the hope that all would right itself when she opened them. It didn’t. The entire flat had been turned upside down.

Felicity stood frozen for perhaps a full minute, trying to take it all in: books pulled from shelves, drawers pulled from her desk, cushions flung from chairs. Hardly breathing, she rushed into her kitchen, bath, bedroom—all chaos—sheets and duvet ripped from her bed, clothes pulled from her wardrobe. She picked her way through scattered papers, dumped files, ripped letters. Dimly she registered that her computer and CD player were still there. Oh, and there was the Horace book still by her bed. She pulled her purse from under a pile of clothes. Empty. But its contents lay nearby. Credit cards and money still there.

Not robbery. So then, what? Why?

Was this an anti-women-clergy thing? Had she underestimated the extent of the resentment? Or was it an anti-American thing? The American president was widely unpopular in England. Had he done something to trigger an anti-American demonstration? Felicity would be the last to know. She never turned on the news.

Well, whatever it was, she would show them. If someone in the college thought they could scare her off by flinging a few books around, she'd give them something new to think about. She stormed out, slamming her door hard enough to rattle the glass pane, and strode up the hill at twice the speed she had run down it. Not for nothing her years of rigorous exercise at the ballet barre. When she reached the monastery grounds, she keyed in the numbers on the security lock with angry jabs and barely waited for the high, black iron gates to swing open before she was speeding up the graveled walk.

Felicity's long blonde braid thumped against her back as she charged onward, her mind seething. If those self-righteous prigs who posed as her fellow students thought they could put her off with some sophomoric trick—

She approached the college building, practicing the speech she would deliver to all assembled for dinner in the refectory: *"Now listen up, you lot! If you think you can push me around just because your skirts are longer than mine..."*

She punched a clenched-fist gesture toward her imaginary cassock-clad audience, then saw the Horace book still clutched in her hand. Oh, yes. First things first. She would have missed the opening prayer anyway. She would just stop by Father D's room—then she would tell them.

She hurried on up the path beyond the college to the monastery, ran her swipe card through the lock, and was halfway down the hall before the door clicked shut behind her. She had only been to Dominic's room once before, to collect a poetry book he was anxious to share with her, but she would have had no trouble locating it, even had the door not been standing ajar.

She pushed it wider, preparing to step in. “Father D—” she stopped at the sight of a man in a black cassock standing there, praying. He jerked around at the sound of her voice and she recognized Father Antony, her church history lecturer.

She took a step backward when she saw the look of horror on his sheet-white face. “Felicity! Don’t come in.” He held up a hand to stop her and she saw it was covered with blood.

“Father D! Is he hemorrhaging?” She lunged forward, then stopped at the sight before her.

The whole room seemed covered in blood. Bright red splotches on the pristine white walls and bedding, on the open pages of a prayer book, on the statue of our Lord, forming lurid stigmata on His hands extended in mercy...

And in the center of the floor, in a pool of red, his battered head all but unrecognizable— her beloved Father Dominic. The smell of fresh blood clogged her nostrils. Gorge rose in her throat.

“Felicity—” Father Antony extended his reddened hands to her in a pleading gesture.

“No!” She screamed, wielding her Latin book as a shield against the blood, a red haze of shock and horror clouding her vision.

She couldn’t believe Antony’s face could get even whiter. “Felicity, wait. Listen—”

She dimly registered his words, but the voice in her head shouted with far greater force. *No! It can’t be. It’s a mistake. I’m in the wrong room. Must be.* She shook her head against the nightmare she had seen yet couldn’t accept that she had seen. Blackness rolled toward her.

She staggered backward into the hall and slumped to the floor as the room spun before her. She closed her eyes against the darkness as her mind reeled, groping for a coherent thought. *How could this be?*

Only a short time ago she had been revelling in the peace of this remote holy place. Where could such violence have come

from? How was it possible here? In a place of prayer? To a holy man. *Why?*

If Father Dominic wasn't safe, who could be?

And even as the questions tumbled, half-formed through her head, even as her mind denied the act her eyes had seen, she knew she had to find an explanation. How could she continue studying—believing in—purpose and justice, if such senseless irrationality reigned free?

Focusing on the questions gave her strength to get to her feet again.

Antony was still standing dazed in the gore-splattered room, looking as though he could collapse in the middle of the pool of blood. Felicity grabbed his arm, jerked him into the corridor, and shoved him against the wall, where he stayed, leaning heavily. He held his hands before his face as if unbelieving they were his own. "When he missed mass I came to check on him... I felt for a pulse—"

"We must get help!" Felicity looked wildly around.

"Yes, of course." Her energy seemed to galvanize Antony. He pushed himself forward unsteadily. "Forgive me, I feel so stupid. It was the horror. I—we must tell the superior. He'll call the police."

"Police? You mean an ambulance." Felicity started toward the room again. Yes, that was it—how could she have dithered so when they must get help? "He's lost so much blood, but maybe—"

"No!" Antony gripped her shoulder with more strength than she realized he was capable of. "Don't go in there again, Felicity. It's useless."

