

An accident waiting to happen?

# PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS



DCI  
Warren  
Jones

PAUL GITSHAM

# **Papering Over The Cracks.**

**A DCI Warren Jones Short Story.**

**Paul Gitsham**

**Praise for Paul Gitsham**

*'Brilliant book . . . Heart-stopping finale'*

*'I do love this series'*

*'Paul never lets you down'*

*'Beautifully written, well plotted and well researched'*

*'Up there with the best series'*



**PAUL GITSHAM** started his career as a biologist working in the UK and Canada. After stints as the world's most over-qualified receptionist and a spell ensuring that international terrorists hadn't opened a Child's Savings Account at a major UK bank (a job even duller than working reception) he retrained as a Science teacher.

You can learn more about Paul and his writing by visiting his website ([www.paulgitsham.com](http://www.paulgitsham.com)) and subscribing to his newsletter.

He is also active on social media.

[Facebook @DCIJones](#)

[Twitter @DCIJonesWriter](#)

[Instagram @paulgitsham](#)

## **Note from the author.**

A shorter version of this story was originally published in the *Four Rivers & a Castle* short story anthology by Hertford Writers' Circle, back in 2013.

The story takes place after the second full-length DCI Warren Jones novel, *No Smoke Without Fire*.

© Paul Gitsham 2023

Paul Gitsham asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

## **Chapter 1**

'Where's the poor sod's head?' Detective Inspector Tony Sutton's voice had a rough edge to it.

Detective Chief Inspector Warren Jones of Middlesbury Police pointed. A black and red shape, half submerged in grey, watery, paper pulp screamed silently at them from the depths of the huge, vertical, pulping-drum. Warren had been an officer for sixteen years. This was the closest he had come to losing his lunch.

To the right of the severed head lay the rest of twenty-eight-year-old Darren Bentley. The cheery yellow of his T-shirt matched his ear defenders.

Warren took a deep breath. ‘Who found him?’

A white-faced, uniformed constable – his back to the machine – responded. ‘A Jack Airey, Sir. He’s outside getting some fresh air.’

Warren couldn’t blame him; inside, wet steam mingled with the coppery tang of blood and hot machine oil.

Leaving the scene, Warren and Sutton crossed the vast, half-empty, Victorian paper mill. Discoloured patches on the concrete floor revealed where other large machines had once stood, perhaps similar to the one that now held the body of the young worker.

The sound of their footsteps bounced off the vaulted ceiling four stories above. Despite the shafts of spring-sunlight spilling through the long, thin windows, Warren felt a chill. A building like this should be noisy, vibrant, bustling. It was clear that even before the accident, Tate and Sons Paper Merchants was barely scraping by. Massive metal racks holding rolls of newly-made paper the height of a man stretched to the ceiling. A quarter of the storage space would have been ample. A forklift truck, forks half raised, sat where its operator had abandoned it.

Outside, Warren counted about two-dozen workers. A disparate bunch, mostly men, they huddled in small, nervous groups or stood alone, lost in thought. The car park was half-full, most vehicles over ten years old. Consequently, the gleaming BMW sports car with month-old licence plates didn’t sit right with Warren. Did it belong to one of the workers? He memorised the plate for later.

Jack Airey was a man in his early fifties, with large, tattooed arms and a soft belly, wearing far too much cologne. As he spoke, his fingers shakily plucked tobacco from a pouch.

‘I did two tours in Iraq then Afghanistan.’ He lit the cigarette and inhaled deeply. ‘A young lad beside me stepped on an IED in Fallujah.’ His eyes closed, and his voice tightened. ‘Never thought I’d see a sight like that again.’

Warren waited a moment for the man to compose himself. ‘Please tell me what happened. In as much detail as you can remember.’

‘Darren was working the pulper, I was downstream running the de-inking tank. The conveyor belts sort of double back on themselves, so I couldn’t actually see him.’

‘Sorry, you’ll have to help me out,’ Warren gestured towards the papermill. ‘I’m not familiar with the set up here. What is it you and Darren do?’

‘We work on the recycling line. Feedstock from paper banks comes into the pulper on a conveyor belt. It’s mixed with hot water and ground into a paste. The slurry is then sent to the de-inker where it’s bleached so it can be used to make new paper. Darren worked the pulper and I work the de-inker.’

‘When did you realise something was wrong?’ asked Warren.

‘The paper slurry stopped coming up the conveyor belt. I didn’t think anything of it at first,’ he nodded in the direction of the mill. ‘All the equipment in there is at least fifty years old, it’s always breaking down. The pulper gets jammed with plastic at least once a shift.’

Airey took a deep drag of his cigarette and exhaled with an angry hiss. ‘The problem is people throw all sorts of crap into recycling bins and if the sorters don’t pluck it out before it gets into the pulper, it wraps itself around the axle and eventually the whole thing grinds to a halt.’

‘What happens then?’

Airey shifted nervously. ‘Well like I said, it happens at least once a shift, so whoever is running it switches the power off, undoes the front, and then reaches inside to remove the plastic.’

Warren remembered the setup: reminiscent of an inside-out water-wheel and tall enough for a man to stand inside, it had metal blades on the inner rim. The bottom had been filled with a watery paste. Large pipes were attached above and below the drum and a stationary conveyor belt covered in drying pulp snaked away, presumably to the de-inker.

‘Why was he inside though? Surely he could have just reached in?’

Airey looked even more uncomfortable. ‘Standard procedure if it’s proper jammed. You climb in and use a crow-bar to get the plastic out of the gears. Perfectly safe if the power’s off.’

‘Didn’t look very safe to me,’ commented Sutton.

‘Yeah well, clearly he didn’t turn the power off.’ The man’s eyes closed for a moment. ‘Stupid boy,’ he mumbled, his voice thick with emotion. ‘He probably couldn’t hear the motor whining with his defenders on. The strain must have built up, then when he released the jam ... the crow-bar whipped around ...’ he stopped for a moment. ‘He never made a sound, it was the clanking that alerted me. I walked around the corner ...’ he paused for a long moment. ‘There was nothing I could do. I just hit the emergency cut-off and yelled for help ...’

## Chapter 2

‘Criminal negligence.’

Sangeeta Choudhary was a smartly-dressed woman in her early-thirties, whose complexion in Warren’s office at Middlesbury CID was a lot healthier this morning than when she’d viewed the accident scene the day before.

Warren nodded; he’d suspected as much. The representative from the Health and Safety Executive had already consulted the Forensics unit that morning.

‘I’m not seeing any suspicious circumstances,’ said Warren. ‘There are no direct witnesses or CCTV of the event, but the position of the body agrees with what we’ve been told. We’ve still got plenty to do, but I think we’ll be ready to hand it over to you pretty soon.’

‘Good, we’re seeing too many of these sorts of accidents. Times are tough and corners are being cut. Take this example,’ she opened a binder labelled “Standard Operating Procedures”. ‘Six months ago, there were two people working that machine. If it jammed, one stood by the emergency cut-off whilst the other climbed inside. They laid off twenty percent of the workforce before Christmas, now there’s only one person.’ She tapped the binder. ‘To the manager’s credit, they rewrote the safety procedures, emphasising that all of the power should be cut, but frankly that’s not enough. Their pro-

tocol for clearing jams was borderline as it was, relying on the quick reflexes of the second operator, but now even that safety net is gone.’

Warren shook his head sadly. ‘Between you and me, what do you think will happen?’

