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DEBORAH CROMBIE

AUTHOR OF *IN A DARK HOUSE*



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Leave the Grave Green

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DEAD

DEBORAH CROMBIE

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For DIANE, DALE, JIM, VIQUI, JOHN, and RICKEY,
who have once again read the book in progress
with much patience and insight.
Thanks, you guys.

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Although the village of Holmbury St. Mary and its church do indeed exist, all the characters portrayed in this novel are entirely a product of the author's imagination.

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CHAPTER 1

His office seemed to shrink as he paced. The walls drew in, their angles distorted by the elongated shadows cast from the swivel lamp on his desk. The Yard always felt a bit eerie at night, as if the very emptiness of the rooms had a presence. He stopped at the bookcases and ran his finger along the spines of the well-thumbed books on the top shelf. Archeology, art... canals ... crime reference ... Many of them were gifts from his mother, sent in her continual quest to remedy what she considered his lack of a proper education. Although he'd tried to group them alphabetically by subject, there were a few inevitable strays. Kincaid shook his head—would that he could order his life even half as well as he did his books.

He glanced at his watch for the tenth time in as many minutes, then crossed to his desk and sat down very deliberately. The call that had brought him in had been urgent—a high-ranking police officer found murdered—and if Gemma didn't arrive soon he'd have to go on to the crime scene without her. She'd not been in to work since she had left his flat on Friday evening. And although she had called in and requested leave from the chief superintendent, she had not answered Kincaid's increasingly frantic calls over the past five days. Tonight Kincaid had asked the duty sergeant to contact her, and she'd responded.

Unable to contain his restlessness, he rose again and had reached to pull his jacket from the coat stand when he heard the soft click of the latch. He turned and saw her standing with her back to the door, watching him, and a foolish grin spread across his face. "Gemma!"

"Hullo, guv."

"I've tried and tried to ring you. I thought something must have happened —"

She was already shaking her head. "I went to my sister's for a few days. I needed some time—"

"We have to talk." He moved a step nearer and stopped, examining her.