She knew. She had seen the blood.



## Chapter 2

The bell chiming for Compline told Felicity that four hours had passed, and yet she had no sense of time or place. The police had asked a few of them to remain in the common room after their initial questioning. Felicity had chosen a deep, overstuffed chair in a dark corner of the room, and managed to remain largely unnoticed. A woman police constable pressed a beaker of strong, sweet tea into her hands, and she realized she hadn't eaten since lunch. Still, she only sipped at it. The mug was far more valuable for its warmth as she cupped her hands around it.

To her surprise, Antony, who had changed out of his blood-smeared cassock, noticed her shiver and slipped his black suit jacket around her shoulders. "Thanks. Normally my cassock is warm enough— I..." She realized she was babbling and fell into silence.

Antony just smiled before he turned back to his discussion of medieval church history with Dr. Breen, who was using his retreat time to study the Community's collection of manuscripts. The athletic-looking, blond American was explaining the importance of one of the manuscripts Benedict Biscop brought back from Rome in the seventh century, and questioning whether or not Bede had interpreted it correctly. History. Irrelevancies. Felicity was furious. She wanted to fling herself at them and shake them both. *Father Dominic is dead! Some horrible, violent madman is stalking the cloisters of this monastery and there you sit engaging in sterile academic discussion!*

But Felicity did not scream, and gradually the discussion, which she vaguely realized was their means of clinging to rationality—a way of keeping chaos and insanity at bay until

a glimpse of order could be grasped—drew her in and she became fascinated by the depth of the American’s knowledge. It sounded as if Breen had made his own translations of some of the documents. What an unusual man—not many Harvard literature professors chose to become lay supporters of monastic communities. She might even enjoy discussing his interpretation with him. But later—when her head was clearer, when the world returned to its orbit—if it ever did.

The door to the side room opened and Inspector Nosterfeld strode in like a bulldozer. “Father Clement, I realize it’s getting late.” His broad northern accent made him sound like a character from *All Creatures Great and Small* which had so captivated Felicity in her growing-up years. “But if you would be so kind as to clear up just a couple of questions for us, we’ll try to let you all go in a few more minutes.” His intimidating attitude made a mockery of his polite phrases. The room lapsed into silence when the head of college left with the police officer.

Some time later Felicity startled awake, sloshing her cooled tea on Antony’s jacket, as the inspector returned to apologize once again for keeping them so long, and to tell them they could go for the night. Breen jerked to his feet and strode to the door, barely pausing to bid a general “Goodnight” to the room. The door banged behind him, leaving them in an echoing silence.

Antony started to rise, but an ashen-faced Father Clement put a restraining hand on his shoulder. “If I could have a quick word—” The principal’s voice came out in a harsh whisper, as if he had a sore throat.

Rotund Father Anselm pushed himself from the deep cushions of the sofa and smoothed his rumpled gray scapular over his black cassock. “I’ll be getting along, then.” He glanced at the clock on the wall. “Compline just over, pity.” The Father Superior had spent the entire time with his head bowed over his prayer book, whether sleeping or praying, Felicity wasn’t sure.

“And you, Father, please. If you could spare me a moment...” Father Clement’s voice wavered on the last word, causing Felicity

to look at the principal of the college more closely. His tall, usually vigorous form was slumped inside his cassock. He appeared to have aged a decade. His ashen gray hue was exactly the color a friend of her father had turned just before he suffered a fatal coronary. She wondered if she should go, but as no one seemed aware of her presence, she simply leaned deeper into her cushions and closed her eyes, not to feign sleep, but to make herself invisible. If only shutting her eyes could shut out the horrors of Father Dominic's room that were burned on the back of her eyelids. It was as if the whole world had changed in that one glimpse of the bleeding monk. Goodness, peace, sanity washed out with his lifeblood.

She heard the plump of the cushion as the principal more collapsed into a chair than sat in it. "I don't know what to do—what to say... They seem to think that I—I *was* late to mass—I explained over and over, I had been meditating in the oratory, so I set out late—then our guest..." He glanced at the door from which Breen had departed. "... waylaid me outside the church on some point of scholarship—he seems to have little concept of our rules and our hours—I didn't want to be rude—I did my best..." A long sigh interrupted his broken narrative. "I know they didn't believe me. In all the college and Community, I seem to have been the only person absent at the precise time. 'Don't leave Kirkthorpe,' they said. That's the same as an accusation."

Felicity jolted up, forgetting she was trying not to be seen, the steel blade of logic incising the chaos in her mind. "How do they know the exact time? He left me just after 4:00. Anyone could have gone to his room and not have been late for mass. I could have followed him. Any of us in this room—" she stopped abruptly, remembering the blood on Antony's hands. "Sorry, forgive me. That was stupid." She sank back in her chair, realizing they were all staring at her.

Father Anselm spoke first in his gentle, yet authoritative voice. "What do you mean, he left you? You mean you saw him this afternoon?"