‘I’ll have to push for a prosecution, possibly corporate manslaughter. We’re looking at hundreds of thousands in fines and maybe even jail time for the owner Peter Tate. He’s ultimately responsible for health and safety.’

The two lapsed into silence. The tragedy went beyond the loss of a young man’s life. Even before Tate had arrived with his lawyer, he must have known that it was all over. Regardless of the outcome of the investigation, a 163-year-old family firm was to all intents finished. Forty-five workers would lose their jobs’ and Tate’s plans to leave a viable business to his son, Wayne, were in tatters.

‘I should have sold up ages ago,’ Tate had said. ‘Tate and Sons has history. We could have sold our brand name to one of the big paper suppliers. A distant ancestor of mine, John Tate, set up the first paper mill in Britain, in Hertford, in 1488. It closed in 1507. Now we’ll go the same way.’

The business had been struggling for years. Unable to compete with the big, high-volume producers, it had specialised, producing high-quality, recycled, luxury paper. Nevertheless, sales kept dwindling, staff were let go and much of the factory’s increasingly out-of-date machinery sold for scrap. The company’s largest asset was its beautiful Victorian building in the centre of Middlesbury.

‘For years I’ve been refusing bids from property developers – now the matter’s out of my hands,’ Tate had lamented.

## Chapter 3

Warren rang the doorbell of the modest, terraced house. Denise Bentley's face as she opened the door told more tales than seemed possible for someone her age. Clearly, she had been crying all night, but it looked as though life had been bruising her long before this latest blow.

Expressing his condolences for the loss of her son, Warren cast his eyes around the obsessively-tidy living room. On the mantelpiece three photographs were aligned precisely, the centre picture showing an awkward-looking teenager in school uniform.

'Is that Darren?' asked Tony Sutton.

She nodded. 'Darren hated being photographed. That's the only photo I have where he's smiling'.

Sitting down, Warren gently explained how it appeared to be an accident with no suspicious circumstances.

Bentley shook her head vehemently. 'No, not possible. Darren wouldn't make a mistake like that.'

Warren leant forward to try again, but the distraught mother cut in.

'Did you find his procedures book?'

Sutton passed over a clear, plastic evidence bag containing a blue A5 notebook. 'Do you mean this? We found it in his inside pocket – we're a bit puzzled about it to be honest.'

She nodded. 'Darren had Asperger's syndrome. He was obsessed with procedures. Everything he did, from getting up in the morning to working the pulping machine, was written down. When they changed from two operators to one after Christmas, they rewrote the safety protocols. I helped Darren copy them into his book.'

'Were you concerned at the changes?' asked Warren.

She shook her head. 'No, not for Darren. I saw the new protocols and it sounded safe as long as he followed the rules – and if there is one thing he does, it's follow the rules. Look at the state of the book, he's always referring to it.'

Warren and Sutton exchanged glances. If Darren Bentley really was that obsessed about following instructions, then it was hard to imagine him forgetting to turn the machine off before he climbed in.

\* \* \*

Back at the station, Warren caught up with his team.

‘Sir, we’ve finished interviewing all of the potential witnesses,’ started DC Gary Hastings. ‘Most claim not to have known anything until the power was cut and Jack Airey screamed for help. However, they did confirm what Peter Tate told us. The company is in trouble financially and this’ll probably finish them off.’

‘Peter Tate was generally well-liked and admired for keeping the company running and not selling out. Many are upset about what is likely to happen to him. They said there was a real family atmosphere, with many workers having joined straight from school. The recent layoffs broke his heart apparently.’

‘What about his son?’ asked Warren. ‘Peter Tate said that he was due to inherit the company one day.’

‘Wayne Tate is a lot less popular,’ Hastings responded. ‘He’s learning the ropes as foreman at the moment, but he’s regarded as lazy and hates to get his hands dirty. He spends most of his time in his office. A running joke is his MBA stands for “Mediocre But Arrogant”. A lot of them reckon he’s just waiting for his inheritance so he can sell it.’

‘Which is probably off the cards now; their reputation will be in tatters,’ observed Sutton. ‘What about the victim?’

‘That’s more complicated. It seems his Asperger’s could make him difficult to work with, but he was generally regarded as “odd but harmless”. However, a couple of workers would wind him up deliberately, Jack Airey in particular. In fact, only yesterday he started a row by sitting in Darren’s preferred chair at lunchtime and refusing to leave. Darren got so agitated he had to be taken outside to calm down.’

‘That fits with what Denise Bentley told us,’ said Sutton. ‘Darren hated change. His mum ended up having to drive him to work after he got into an altercation with a bus driver who was running two minutes late.’

‘Well good work so far,’ said Warren. ‘Keep on digging and see what else turns up. In the meantime, I’m going to ask the HSE to hold fire a bit

longer.’

At that moment a support worker popped her head around the door. ‘Sir, Andy Harrison is on the line – he thinks they’ve found something.’

## Chapter 4

Back at the mill, Crime Scene Manager Andy Harrison illuminated the pulper’s control box with UV light.

‘The victim wasn’t wearing gloves and was the only person to have used the machine for several shifts,’ said the burly Yorkshireman. ‘So, as you’d imagine, his thumbprint is on the OFF switch. It’s clearly the most recent one and we’ve found no other ridge patterns. However, on the ON switch the prints have been heavily smeared and are no longer readable.’

‘What do you think that means?’ Warren asked.

‘I reckon the machine was turned on by somebody else, probably wearing gloves, which smeared any existing marks.’

Warren whistled, softly. ‘Well depending on the timing, that would suggest murder not an accident.’

‘I found these in the bin over there,’ said Harrison, holding up two plastic evidence bags containing white, latex gloves. ‘Maybe we should be looking for whoever wore them?’

Warren smiled. ‘Good work. Can you find out who the wearer was and link them to the machine’s switch?’

Harrison gave a shrug of the shoulders. ‘Possibly. We may be able to get a DNA profile of the wearer from inside the gloves, and traces of the victim’s DNA might have been transferred to the outside of the glove’s fingertips from the ON switch.’

‘Do it as a priority,’ ordered Warren, ‘I’ll authorise the expense.’

\* \* \*

Warren called a briefing; Karen Hardwick spoke first. 'I spoke to the owner of that BMW yesterday. He claims to have bought it cheap; an ex-display car pranged on a test drive that they couldn't sell as brand new. I'm going to the dealership to check it out.'

'Good work. Anything else?'

'Gary sends his apologies, he's chasing down a hunch with English Heritage. He'll get back to you later.'

Warren nodded towards DS Mags Richardson, Middlesbury CID's liaison with the CCTV unit at the force's headquarters in Welwyn Garden City.

'Unfortunately, there's no footage of the pulping machine itself, the security system is more geared towards preventing break-ins, but there are a couple of cameras at that end of the factory floor. The team are analysing them now.'

Warren nodded towards DS David Hutchinson. 'Hutch?'

'We've spoken to Human Resources. Jack Airey was dishonourably discharged from the army after a nasty pub brawl. According to his record he has Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and anger management issues. He received a written warning last year for turning up to work drunk.'

Warren thought back to the man's shaking hands and over-powering cologne. It was too late to do a blood alcohol test, but Airey had been seen arguing with Bentley earlier that day.

'No prizes for guessing who shopped him,' continued Hutchinson.

'Bring him in,' ordered Warren.

\* \* \*

'Well that was a waste of bloody time,' Tony Sutton opined after listening to Jack Airey repeat 'No comment' throughout his interview.

