

**TROUBLE
COMES IN
THREES**

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TROUBLE COMES IN THREES

MICHAEL JENET



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FOREWORD

Just over a week into the lockdown from the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020, Journey Institute Press, a fledgling non-profit publishing house, began posting daily writing prompts on a Facebook group page. The purpose of those writing prompts was to help authors write and focus on something other than the dread and the unknown of the pandemic.

Those writing prompts have continued to this day.

In the early months of the pandemic, Michael Jenet began posting his own answers to those prompts in the hopes of encouraging other writers to join in. As time went by a character showed up, and kept showing up, in various short vignettes.

One writing, turned into three, then four, and before he knew it he had finished a story made up of a dozen or more 'episodes' over a span of several weeks. Over the next three years he wrote more episodes. Now, after much encouragement from family and friends, comes the compendium, *Trouble Comes in Threes*; the first three books featuring Detective Inspector Jillian Scotte.

What makes these stories different is that they weren't written in novel form. They were written as short episodes in response to the writing prompts over the course of weeks, thus they are fast-paced and action-packed stories from start to finish. Longer than a short story, but shorter than a typical thriller/mystery novel, each chapter is concise and more engaging than the one before. Cliffhangers abound and the tension builds from one episode/chapter to the next until the thrilling conclusion.

With these first three books in the series, Michael Jenet introduces us to a vibrant cast of characters and criminal elements that make up the world of DI Jillian Scotte.

~ *Journey Institute Press*

The Lumberjack Murders

**A DI Jillian Scotte Mystery
Book 1**

1

The mountain stream bubbled and swirled as it made its way down through the fells of the Lake District towards Ravenstonedale in Cumbria, Northwest England. A still unspoiled village at the foot of the Howgill Fells, this picturesque village was a quiet, farming village with tourists. Nothing exciting happens here.

Jillian Scotte, with an ‘e’, as she often felt compelled to say, had chosen Eden Police Department serving Cumbria for this very reason. A newly decorated Detective Inspector from the Thames Valley Police Force, she had played a major role in a widely publicized serial murder inquiry. She thought of it as just doing her job. Others said she alone had broken the case wide open.

Jillian remembers the day she walked into her boss’s office two months later and asked for the transfer.

“What, Cumbria?” he said, astonished. “But that’s in the middle of nowhere!”

“I know,” she replied, standing before him, having refused to sit. She

knew if she sat, it would give him more time to talk her out of it.

“Jillian, come on,” he’d said rather forcefully, “this is ridiculous.” He stared at her for over a minute, waiting for something that would never come. “Look, if you want a transfer, that’s fine, I can help you there, but you are far too talented a DI to go God-knows-where out in the middle of bloody.... I mean, it’s damn near Scotland!”

Jillian, all five foot eight of her, stood her ground, and now six weeks later she just finished her first full week, having replaced the departing Inspector who had been in Ravenstonedale for almost five years. Having never needed to get training in criminal investigations and not having a CID to be attached to, he remained a uniformed Inspector for years.

The brass in London had shaken their heads as Jillian’s request passed up the line to the DCI and even the Superintendent. “But DI Scotte,” the Super had said, “You’re bound to make Chief Inspector soon and I daresay one day you’ll be sporting for my job.” Shaking his head, he added, “Going to Cumbria will put paid to that.”

Nevertheless, Jillian had packed up her life, such as it was, and headed north.

The village had become a central location for several other villages and towns around it to put a police station in five years ago. Jillian would be the first DI there.

The station was small, a staff of five, Jillian included. One Detective Sergeant, one Police Constable, one Police Constable in training, and a retired Sergeant who manned the desk and phones as a volunteer.

It wasn’t much, but it would suit her just fine.

Jillian drove slowly down the narrow lane in the department’s only non-marked vehicle, an aging Range Rover in desperate need of a new clutch. Trying to hold her thermos of coffee in her right hand while simultaneously holding the steering wheel, she worked the shift noisily into fourth gear with a lot of colorful encouragement.

Her light brown hair was blowing all around her as she drove with the windows down, despite the early spring chill. She navigated a turn without spilling her coffee. Having only been here a week, she still marveled at how beautiful the countryside was.

Smiling to herself, she took a sip of her still hot coffee mocha. Her motto was, *what was the point of drinking something bitter unless you could add chocolate to?*

The smile faded as she crested a small hill and saw the flashing lights of PC Worhington's car. He'd called into the station, but she had been driving in and answered before the retired Sergeant Tillman could respond.

Worhington's voice had seemed odd. He said a body, of sorts, had been found. Not wanting anything more to go over the scanner lest someone was listening, and god forbid some tourist heard about it and came out with their cameras, she turned around and headed out straight away.

Pulling into the small dirt path off the road, she stopped behind the yellow and blue police car.

Police Constable Jack Worhington was a nice enough PC, if not a bit on the inexperienced side.

"Hello Jack," she said as he approached her. "Tell me what we've got."

She could see he was uncomfortable, so she gently turned him around by the elbow and kept him moving. "Well," he said, clearing his throat, "Merrick Thompson, he's the one that owns this land" he paused and swallowed.

"Yes, go on," she said walking beside him.

"Well, he found.... uhm.... he was walkin' 'is dogs this mornin' and they was diggin' and when he came up on em, he saw.... well...." it was clear he was not comfortable, "it's a head Mum" he said quickly wanting to get it out.

Jillian looked at him. His face was flushed, and his breathing was coming

in short spurts. He had never seen a dead body before. Putting her hand on his shoulder she stopped him, “Alright Jack, take a deep breath. That’s it. Now, tell me everything you’ve done since you found the body. How much did the dogs disturb the scene? Have you roped it off yet?”

Something in the way PC Worthington looked at her told her there was something else. Frowning, she opened her mouth to ask him, but he beat her to it, “That’s just it, Mum...” he said, again swallowing heavily before the next words came out of his mouth and changed everything.

“There’s no body. It’s just a head.”