“Yes, he dropped by my flat quite unexpectedly. I gave him tea. I told the police. I assumed that was why they asked me to wait. Isn’t the last person to see the victim alive always supposed to be a prime suspect?”

“I don’t understand. Why would he break silence?”

“He said he wanted to give me a book of poetry—at least, I think that’s what it is. He often shared his poems with me. I had no idea it was forbidden—I...” Felicity floundered to a halt. Why was she making excuses? She would have welcomed Father Dominic under any circumstance.

“Most interesting. Did you tell the police?” The superior’s calm questioning continued.

“No. I didn’t think it was important.” Felicity reached into her skirt pocket through the slit in her cassock. She handed it to Father Clement. He looked at her questioningly and she nodded. He carefully undid the wrapping. He was shaking so, Felicity was afraid he would drop it. It was, as it had felt through the wrapping paper, a small hardback book. The cover bore no title, just a pattern of green and gold antique marbling. It was very old. Or simply an imitation.

Father Clement turned several pages, his frown deepening as he scanned them. “What do you make of this?” He thrust it toward Antony. “Read it out so we can all hear.”

Antony glanced at a few pages, frowning as Clement had. “Well, there’s nothing very coherent here.” He cleared his throat. “‘I will bless the Lord, who has given me guidance. He has shown me the way. My heart is glad, and my glory—’ No, he crossed that out. Hard to make out what he’s written over it. Hm, ‘soul’, I think. Yes, ‘my soul rejoices.’” He turned a page and his brow furrowed deeper. “Well, here we have a jotting of numbers. Prices, perhaps.”

Clement looked over his shoulder. “Expenses, I should think. This entry with an ‘r’ after it,” he pointed, “could be the price of a rail ticket.”

“And those marked f would be food. He didn’t eat a lot, did

he?” Antony flipped a few pages ahead. “Yes, here are some place names: Lindisfarne, Durham, Whitby...” He turned to Father Anselm. “Are these places he went on his pilgrimage?”

“I believe so, yes.”

Antony nodded and returned to reading. “He did not suffer his Holy One to see corruption... grave can praise... death doth celebrate.” He turned a page. “Neither will you suffer your beloved saint to see corruption.” He closed the book, his finger keeping his place. “Do you want me to go on, Father? There’s quite a bit more of these sorts of scattered jottings, interspersed with more place names and a bit of accounting.”

“I think we have the idea. Thank you, Antony.”

Antony started to close the volume when one last jotting caught his eye. “Triumph in death, Death over death, Life over death.”

The room was silent for the space of ten heartbeats. Antony handed the slim volume back to Felicity. She opened it at a random page and looked at the familiar handwriting. “Oh, look. This passage has a little triangle by it. I wonder if that means anything.” She read, “Cuthbert the beloved lies dead and buried, his sepulcher with us unto this day. As in the resurrection of Christ, his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh decay, no more to return to corruption.”

Threatened tears made her blink and fight for breath. “It’s so like him.” She forced a ragged breath past the constriction in her throat. “And odd. He seems to have been gathering thoughts for a poem. But how strange that he would have wanted to share it with me when it’s in such a rough state! And yet, even as it is, it’s so—so comforting. He was so—” She gulped and forced herself to go on. “So gentle when he gave it to me—as if he knew I would need it. He was my best friend here.” She thought for a moment. Her only friend, really. A wave of desolation and despair washed over her as she glimpsed how much she would miss him. Could she stay here after this? But where would she go? To turn her back on all that Father Dominic lived for seemed almost as

brutal a betrayal as that of his killer.

“Yes,” Antony drawled the word on a slow breath, his brow furrowed. “It is very comforting—applied to death in general. But also very confusing in trying to figure out what he’s talking about. Does he mean his own death, or the death and resurrection of Christ? Did he have a foreshadowing of his own death?”

Felicity forced her thoughts back to the present and nodded. “And the bit about Cuthbert—what’s all that? If he had a premonition, he could be using the saint’s death as a symbol of his own.” She covered her eyes with her hands as if to block out visions of her beloved friend covered in his own blood. Surely Dominic could not have had any inkling...

Antony frowned and pressed on. “Whatever it is, it *has* to be significant.”

“I agree,” Felicity said. “I suppose I should show it to the police, but they’ll probably dismiss it as religious mumbo-jumbo.”

“Sadly, most religious things are meaningless to the secular world. It’s clear that it needs a religious person to sort out the meaning.” Clement looked grayer than ever. It was frightening. The principal was always so dynamic, leading the college with such force. In the long silence of the room, everyone shook their heads.

Antony spoke into the void. “What could Dominic have recorded here that would be important enough to make him break silence?”

Father Clement cleared his throat and straightened his shoulders a fraction, as if he had come to a decision through all the fog surrounding them. “You’re quite right, Antony. The key is there. And you’re the man to unlock it.”

Antony ran his hand upward through his thick, dark hair, then back down to flatten it, a nervous gesture Felicity had often seen him do while lecturing. It left his ashen symbol of mortality smeared across the ivory skin of his wide forehead. What irony: that the most Christ-like man she had ever known—could ever

imagine—had been killed on Ash Wednesday, a precursor of Good Friday.