There was a tap on Warren's open office door. Warren and Sutton both looked up. Mags Richardson smiled grimly. 'Got something you might like to see.'

\* \* \*

Half-an-hour later, Warren and Sutton re-entered the interview suite that Jack Airey was still occupying.

Sutton placed his laptop on the table, the screen open and visible to Airey. He pressed start on the CCTV footage and sat back, his arms folded.

Airey paled, his Adam's apple bobbing.

'Care to explain this?' asked Sutton.

'I think I'd like a solicitor,' said Airey eventually.

'A very good idea,' said Warren. 'Jack Airey, you are under arrest on suspicion of the murder of Darren Bentley...'

## Chapter 5

It was a little after eight a.m. and Warren and Sutton were already on their second coffees that morning. It had been after ten p.m. by the time Jack Airey's duty solicitor had arrived. Unsurprisingly, he had advised his client to continue "no commenting". Eventually Airey had been shown to a cell. Hopefully a night behind bars had changed his mind about cooperating.

Warren was acutely aware that he had until that evening to release or charge the ex-soldier. If he convinced a magistrate to grant him an extension, he should get the results back from the gloves before the new deadline expired. The last thing anyone wanted was a potential murderer back on the streets. But that meant Airey had to give them something first.

\* \* \*

Jack Airey looked even more tired than Warren felt; at least Warren had managed to sleep once he'd finally made it to bed.

Airey's prepared statement was read out directly from his solicitor's laptop.

'As stated previously, whilst working the de-inker, Mr Airey became aware that there was no more paper slurry travelling along the conveyor belt. This is a common occurrence and typically indicates that the pulping machine has become jammed by plastic.'

The solicitor cleared his throat, and Airey shifted slightly, suddenly becoming very interested in his fingernails.

"Realising that the machine had stopped, and knowing that it would not be restarting for some minutes, Mr Airey took the opportunity to go to the bathroom. That is why the CCTV footage shows him disappearing from his post after the machine stopped.'

Warren thanked the solicitor. 'Tell me Jack, what are the rules concerning workers leaving the de-inking machine to use the bathroom?'

Airey continued to stare at the table, his voice barely audible. 'There should be two workers on the pulping and de-inking line whenever the main power is turned on.'

'Was the main power turned on?' asked Warren.

'Yeah.'

'Why was that, Jack?'

'You don't need to turn the main power off to the whole line to clear a blockage, just the power to the pulping machine.'

'And was the power to the pulping machine turned off?'

'Yeah.'

'How did you know?' asked Sutton. 'You can tell if the power to the whole line is off, because the lights go out on your display. But there isn't a light to tell you if the pulping machine still has power.'

Airey licked his lips. 'I could hear that the machine was off.' He gestured towards Sutton's laptop. 'You can even hear it on the CCTV.'

‘But you wouldn’t have been able to; you were wearing ear defenders,’ said Sutton. ‘We can see that you don’t remove them when you leave your post,’ he paused briefly, ‘as you head towards Darren Bentley’s pulping machine.’

The solicitor interjected swiftly. ‘That’s speculation, the CCTV doesn’t cover the pulping machine. My client has already admitted to going to the bathroom. The toilets are in that direction and there is no indication that Mr Airey interacted with Mr Bentley on his way there.’

‘About that, Mr Airey,’ Warren pressed play on the CCTV footage again. ‘We can hear the machine stop working about twenty seconds before you leave,’ Warren pointed to the de-inking tank. ‘And it’s obvious that the slurry has stopped being delivered along the conveyor belt.’

Airey shrugged.

‘The most direct route from the de-inker to the toilets would take you within a few metres of Darren Bentley,’ Warren continued. ‘In fact, you’d pass him twice – on the way there and coming back.’

Warren increased the volume. In the background a low hum started, rising in pitch. After almost a minute, Airey reappeared in shot. The whine increased in volume.

‘That sounds as though the motor has been turned back on, but the machine is still jammed. I guess you didn’t hear it, because you had your ear defenders on.’

Airey looked over at his solicitor.

Warren continued, as the sound became louder. Suddenly the whine was replaced with a loud banging and clanking noise. On screen, Airey stiffened, then jogged back out of shot. A few moments later the banging stopped and was replaced with Airey’s panicked shouting.

Warren pressed stop. Airey’s eyes were closed tightly, his hands pressed over his ears.

‘This doesn’t look good for you, Jack,’ said Warren. ‘We know that Darren Bentley turned off the pulping machine before he climbed inside it to remove the blockage. The machine was then turned back on again, whilst he was still in it. We can hear that it resumed after you had left your post and walked towards him. Tell us what happened, Jack. Why did you turn the machine back on?’

‘Nothing happened. I didn’t turn it on,’ Airey’s voice was strangled.

‘Do you really expect us to believe that?’ asked Sutton. ‘You head towards him and the machine turns itself back on? We’ve had engineers looking at the machine and it’s old, but it isn’t faulty. If you didn’t turn it back on, who did? Darren couldn’t have reached the on switch from inside the drum.’

‘I don’t know, I didn’t see anyone. I went to the toilet and then came back.’

‘To go to the toilet, you have to walk past Darren twice, but you didn’t see anyone? How is that possible?’ asked Sutton.

Airey stared at the table.

‘No comment,’ he said finally.

Warren opened the folder next to his elbow. ‘If you weren’t going to the toilet, and you didn’t walk past Darren, there’s only one other place that you were going.’ He pushed a photograph across the table. ‘We found this bottle of vodka in your locker. How much did you drink whilst you were waiting for Darren to restart the pulping machine? How much had you drunk before your shift even started?’

‘Don’t answer that, Mr Airey,’ interjected the solicitor firmly.

The interruption was hardly unexpected. Admitting he was unfit to operate machinery through alcohol would expose Airey to a lot of trouble down the line.

‘How did you feel when you learned that it was Darren Bentley who reported you turning up to work drunk?’

‘No comment.’

Sutton pulled out a sheet of paper. ‘Would you say that Tate and Sons were good employers, Jack?’

Airey blinked at the sudden change in direction. ‘I suppose so.’

‘Is the pay good?’ Sutton asked.

Airey shrugged. ‘It’s alright.’

‘But a little extra wouldn’t go amiss, eh?’

Airey said nothing.

Sutton passed over the sheet. ‘Your wife doesn’t work, does she?’

Again, Airey said nothing.

‘And you’ve got some pretty big bills coming out each month. In fact, you have more money coming out of your account than going in. Is that fair?’

Airey swallowed. There was no point denying what was written on the bank statements in front of him.

‘I’d say that unless you get a big pay-rise or stop eating, you’re going to struggle to pay your rent,’ Sutton continued.

Warren pulled out another photograph. Airey closed his eyes. ‘So, I have to ask myself, where did you get this envelope stuffed with three thousand pounds that we found in your locker?’

Airey said nothing.

Eventually his solicitor spoke up. ‘Why don’t we take a break?’

## Chapter 6

The lunch-time phone call the moment Warren re-entered his office was not what he wanted to hear.

‘No match to Airey.’

Warren swore. The glove had been positively linked to the pulper’s ON switch, but the wearer was not the former soldier.

‘However, the DNA also doesn’t match Darren Bentley,’ said the technician. ‘We’re running the DNA profile through the database, so maybe we’ll get lucky.’

Warren relayed the news to Sutton.

‘Well I still think Airey knows more than he’s letting on,’ said Sutton, ‘I want to know where that money came from.’

Warren looked at his watch. ‘He’s been with his solicitor for almost half-an-hour, I’ll be annoyed if all we get out of him is another round of “no comments”.’

As if on cue, the phone rang.

‘He’s back,’ said Warren draining his coffee and standing up. But before he could leave, there came a knock on the door. Hastings and Hardwick were standing outside.

Hardwick spoke first. ‘The story’s a complete lie. That shiny new BMW you saw sitting outside the factory was bought outright at the full list-price, the buyer didn’t even try to haggle. Forty-eight grand all-in. Dealer thought it must be Christmas.’

‘And there’s more,’ said Hastings. ‘I’ve spoken to English Heritage. The paper mill is a Grade II listed building, so you need planning permission to make any alterations. They received an enquiry about it three months ago from a local property developer “Hertfordshire Heritage Living”. They faxed me the application form.’

Warren read it quickly. ‘So as long as they don’t change the exterior, they can do whatever they want inside,’ he stopped and looked up. ‘Weren’t these guys in court recently?’

‘Yes, for offering bribes to planning inspectors. But that’s not all, look who co-signed the application form.’

Warren looked at the bottom line. ‘Well, well. That certainly changes things.’

\* \* \*

Thirty minutes later, Warren and Sutton jogged out of the interview suite. The unit’s commander, DSI Grayson, met them at the top of the stairs.

‘The money was to keep his mouth shut after he overheard a phone call he shouldn’t have,’ said Warren.

‘Good,” said Grayson. ‘Even better news, they’ve found a hit on the DNA from the latex gloves. The subject was arrested for drink-driving three years ago. He only got his licence back last month. And it sounds like he cele-

brated by buying himself a very nice car. His fingerprints are also on that envelope of cash. Get your coats, gentlemen, you've got an arrest to make.'

\* \* \*

Sutton was in the passenger seat as Warren turned into the service road leading to the paper mill, swerving to avoid a jet-black BMW sports car hurtling in the opposite direction.

'Let's see where our friend is going,' suggested Warren, executing a hasty three-point turn.

The suspect was soon racing south along the A10 and Warren struggled to keep up.

'He'll lose his licence again, if he doesn't slow down,' the DCI grouched.

'He's exiting at the A414, heading for Hertford,' said Sutton. 'Let's hope we don't lose him in the one-way system.'

Holding back, Warren managed to keep the sports car in view as it negotiated two roundabouts before taking a sharp left exit.

'Castle Street – it's a cul-de-sac.'

Warren pulled over to the side of the road and double-parked, the two men entering the narrow street on foot. The BMW was parked on the left.

'Looks like he's gone into the White Horse,' said Warren.

The two men peered through the window of the pub.

'Who's that he's just met?' asked Sutton. 'He looks familiar.'

Waiting until the unknown man turned slightly, Warren snapped a picture with his phone and emailed it back to Gary Hastings for a web search.

Hastings replied in seconds. 'No need to search, I've already got his mug on my screen. It's Dermot Calloway, managing director of Hertfordshire Heritage Living.'

'Well there's the motive,' said Warren. 'If the mill is facing bankruptcy, they will have no choice but to sell off the building to pay off their debts.'

‘And any bribes necessary to grease the wheels will be more than compensated for by the profit from turning that fine old building into luxury flats.’ Sutton’s tone betrayed his distaste.

The men continued to watch through the window.

‘And there’s the rest of the pay-off,’ announced Sutton as Calloway slid a brown envelope across the table.

Was it really worth it? Warren mused, as he shouldered his way through the double doors. The life of an innocent young man to satisfy the greed of two men? The legacy of a centuries-old family business for an envelope of cash? Dozens of livelihoods and a hardworking father’s reputation and freedom because a son wanted his inheritance early?

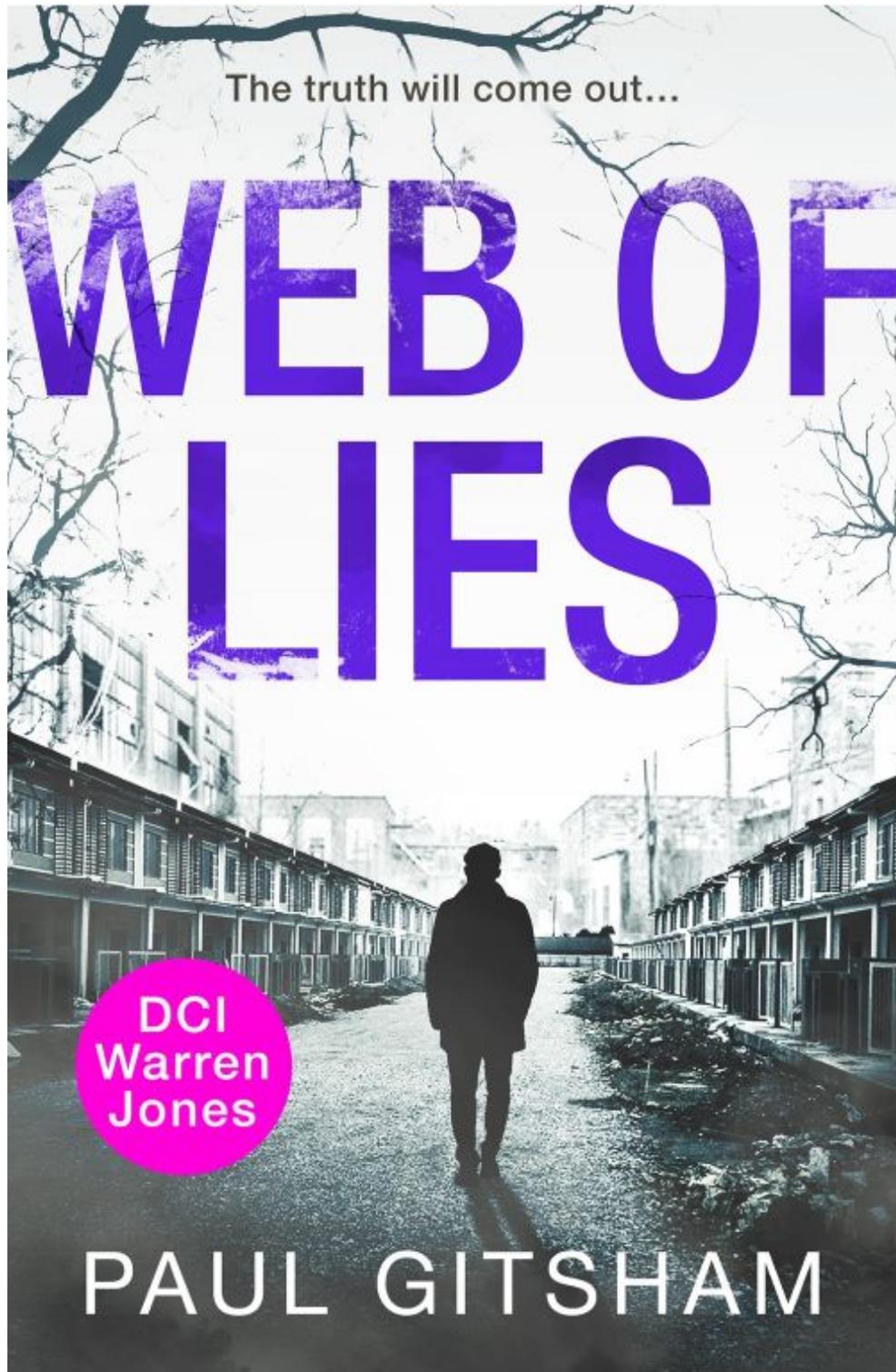
The two men looked up in surprise as the two police officers entered the bar.