“Father, with respect,” Antony’s words recalled her attention. “I’m honored. But I don’t think I’d be capable. I’m a plodding historian. I deal in facts. Obscure poetry fragments... If that’s what they are—” He shook his head. “I’m afraid they escape me.”

The principal cleared his throat a second time and his voice took on some of the authority it had lost. “Facts are exactly what we need. What I need. That the police could think that I could commit such an act of violence...”

“If there’s a lead to Dominic’s murder here, I don’t see it,” Antony protested.

Felicity gasped and pushed forward from her deep cushions as the thought struck her. “But what if there is? And the murderer knew? Maybe that’s what the vandals in my flat were looking for.”

“What about your flat?” Father Clement demanded.

She explained in a few words that it had been turned upside down, but apparently nothing stolen. “That’s why I thought it was some sort of prank or protest.” Now she realized how wrong she had been.

“Did you tell the police?” Antony asked.

“Yes. They said something about dusting it for fingerprints, and that they would keep an eye on it. I suppose they’re watching the whole monastery.”

“Right, then.” Father Clement appeared to be rapidly getting a grip on his authority. “This must be solved. Dominic was definitely trying to tell us something. And someone seems to know more about it than we do.” The principal looked steadily at Antony.

The room fell silent, all attention focused on Antony. He held his hands up in a gesture of rejection, shaking his head. “Really, I don’t think—” He took a step backward.

Felicity gritted her teeth in impatience. The whole thing was

so unfair. One more example of the injustice she had determined to fight. It was intolerable that such gross injustice had happened before her own eyes, and these dithering males were ignoring her. Of course deciphering Dominic's scribbled thoughts was the thing to do.

"Excuse me, Principal, but Father Dominic did give his journal to me. I rather think that if anyone is to follow it up, it should be me." They turned and looked at her as if the lamp had spoken. Well, everyone expected Americans to be pushy. Normally she worked hard to curb her outspoken instincts so as to avoid living up to the stereotype. But sometimes one just couldn't let natural talent go to waste.

Father Anselm's gentle voice broke the silence. "That's very generous of you, Miss Howard." He smiled at her with just a hint of a nod. Clement's nod was more of a jerk, but it signified agreement.

"But surely—" Antony began.

The superior quelled him with a look. "It strikes me that Miss Howard does have a point. It seems clear that, whatever his reasons, Dominic wanted to get this into the hands of someone he trusted. Someone who understood his cryptic writing." Felicity felt them all looking at her. "If you would be so good as to assist Father Antony in his labors, Miss Howard. I'm certain you are anxious to help in any way you can to see justice done."

"Yes, of course." But in spite of the alacrity of her words, she felt the hollowness of the goal. Nothing they did would bring Dominic back. She believed fervently in the importance of justice. But at the moment, such an abstract virtue seemed a cold compensation.

She paled as a ray of reality shot through her earlier impetuosity. What had she gotten herself into by her rash outburst? "But I don't really know..." Her voice trailed off.

Father Anselm rose. "Well, that's settled then." He cut through her floundering. "Miss Howard, will you be all right? Do you have a place to sleep?"



“Oh, I hadn’t given it a thought. Yes, Kate. Upstairs. She has a couch.” She held out Antony’s jacket to him.

He stepped forward. “I’ll walk you home.”

“Don’t be silly. I’ll be fine.” Felicity heard her own words and had the grace to blush. “Oh, I’m sorry. That sounded rude.” She forced a smile. “Thank you. That would be very kind.”

When they stepped out into the silent dark, Felicity was very glad to have Antony’s escort. She looked to one side, then the other, wondering what the shadows held. A small creature rustled in the hedgerow, and she jumped. What a fraud she was. The gravel of the path crunched under their feet, sounding as loud as a shotgun.

Felicity’s thoughts raced and lurched, entirely out of synch with their measured footsteps. How like her this was, she berated herself. All her life she had leapt before she looked, but she couldn’t remember ever feeling so foolishly rash before. She slowed her pace to walk closer to her companion. “This doesn’t make any sense. Why me?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that if there is some kind of hidden message in the journal, why would Dominic confide in me? In his lifetime of work here he must have had lots of close friends he trusted. Men with wisdom and knowledge and experience. I’m none of that. I’m not even English.” It was a desperate cry for reassurance, for courage to go on—or to be let off the hook. Maybe Antony would see that she was incapable, and step up to the plate himself.

“Which means that you’re probably a lot better at thinking outside the box than men who have lived enclosed, obedient lives for decades.” In the dark she could only sense his grin, but it did a lot to lighten the atmosphere. “Which obedience means that no one in the monastery would have readily welcomed having him break the Greater Silence. For a clear emergency, yes; for a vague uneasiness, no. And apparently that’s all he had. Also, remember, Dominic’s life work was in South Africa. He spent most of his time going back and forth, working in Kirkthorpe’s sister house in

South Africa more than half his life. He had only been back here a few months this time, perhaps not long enough to form really close friendships. But I think the key thing was your instinctive grasp of his poetry. I doubt that he connected with anyone else here as well on that point.”