‘Wayne Tate, I am arresting you on suspicion of the murder of Darren Bentley...’

The End

Read on for a preview of the next instalment in the  
DCI Warren Jones series.

*Web of Lies*



Out in eBook March 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

Paperback and Audiobook April 27<sup>th</sup> 2023

Available to [Pre-order now](#).

# **Web of Lies**

Paul Gitsham



ONE PLACE. MANY STORIES

## Copyright

HQ

An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd.

1 London Bridge Street

London SE1 9GF

[www.harpercollins.co.uk](http://www.harpercollins.co.uk)

HarperCollins*Publishers*

Macken House, 39/40 Mayor Street Upper,

Dublin 1 D01 C9W8

First published in Great Britain by HQ in 2023

Copyright © Paul Gitsham 2023

Paul Gitsham asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of HarperCollins.



# Prologue

*The woman hunched over the workbench straightens with a groan. How long has she been working? She's so tired, she can't even remember. She looks at the pile of finished boxes, then at the far bigger pile awaiting assembly, and feels a wave of despair.*

*Christmas is half a year away, but she'll need to fulfil her orders months before then. She has to. It's her last throw of the dice; the culmination of years of scraping by, building her reputation, garnering positive reviews. First at the kitchen table, then at a second-hand dining table in the garage, and now in the cheapest rental unit, on the dodgiest industrial estate in Middlesbury.*

*If she can prove herself this Christmas, they can finally move forward; the banks will start listening again, and they can put all this behind them and start living like a family once more. Her eyes flick towards the picture above the bench: four crudely drawn stick figures representing the centre of her universe.*

*She's exhausted; all she wants to do is go home and sleep. But it's too early. She has to hit her daily target. Miss it tonight and she'll have even more to do tomorrow.*

*She wistfully remembers her university days: all-nighters fuelled by endless cups of coffee made with three spoonfuls of harsh, supermarket-brand instant coffee. Foul-tasting, even with milk and sugar, but effective.*

*Those days are long gone. Caffeine no longer does the job.*

*Opening a drawer, she pulls out a small tin marked "paperclips" and unscrews the lid. She has to be careful; she needs enough to get her through the next two hours, but not enough to stop her sleeping when she finally makes it home.*

*Just the one line, she decides; although she makes it a generous one.*

*The knocking on the door makes her jump.*

*Who the hell is that, this time of night? She hastily wipes her nose, screws the lid back on the tin and drops it back in the drawer.*

*More knocking.*

*During the day, she works with the door propped open to let in more light, but not at night, when the occupants of the other units have gone home.*

*Crossing the workspace, she peers through the narrow window next to the door.*

*She recognises a familiar outline.*

*'What are you doing here?' she starts to ask as she turns the handle.*

*The words die in her throat . . .*

Thursday 16th May

# Chapter 1

‘Louisa Greenland, thirty-one years old, missing since Tuesday night.’

Detective Chief Inspector Warren Jones projected a headshot of a dark-haired woman with pale, lightly freckled skin, onto the briefing room screen. ‘Her husband, Ben, reported her missing yesterday afternoon, when the nursery for their youngest child contacted him at work to say she had been sick and needed to go home. Louisa is the primary contact, but her phone was switched off. He picked up his daughter and took her home and could find no sign of his wife. He went around to the industrial unit she rented for her cosmetics business and found it locked. None of the tenants from neighbouring units recalled seeing her that day.’

The question was immediate and predictably from Detective Sergeant David Hutchinson, who always got his hand up first. A transplant from Newcastle, “Hutch” specialised in organising door-to-door canvassing; he’d worked at Middlesbury for longer than anyone cared to remember.

‘Why didn’t he notice she was missing first thing?’

‘Apparently, Louisa has been working very late for the past few months, and her husband is a light sleeper, so she is staying in the spare bedroom. He gets up with the kids and does the school and nursery run; Louisa works from home during the day and picks them up. For the past few months, she’s then left her husband in charge for the evening and walked to her unit and worked until the early hours.’ Warren gave a tight smile. ‘We’ll be looking into the state of their marriage as a matter of course.’

‘Why has it come our way?’ asked DS Mags Richardson. ‘She’s been gone, what? Thirty-six hours? Surely it’s still a missing person inquiry.’

‘An overabundance of caution perhaps, but there are enough inconsistencies for them to bring us in,’ said Warren. The Missing Persons Unit’s careful approach was understandable. The previous year the team, based at Hertfordshire Constabulary’s headquarters in Welwyn Garden City, had failed to

escalate the disappearance of a vulnerable victim. Several months had passed before her body was found, during which time her killer had been free to murder again. The subsequent inquiry into those failings, and another poorly handled disappearance, had been brutal, almost claiming the scalp of Camilla Wong, the inspector in charge.

‘At first glance, Louisa’s a prime candidate for somebody who’s decided to take off for a while. She’s had mental health episodes previously, including post-partum depression, and has been under significant pressure for the last year. Her husband claims their marriage is fine, but their sleeping arrangements suggest that might not be entirely true. Her unit was locked, its alarm set, and her bag wasn’t there. A search of the premises revealed a quantity of cocaine; she has struggled with addiction issues in the past.

‘All that being said, she is regarded as potentially vulnerable. We have been called in because of some worrying indications.’

He ticked the reasons off on his fingers. ‘First, she is a devoted mother and normally leaves her phone switched on. According to the network, it was turned off shortly after midnight on the Tuesday and hasn’t connected since. Its last location was her unit.

‘Second, her laptop was still sitting on her workbench. She always takes that home.’

He uncurled another finger. ‘Third, she had a number of important phone calls scheduled for yesterday afternoon. She runs an online business called “P@mper by Louisa”, selling handpicked cosmetics. Earlier this year, she secured a contract to supply the Holistics Spa and Gym chain with Christmas beauty hampers for their gift shops. If it all went well, she hoped to expand her business further. She was said to be very excited about it.

‘Finally, there is evidence to suggest that she left abruptly. She is extremely organised, bordering on the obsessive, and working to a tight schedule. She set herself a target of thirty completed hampers each night, the number needed to fill a shipping crate. The latest crate was only half filled, but she had already prepared everything necessary to complete the remaining hampers. Her husband is adamant she is the sort of person who won’t leave a job half done.’

Looking around the room at his colleagues’ faces, Warren could see his own unease mirrored. Missing Persons had been right to contact CID; some-

thing didn't smell right.

\* \* \*

Ben Greenland opened his front door before the doorbell finished sounding.

'Have you found her?' he asked immediately.

'No, I'm sorry, Mr Greenland, we have no news yet. My name is Detective Sergeant Karen Hardwick with Middlesbury CID. May I come in?'

'CID?' Greenland swallowed. 'Don't you investigate murders? Does that mean you think . . .'

Behind him, PC Kevin Lederer, a family liaison officer who Hardwick had worked with before, laid a hand on the man's shoulder, gently leading him back indoors; his voice was soothing. 'Not necessarily, Ben. CID are detectives. They're the best placed to assist Missing Persons with the search.' Hardwick noted he avoided using the word "investigation". An "investigation" was scary; it implied something had happened that needed investigating. On the other hand, a search was positive; it meant that they were hoping to find her.

The familiar sound of a Disney movie drifted in from the living room; the couple's two daughters, Pippa aged three and Molly aged five. Ben's mother was currently entertaining her grandchildren. The door to the living room opened, and a dark-haired woman about the same age as Greenland came out.

'Ben? Is everything OK? Have they found Louisa?'

'And you are . . . ?' asked Hardwick.

'Caitlin. Caitlin O'Shaughnessy, I'm a friend of Louisa and Ben's.' She spoke with a soft, Irish accent. 'I just came around to see if he and the girls were OK.'

'There are no updates, I'm afraid,' said Hardwick. 'Would it be possible to speak to you?'

'I was just leaving,' she said. 'But I can give you my details.'

Hardwick noted them down. O'Shaughnessy turned to Greenland and gave him a hug. 'Call me as soon as you hear anything,' she whispered, before shouting goodbye into the living room and leaving.

Hardwick took a chair at the kitchen table opposite Greenland, accepting his offer of a coffee. 'I know you've been through this already, but I'd like to hear it first-hand from you,' said Hardwick. 'Tell me about Tuesday.'

Greenland nodded tightly. Hardwick could see the impatience on his face, but he forced himself to speak. 'It was a normal day. I left for work at my usual time, just after eight a.m. I dropped the kids off at nursery and school on the way. Louisa was still asleep.'

'In the spare room?' interjected Hardwick.

'Yes, she's been working until the early hours. She sleeps in there so she can get a lie-in and not disturb me when she comes in.'

'And where does she work?'

'The Forest End Industrial Estate. She rents a lock-up to run her online cosmetics business.' Middlesbury had a number of industrial estates within the town's boundaries. Forest End was one of the less salubrious.

'Did she visit there during the day?'

'I don't know. Some days she does; other times she works from home. She prefers to do paperwork at the kitchen table, so she can run the washing machine and prepare dinner. The unit's only a short distance from here, so it's no big deal for her to pop down there for a couple of hours to pack some hampers. Either way, she picked up the kids at their normal time and brought them home. I arrived home at around half-five.'

'And how did she seem to you?'

He shrugged. 'Normal.'

'She didn't mention any worries?'

'Nothing.'

'What about the last few weeks? Anything unusual?'

He puffed his lips out. 'Look, the last few months have been hard work. P@mp@r has only really been ticking over for the past couple of years. She sells her gift hampers online – eBay, Etsy, Not On The High Street, Amazon – the usual places. She was getting great ratings, but sales were stubbornly low. She started off working out of the garage on her own, but eventually needed more space, so she hired the industrial unit. She was keeping up with the workload, but only breaking even. Then in January, she landed the Holis-

tics contract and things went crazy. She's hoping to take on a couple of people to help her over the summer.'

'How does she get there?'

'She walks. It takes about fifteen minutes.'

'Even late at night?' asked Hardwick, keeping her voice neutral.

Greenland shifted in his seat. 'She doesn't drive. Sometimes she calls a taxi . . . normally she texts to tell me she's on her way home, but Tuesday night she didn't.'

'What time does she usually come home?' she asked.

'About two a.m. It depends.'

Hardwick smiled encouragingly. 'Depends on what?'

'On what she needed to do that evening. She tries to do thirty hampers most nights to fulfil the Holistics contract, but before she assembles them she needs to prepare everything. She makes her own scented candles and bath bombs, and each hamper has a handwritten insert. Plus, she's still building hand-selected hampers for her online clients. They take a lot more time and effort than the identical ones for Holistics, but they are the customers who built her reputation, and she needs to look after them.'

'Going back to Tuesday, walk me through what happened after you dropped the kids off.'

'Just a typical day. I worked until five, then drove home. Louisa was already in.' He looked up at the ceiling briefly. 'She'd made a cottage pie. The girls were in the living room watching a film. I tidied the kitchen, whilst Louisa went and spent some time with the girls. Then we ate and I loaded the dishwasher as Louisa bathed the kids. She then left to go to work. That's the last I saw of her or spoke to her.' His eyes filled with tears.

Hardwick gave him a moment to compose himself. 'What time was that?'

'About seven. Look, I've already told everyone this.'

'I know, but sometimes people remember new details and I always prefer to hear it first-hand,' Hardwick reassured him. 'Please carry on.'

'I put the girls to bed. I read to Pippa until she fell asleep, then Molly and I did a bit of reading practice, before she went to sleep also.'

‘Do the girls sleep in the same room?’

‘Yes. Maybe when they’re older, and we can afford to move house . . .’

‘Did they get up in the night?’

‘Not that I recall; they’re both pretty good.’

Hardwick made a note to look into having a specialist interview the two young children. She’d also have someone speak to their teachers and other carers; it was amazing what kids overheard sometimes. ‘What did you do then?’ she continued.

‘Nothing much. I pottered about in the kitchen, sorted some laundry and set the timer on the washing machine. Then watched a bit of TV, until it was time for bed.’

‘What did you watch?’ asked Hardwick, casually.

‘The footie on Sky. West Brom v Villa in the Championship play-off.’

‘What time did you go to bed?’

‘About half-ten. I watched the ten o’clock news, read for a bit and I guess I was asleep by elevenish?’

Hardwick made a note in her pocketbook. ‘And did you sleep through until the morning?’

‘Yes. The alarm goes off at quarter to seven. I got up, made the girls breakfast and did the school run, then went to work.’

‘And you are sure your wife wasn’t home?’

‘I have no idea. I don’t disturb her; I let her lie in.’

‘Did you try to call Louisa during the day?’

‘No, we were snowed under at work. I planned to give her a ring at lunchtime, but Pippa’s nursery called about midday and said she had a temperature and had been sick. That’s when I checked my mobile and saw Louisa hadn’t texted when she finished work like she usually does. So I picked Pip up then drove home. The house was empty, so I called Lou’s mobile and it went straight to voicemail. Pip was a bit sleepy, but she was OK, so I drove around to Lou’s unit, but it was all locked up and the garage next door said they hadn’t seen her. That’s when I called the police.’

‘Do you know if she came home at all?’

‘I don’t think so. The dishwasher was still full, and the washing machine needed emptying. She usually leaves her cereal bowl to soak in the sink, but it wasn’t there, and the only coffee cup was mine from breakfast. She also makes a point of making the girls’ packed lunches when she gets in. Crazy, I know, that time of night, but she likes to put a little note in there. Their lunchboxes were still empty that morning . . . she’s never forgotten before.’ His lip started to tremble. ‘Something must have happened to her Tuesday night.’

Hardwick gave him a sympathetic smile. ‘I realise this must be difficult, for you, but what was your wife’s state of mind? How was she feeling in the days before she went missing?’

He wrung his hands together. ‘She was stressed, and she was very tired, but she was also excited, you know? She’s worked so hard over the past couple of years and finally, it was going to pay off. The contract with Holistics was a really big deal. They said that if her hampers sold well over Christmas, they would consider stocking them permanently and even using some of her products in their spa therapies. Then she could consider renting somewhere a bit nicer, perhaps even opening her own shop.’ He rubbed his face. ‘Longer term, I was going to cut back at work and help her run the business.’ He gave a bleak smile. ‘Everything was going really well.’

Hardwick chose her words carefully. ‘We know Louisa had some mental health challenges in the past. Do you know if she had been struggling at all recently? Perhaps found things a bit overwhelming?’