She nodded slowly, thinking over Antony’s words as he opened the gate. With understanding came the weight of it all, and once again the desolation of loss. “Yes, I see. It’s a huge honor. And a huge responsibility.” She paused. “But what if I get it wrong? I mean, why couldn’t he just have told me what he suspected was going on, and told me not to tell anyone unless I needed to? Why just bless me and give me those... those random scribbles—which I *don’t* understand!” She ended on a note of desperation that rose to near-hysteria. She was suddenly taken with irrational anger toward Dominic.

It was his fault. If it hadn’t been for his enigmatic ways... If he suspected anything—so much as a glimmer—why did he go ahead? Why did he let this happen? Why did he take a chance on landing them all in this mess?

*He was so holy. He was so wise. How could he?* With horror, she realized she had screamed the words she meant only to give thought to. And she had accompanied each word with blows of her clenched fists on Antony’s chest.

“Felicity, Felicity.” His hands on her shoulders held her firmly, pushing at her in a gesture that was more of a rocking than a shaking as tears drowned her angry words and she collapsed in his arms as the gate swung shut behind them.

Still the doubts continued to mount, looming in the darkness, when she was tucked up on Kate’s couch with a large mug of hot chocolate. What had she volunteered for? To uphold justice, to avenge Father Dominic, to solve the riddle of his murder—yes, yes; high-sounding goals... truth, justice and mercy—all that—but what on earth did she think she could actually *do*?

Her rash speech would make her look more foolish than ever in the morning when she had to admit she literally didn’t

have a clue. But that's what she would have to do. After all, she couldn't go around making promises that she had no hope of fulfilling to the Superior of the Community and Principal of the College.

But if she didn't, who would? The dithering Father Antony—all brains and no action? The bullish Inspector Nosterfield—all action and no brains?

The image of Father Dominic at tea returned to her—the eyes sparkling with excitement in the lined face, the voice animated with hope for the future. A future he no longer had. But she did. She had a future and she would do everything she could to see that those African children Father D loved so much had a future, too.

She would think of something. Somehow she would carry on for him. She would make good on her promise.

## Chapter 3

“**O** Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day...” The weight sat heavy on Antony’s chest and sent its cold tentacles upward to close his throat, making it almost impossible for him to chant the morning prayers. Father Anselm had requested to see him in his office after Matins. He knew the superior would renew Father Clement’s request for Antony to undertake this investigation. Although Clement, not Anselm, was his boss, the Father Superior bore great moral weight. What Father Anselm requested, Father Anselm got.

And Antony would have to face his demons. Most of the time they stayed conveniently out of sight, stuffed down by the rigorous demands of a combined monastic and secular routine. But now...

“Now is the healing time decreed/For sins of heart and word and deed ... That we from this our abstinence/May reap the fruits of penitence.” He filed out slowly behind the rest of the college and Community with the words of the closing Lenten hymn still echoing around him. He paused briefly to reverence the seventeenth century Russian icon of Our Lady of the Transfiguration in the side chapel, then made his way on down the corridor.

Everything around him was so orderly, so serene, so peaceful, he hardly remembered what the world beyond was like, even the world of a parish ministry, let alone some wholly secular lifestyle. Could he go out and face the world—as surely undertaking such an investigation would entail?

Could he do it? What if he learned, not just more about Father Dominic and his poetry, but more about himself? What

if others learned more about him? What if this caused cracks in the careful shell he had spent so many years building around himself? The tightness in his chest threatened to choke him. He looked wildly around for an open room to bolt into, but there was none. Father Anselm's ample form loomed just ahead of him. Why hadn't he lingered longer before the icon? He took a deep, steady breath. What must be, must be faced.

"Ah, Antony, thank you for coming." Anselm turned just as he reached his office door. "I was hoping you had slept somewhat better than the rest of us, but I can see you didn't. Terrible thing, this. Terrible." He indicated for Antony to take a chair on one side of the fireplace and took the other himself. "One advantage of spending the night awake is that it gives one plenty of time to pray and think. Have you had any insights on this matter?"

"Well, obviously, besides the entries which apparently apply to his travels, the more enigmatic entries were mostly Scripture—paraphrases of psalms and the writings of St. Paul." There could be no more dithering in front of Father Superior. He must focus and do his best to give intelligent answers.

"And what do you make of the Cuthbert reference?" the superior continued. "Is it only an analogy, or the central image? I can't decide."

Before Antony was required to answer they were interrupted by a soft knock. The superior smiled. "Ah, that will be Miss Howard. I asked her to join us." He raised his voice to carry through the door. "Yes, come in."

Felicity entered with her accustomed energy, as if propelled by a gust of fresh air, her long blond hair swirling loosely around her shoulders. "Sorry I'm late, Father. Jonathan Breen rather cornered me. He wanted to talk about the morning's Latin canticle—about it being a corrupted form. Of course, to one way of thinking all ecclesiastical Latin is corrupted." She took the chair Anselm indicated and looked around. "Sorry," she repeated. "I'm interrupting."

"No, no. We were just getting started. I had hoped the

principal could join us as well, but it seems the police are in further need of his help in their inquiry.”

“They can’t be serious about suspecting Father Clement!” Anger made Felicity’s voice rise and her cheeks flush. “That’s utter nonsense.”

“Of course it is. But it seems they are less than happy about his being the only one in the Community to be late for mass.”

“And Breen,” Antony reminded them.

“It seems that his presence in the kitchen is well substantiated by all three cooks from whom he was begging a snack.”

“Ah,” Felicity took up the thought. “What about the staff? There must have been other people around. The main gates were locked, but the groundsman might have left something open—”

Anselm nodded. “I’m sure the police will cover all that most thoroughly. As well as all the relationships inside the Community, of course.”

“Inside? You mean the brethren? Surely, no one could think...”

The superior’s ironic laugh cut her off. “My dear, no one could be so naive as to believe that some thirty men could live enclosed, even in consecrated space, and not rub each other the wrong way more than occasionally. Holiness can be a very irritating quality. But I want to know what new thoughts you have had on the journal entries.”

Felicity jumped right in. Antony was more than happy to let her take the lead. The stark contrast of her spirit and energy to his reticence making him feel even more reticent. “Well, Dominic seems to have been excited about something. If the jotted thoughts were to be crafted into a poem, it’s theme would most certainly be about death, but the tone is very upbeat—exuberant, even. I don’t understand the references to Cuthbert, though.”

“We were just mentioning that when you came in. It’s what puzzles me most.” Antony was happy to enter in here. He was on good ground on matters of church history. “It’s a superb analogy, if that’s all it is. Cuthbert’s body remained uncorrupted for hundreds

of years, which was taken as evidence of his special holiness. So all the references to incorruption could apply to Cuthbert—”

“So Cuthbert could just be a symbol of incorruption and not a real clue to the meaning at all?” Felicity asked.

“Yes, but that’s the problem. Dominic was an expert on Cuthbert, so he would have known that the last time the tomb was opened, in the late nineteenth century, the flesh had completely decayed. Bare bones were reinterred behind the high altar in Cuthbert’s shrine at Durham Cathedral—not the fully fleshed body the reference in the journal seems to imply.”

Felicity leaned back and crossed her long legs, tangling in the folds of her cassock. Antony watched as she impatiently undid all thirty-nine of its buttons and freed herself. “But aren’t we forcing this? Isn’t the idea of this being some sort of message silly? If Father Dominic did suspect he might be in danger, why not just say so—or write it clearly in a letter? If I were in danger, that’s what I would do.”

“I agree.” Antony nodded, his thoughts becoming clearer as he spoke. The vague feelings fuzzing his mind had begun to form a meaningful pattern. “His sense of excitement, joy even—I think they refer to something Dominic found or learned or accomplished on his pilgrimage. I don’t think the poem he was working on was to convey any sense of doom, but more of spiritual ecstasy. I think the threat showed up suddenly and unexpectedly—so suddenly, he chose to break silence to get the message of his discovery to someone he hoped would understand, just in case the worst happened. And if it didn’t, then all he would have done was share some thoughts with a friend.”

“Quite right. Quite right.” Father Superior slapped the arm of his chair. “And so you’ll undertake the investigation. Excellent!” Anselm’s bald head was as pink as his cheeks, making his gray fringe of hair look like a tonsure.

Antony held up a hand and pushed into the back of his chair. “With all respect, superior, that’s not what I meant to be saying. And besides—” another thought, quite unconnected to

the events of the past day, flashed into his mind. Here was the out he had been looking for. “Forgive me, but it’s less than two weeks until I assume chairmanship of the Ecumenical Commission, and I’m afraid I’m woefully unprepared.”

“As you are quite aware, Father Antony, I can’t command you. Since you aren’t a monk, you’re under no vows of obedience to me. But I can beg you. I’m certain there are things here the police wouldn’t understand. Things that could be of great importance.”

Antony bowed his head in a gesture of acquiescence. He had made his best argument. There was no way he could refuse. And yet the fear that had dogged him all his life gripped him. The fear of failure. And always, at the back of his mind the little voice saying, *Maybe they’re right. Maybe you aren’t good enough. Maybe this is the time everyone finds out.* Aunt Beryl had always said he was useless. He had struggled all his life to prove her wrong. *But maybe she was right.*

“Excellent.” Father Anselm’s voice cut through Antony’s abstraction. “You and Miss Howard will make a most efficient team, I’m sure.” He crossed the room and sat at his desk, his gray scapular billowing out as he bent to open a bottom drawer. He pulled out a sheet of paper bearing a few lines of Dominic’s distinctive handwriting.

Antony groaned. “Another poem fragment.”

“Perhaps a bit more straightforward.” Father Anselm smiled. “I requested an itinerary from Dominic before he left on his pilgrimage. Nothing detailed, just wanted to be informed as to where he would be.”