He shook his head vigorously. ‘She had some difficulties a few years ago, but the last bout of depression was postnatal, after Pip was born. She had a few dark months, but her GP was brilliant. Since then, she hasn’t needed any medication and, like I said, she was excited about the future.’ His voice became more earnest. ‘Lou has never been afraid of hard work. Back at university, she was the queen of the all-nighter. She loves a challenge. That’s why I can’t see her walking away now, leaving things unfinished.’ He gestured towards the living room. ‘And she would *never* leave me and the girls. Never.’

Hardwick met his gaze. ‘Ben, my colleagues have searched Louisa’s unit and we found a quantity of what appears to be cocaine. Was Louisa using drugs?’

Greenland's shoulders slumped. 'Shit,' he said quietly. 'I thought we'd dealt with that.'

'I need you to be honest with me, Ben,' said Hardwick. 'We're very worried about Louisa. We are aware she had some problems in the past.'

He sighed. 'No, you're right.' He swallowed. 'Back at university, we liked to party; Louisa especially. She's always been all or nothing. That was fine at uni, but when we left and started working, it nearly cost her her job. She sought help and stopped the cocaine and the drinking. As far as I know, she's been clean since then.'

'So no drugs at all?'

He bit his lip. 'We occasionally have a little weed now and again, just to unwind after a hard week, but nothing stronger. I still have the odd pint with my mates, but we never have booze in the house.'

'Do you know where she got the cocaine?'

'No, idea,' he said quickly.

'Where do you get the cannabis?'

'Just a mate,' he mumbled.

Hardwick waited, but he looked down at the table and remained mute.

'If Louisa did decide to leave for a while, perhaps to clear her head for a few days, do you know where she might go? Any places that are special to her, or friends she might stay with?'

'No, just the ones I told the constable from the Missing Persons Unit about. And I had another look at the wardrobe and bathroom. None of her clothes are missing, her overnight bag is still there, and her toiletries are all in the cupboard. Her contraceptive pills are in her bedside drawer; she'd never leave without those.'

A sudden squeal came from the lounge, followed by a muffled adult voice admonishing somebody to "play nicely".

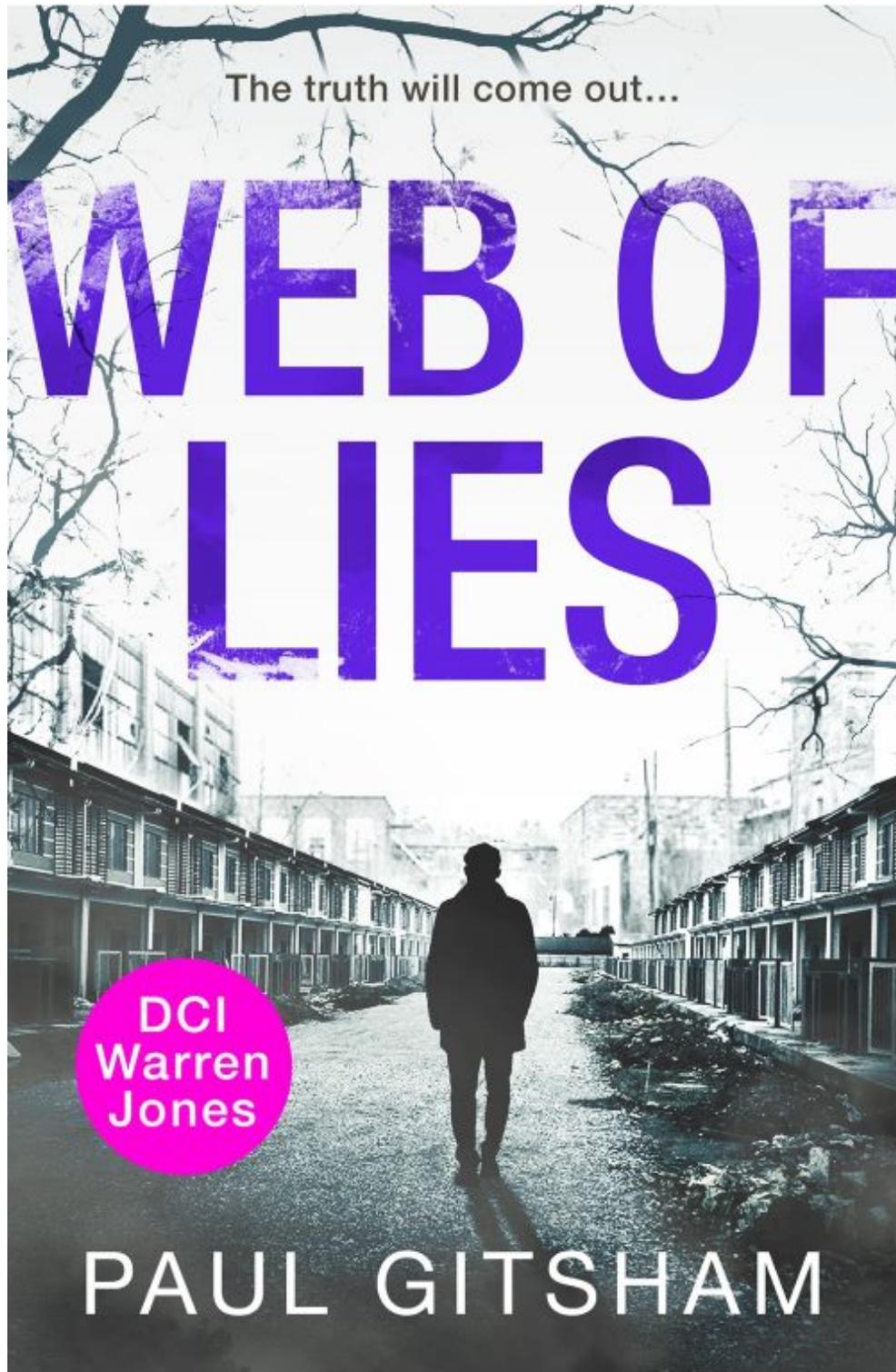
'I'm sorry, Sergeant, I have to go and deal with that.'

'Of course.' Hardwick handed over her card. 'If you think of anything at all, please let me know, or speak to PC Lederer.' She gave him a smile. 'I promise you, we will do everything in our power to find Louisa.'

Hardwick saw herself out, whilst Greenland and Lederer headed to the next room to put an end to whatever drama was unfolding between his daughters. Sitting in her car, she called the station. DI Tony Sutton answered.

‘I’ve just spoken to Ben Greenland. He’s lying.’