Antony took the paper and read aloud:

*“The talisman of Ninian;  
The knowledge of Bede;  
The treasure of Aethelstan;  
The energy of Hilda,  
The secret of Cuthbert:  
Lindisfarne, Jarrow, Whithorn, Chester-le-street, Whitby,  
Durham.”*



He looked up, nodding. “Yes. Excellent itinerary, although rather a lot to cram into two weeks.”

“It was a pilgrimage, not a retreat,” Anselm said.

“Quite so.” Antony returned to the paper. “Interesting couplet he ends with. Do you know what it means?”

Anselm shook his head. “I was hoping you might have some ideas on that.”

Felicity held out her hand for the paper.

*Three from the See, Shield-Bearers protecting;*

*Three from the sea, Spear-Danes destructing.*

She laughed. “How like Dominic to attach a fragment of a poem to a travel schedule. He probably wrote laundry lists in Iambic Pentameter.”

“The pilgrimage has to be the key, doesn’t it?” Antony said slowly. “What did he do or see or find? What did he say to you, Felicity?”

“He talked mostly about his African Children’s Fund. About how now they would be able to build a hospital. I think he said something about AIDS babies, I know he was terribly concerned about them from his work in Africa.” She thought for a moment, then gasped. “Do you mean maybe he found *treasure*? Something to build his hospital?”

“Well, his journal notes do refer to treasure, but surely the idea of buried treasure or something like that today is just nonsense.” Antony attempted to sound sternly no-nonsense. “And if he did discover something in that line, he couldn’t legally keep it. It would be the property of the Crown.”

“Oh,” Felicity’s excitement deflated. “Well, it was just a thought.” She looked at the paper in her hand again. “What’s this about the Three? Three what? And the triangle doodles—could they be references to the Holy Trinity?”

“Yes, I suppose that could be it—but...” Antony’s voice trailed off, the thought almost too vague to grasp at.

“But what, Father Antony?” Anselm asked. “We need all

ideas on the table.”

“Well, it sounds silly,” still he hesitated. “But there is an old legend about some secret brotherhood in connection with St. Cuthbert.” Antony shrugged dismissively. “Butler mentions it in passing in his *Lives of Saints*, but it’s a myth. I never indulge in extravagant embellishments in my lectures. The lives of the saints are far too clouded with such embroidery, when their real value to us lies not in their superhuman powers, but in the fact that they were very ordinary men and women who triumphed by relying on God in their weakness.” He stopped abruptly and ran his hand through his hair. “Sorry. Didn’t mean to lecture.”

Felicity just smiled as if she’d heard it all before. She was focusing on the list of place names. “I’ve never heard of most these: Jarrow? Whithorn? Chester-le-street? What’s their significance?”

“Places connected with Cuthbert,” Antony said.

Felicity twiddled her hair, thinking. “So... If you put this with the journal, the reference to Cuthbert must be more than a literary device.”

Father Anselm glanced at his watch and levered his impressive bulk to his feet. “Do carry on. I’m delighted that you seem to be making headway. Unfortunately, our good Inspector has asked to interview me again. But please use my office for as long as you need.” He left the room with a satisfied smile and a backward glance at the two heads bent over their work.

After a few moments of silence, Antony nodded. No matter how hard he tried to resist, how much he protested, he felt himself being drawn into the riddle. Especially now that there seemed to be so much church history involved. One of the things he had so loved about his subject was that it was safe. History was there for us to learn from—choose models to emulate, see mistakes to be avoided; but, unlike occurrences in today’s newspaper, one was insulated from the events by the perspective of time. Now was history pressing on the present? On his life in a way that demanded he take action? He sighed as he mentally resigned himself to it.

Perhaps this was being thrust upon him as penance. A way to make amends for all the times he had shirked his duty? He must try. “It does all seem to revolve around Cuthbert. I suppose that’s hardly surprising since Dominic was as devoted to Cuthbert as he was to Africa. I think he rather identified with him in a personal way.”

“I was wondering about that,” Felicity interrupted. “Was Cuthbert known as an outstanding preacher? Father Dominic once told me he took the name of Dominic at ordination because St. Dominic was such a passionate preacher, and more than anything in the world he wanted to preach the Word of God with passion.”

“Yes, Cuthbert was a great preacher, but I think he is most remembered for his gentle, loving spirit.”

“Like Dominic.” Felicity’s voice caught on a sob. “How could this have happened?”

Antony shook his head helplessly. He had no answers he could give her. *What’s wrong with what we’ve taught—or haven’t taught? With our worship? With our belief? Hundreds, thousands of hours of reading the Scripture, of praying, of singing hymns—and then this! How can it be? Is it all dust and ashes?*

The questions left him feeling overwhelmed with the futility of it all. Helpless and angry. Angry at Dominic who chose to be so obscure. Angry at Father Anselm who had maneuvered him into this impossible situation. Angry at God, who had allowed it to happen. God was all-powerful and all-knowing and all-present. Was it too much to think he could have prevented the evil that caused the violent, ugly death of one good man?

Antony pulled himself up short. That was a dead end, giving in to anger and despair. What ifs and why fors did no one any good at this moment. Action was called for. He must take action to atone for his own failures. Only God knew his sin. God and himself in the middle of the night. Sins of omission and sins of commission. *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us.*

He pulled himself up sharply, picked up the itinerary which Felicity had laid on the table, and strode to Father Anselm's computer. Perhaps he should just check...

Felicity blew her nose loudly, then returned to Dominic's journal. After a few moments she began muttering the words half out loud. "Mmm, 'neither did his flesh decay...'" She paused. "I suppose he means in heaven."

Felicity's voice broke Antony's troubled concentration. "What?"

"Dominic's reference to Cuthbert's incorruption—you said his body did decay, but Dominic could mean in heaven; that would make sense after his reference to the resurrection of Christ."

It was a mere musing to Felicity—picking one phrase to read aloud—but the words echoed and re-echoed in Antony's mind. He held out his hands and looked at them in the cold light of the computer screen. Dominic's blood had been on his hands yesterday. He had washed it off sometime in the course of the evening. But he had not been any more successful in cleansing the deeper stain than Pilate had been.

He closed his eyes against the memory of all that blood. And if he didn't take up the cross of this investigation, he would be guilty of far more than merely shirking his duty. He would be guilty of acquiescing in Father Dominic's death. He would be guilty of murder.

Was the choice that clear? If one didn't champion the victim was one siding with the perpetrator? He looked at his hands again, half-expecting to see the incriminating stains still there. *How far did his own accountability go? If he had done things differently—if only...* He had an almost overwhelming impulse to attempt rubbing the spots out, like Lady Macbeth, but forced his hands back to the keyboard instead.

Felicity's musings continued in the background until she looked up at the clicking of computer keys. "What are you doing?"

"Checking train schedules. It seems to me the only way to

get to the bottom of this is to retrace Dominic's footsteps and see if we can sort out just what he discovered that he was so excited about. When we know why he was killed, we'll probably know who."

"So you *do* think he might have found treasure!"

Felicity jumped as the office door swung open with a crash. "Brother Matthew—" Her voice showed the astonishment she felt at being burst in upon by the quiet, slow-moving lay brother who served the Community as treasurer.

"F-f-Father Superior sent me." He pulled the door tightly shut behind him. "You must g-go now, he said."

Both Felicity and Antony gaped at him, unmoving. "He what?" Felicity asked.

"F-father S-s-s—Anselm says you must get out of the monastery now. The police are asking for you."

Brother Matthew pushed his limp, pale hair back from his forehead, and looked wildly around the room from behind his dark-rimmed spectacles. "H-hurry," he said. "The inspector told him. They found evidence. They're going to charge you."

It took Antony a moment to figure out who he was referring to. "You mean Clement—that's who they suspected."

"No." Matthew pushed his spectacles back up his face in an oddly stubborn gesture, then pointed. "You. Fingerprints on the w-weapon."

"Me? They're going to charge *me*?" Antony had just been contemplating his own guilt. Suddenly the nightmare had become true. "No!" Fingerprints? What *had* he touched in Dominic's room? Oh, the statue of our Lord. He had set it upright. Had *that* been the murder weapon?

Matthew was insistent. "I was in the next room—d-doing my accounts. The l-library expansion fund, you know? F-father told them you had gone—on spiritual retreat, he said. Nosterfield was m-most upset. S-S-Stormed out of the room. F-father knew I was next door, he told me to run. To warn you." As he spoke he crossed the room, opened the door onto the cloister and pointed

to the woods at the back of the monastery property. “Go on. Now!”

Antony sat frozen for a long moment, looking at his hands as if they were still covered with blood. *Lord, have mercy. Should I surrender?* It would almost be a relief. He’d been running all his life. Hoping to atone. And once again it was all shambles.

“Well, come on then. You heard the man. I don’t fancy doing this alone.” Felicity’s firm yank on his arm jerked him to his feet. “Look. If there is treasure out there, Father D’s murderer knows about it. That has to be what he was murdered for. That means the murderer will get it. Unless we get it first, of course.”

“Yes, but if I just explain it to the police—”

“They’ll lock you up and spend all their time looking for evidence against you while the guilty person makes off with the treasure.”

“But there’s no way I can escape from the police. And running will just make me look guilty.”

“Fine. I hope you’re very cozy in your cell.” She turned with a flip of her head and marched toward the open door still held by Brother Matthew.

“No, wait—” Antony wasn’t sure whether he was agreeing to help her, or darting out to try to stop her. But one thing was clear: he couldn’t let Felicity tackle this alone. He couldn’t live with another death on his conscience.

Yet even as they fled through the monk’s garden, Antony knew he had made his decision. Surrendering to the police would be the easy route. The choice he had always made—to turn from challenge and danger of any kind. Running would mean facing his fears. This time he would run toward the challenge, not away from it.

And with each stride it became easier to run with the baton he realized he had accepted. He was not running because Father Anselm had sent a frantic message, but because he chose to.