## *Web of Lies*



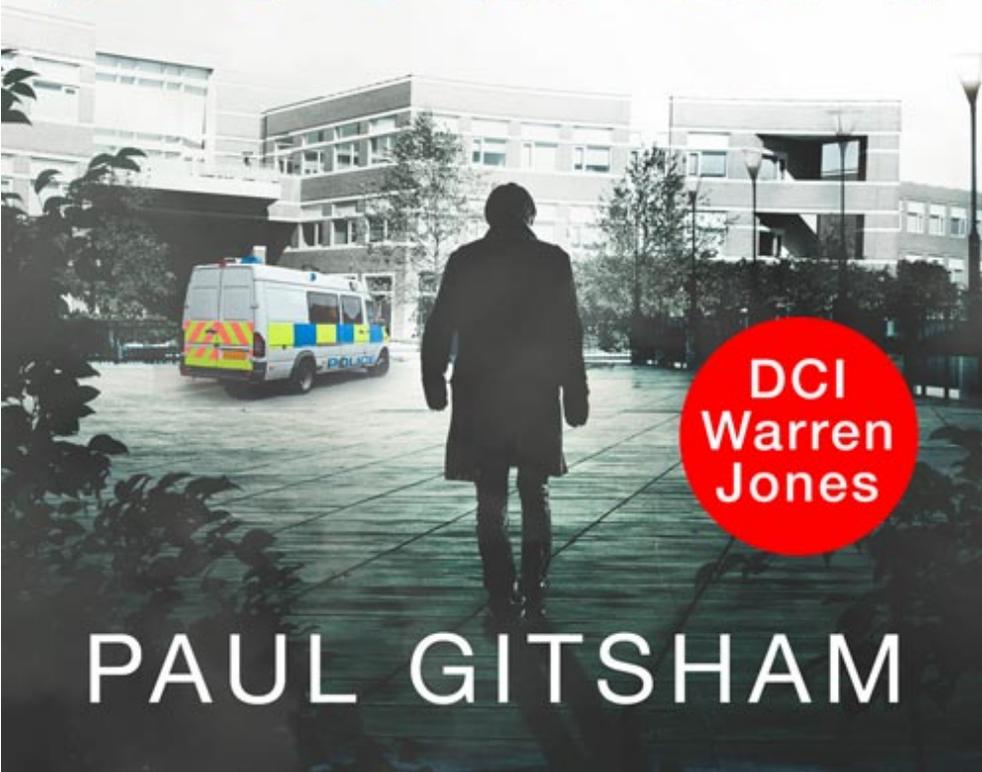
Out in eBook March 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

Paperback and Audiobook April 27<sup>th</sup> 2023

Available to [Pre-order now](#).

'Crime writing at its very best'  
Kate Rhodes

# THE LAST STRAW



**The Last Straw**

When Professor Alan Tunbridge is discovered in his office with his throat slashed, the suspects start queuing up. The brilliant but unpleasant microbiologist had a genius for making enemies.

For Warren Jones, newly appointed detective chief inspector to the Middlesbury force, a high-profile murder is the ideal opportunity. He's determined to run a thorough and professional investigation but political pressure to resolve the case quickly and tensions in the office and at home make life anything but easy.

Everything seems to point to one vengeful man but the financial potential of the professor's pioneering research takes the inquiry in an intriguing and, for Jones and his team, dangerous direction.

**Click here to buy in the UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339)**  
**Click here to buy in the US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339)**

Meet a killer who knows  
how to cover their tracks.

# NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

DCI  
Warren  
Jones

PAUL GITSHAM

**No Smoke Without Fire**

DCI Warren Jones has a bad feeling when the body of a young woman turns up in Beaconsfield Woods. She's been raped and strangled but the murderer has been careful to leave no DNA evidence. There are, of course, suspects – boyfriend, father – to check out but, worryingly, it looks more and more like a stranger murder.

Warren's worst fears are confirmed when another young woman is killed in the same way.

The MO fits that of Richard Cameron who served twelve years for rape. But Cameron never killed his victims and he has a cast-iron alibi.

Then personal tragedy intervenes and Warren is off the case. But the pressure is mounting and another woman goes missing. Warren is back but will the break he desperately needs come before there's another victim?

**Click here to buy in the UK <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781472096487&oisbn=9780008395339>**

**Click here to buy in the US <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781472096487&oisbn=9780008395339>**

One body. No witnesses.  
DCI Jones is on his own.

# SILENT AS THE GRAVE

DCI  
Warren  
Jones

PAUL GITSHAM

**Silent as the Grave**

**It's DCI Warren Jones' coldest case yet . . .**

The body of Reginald Williamson had been well concealed under a bush in Middlesbury Common and the murder efficiently carried out – a single stab wound to the chest. Reggie’s dog had been killed just as efficiently. With no clues or obvious motive, the case is going nowhere. Then Warren gets a break.

Warren’s instincts tell him that the informant is dodgy – a former police officer under investigation. But when Warren hears the incredible story he has to tell, he’s glad to have given him a chance to speak. Suddenly, a wide criminal conspiracy, involving high-level police corruption, a gangster and a trained killer, is blown wide open . . . and Warren finds that this time, it’s not just his career under threat, but also his family – and his life.

Click here to buy in the UK <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781474033602&oisbn=9780008395339>

Click here to buy in the US <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781474033602&oisbn=9780008395339>

## Also by Paul Gitsham

### The DCI Warren Jones series

#### *The Last Straw*

UK <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339>

US <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781472094698&oisbn=9780008395339>

#### *No Smoke Without Fire*

UK <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781472096487&oisbn=9780008395339>

US <http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781472096487&oisbn=9780008395339>

#### *Blood is Thicker Than Water (Novella)*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9781474034159&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781474034159&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9781474034159&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781474034159&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*Silent as the Grave*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9781474033602&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9781474033602&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9781474033602&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9781474033602&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*A Case Gone Cold (Novella)*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008301163&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008301163&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008301163&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008301163&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*The Common Enemy*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008301170&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008301170&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008301170&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008301170&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*A Deadly Lesson (Novella)*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008314378&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008314378&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008314378&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008314378&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*Forgive Me Father*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008314385&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008314385&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008314385&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008314385&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*At First Glance (Novella)*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008320591&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008320591&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008320591&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008320591&oisbn;=9780008395339)

*A Price to Pay*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008301200&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008301200&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008301200&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008301200&oisbn;=9780008395339)

### *Out of Sight*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008395292&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008395292&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008395292&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008395292&oisbn;=9780008395339)

### *Time to Kill*

UK [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?  
isbn=9780008395315&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnukboba?isbn=9780008395315&oisbn;=9780008395339)

US [http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?  
isbn=9780008395315&oisbn;=9780008395339](http://ads.harpercollins.com/hqnboba?isbn=9780008395315&oisbn;=9780008395339)



Dear Reader,

We hope you enjoyed reading this book. If you did, we'd be so appreciative if you left a review. It really helps us and the author to bring more books like this to you.

Here at HQ Digital we are dedicated to publishing fiction that will keep you turning the pages into the early hours. Don't want to miss a thing? To find out more about our books, promotions, discover exclusive content and enter competitions you can keep in touch in the following ways:

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY:

Sign up to our new email newsletter: <http://smarturl.it/SignUpHQ>

Read our new blog [www.hqstories.co.uk](http://www.hqstories.co.uk)

Twitter icon: <https://twitter.com/HQStories>

Facebook icon: [www.facebook.com/HQStories](http://www.facebook.com/HQStories)

BUDDING WRITER?

We're also looking for authors to join the HQ Digital family! Find out more here:

<https://www.hqstories.co.uk/want-to-write-for-us/>

Thanks for reading, from the HQ Digital team



## About the Publisher

### **Australia**

HarperCollins Publishers (Australia) Pty. Ltd.  
Level 13, 201 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia  
<http://www.harpercollins.com.au>

### **Canada**

HarperCollins Canada  
2 Bloor Street East – 20th Floor  
Toronto, ON, M4W, 1A8, Canada  
<http://www.harpercollins.ca>

### **India**

HarperCollins India  
A 75, Sector 57  
Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201 301, India  
<https://harpercollins.co.in/>

### **New Zealand**

HarperCollins Publishers (New Zealand) Limited  
P.O. Box 1  
Auckland, New Zealand  
<http://www.harpercollins.co.nz>

### **United Kingdom**

HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.  
1 London Bridge Street

London SE1 9GF

<http://www.harpercollins.co.uk>

**United States**

HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

195 Broadway

New York, NY 10007

<http://www.harpercollins.com>