

A Choir of Men and Boys

All men die. Not all men truly live

It is a time of civil unrest and bitter conflict in Britain. A radical new government has pushed through some inordinately controversial new legislation causing vast rifts among the people and a nation so divided it borders on anarchy. The eruption of this tumultuousness is mainly due to the new government's reintroduction of Capital Punishment.

As the date for George Effney's execution is announced as January 1st, he becomes more infamous for being the first man to be hanged in England for over forty years than he is for the murder of five young men ten years previous.

The events naturally lead to an unprecedented media circus and with only four weeks to go before his execution George Effney has still refused to speak to any journalist or media organisation despite a multitude of requests.

And so when executives at sleazy London tabloid newspaper 'The Insider' receive a personal letter from Effney specifically inviting their most junior writer Darien McLeod up to his death row prison in the northern town of West Proctor for a succession of one on one interviews they can hardly believe their surreal luck. Their excitement turns to irate disbelief when they approach Darien with the goldmine assignment and he bluntly refuses the job. Their anger and confusion is compounded by the fact that Darien is a young writer whose ambition is beyond ardent – he is literally a man consumed by his career – having little or nothing to do with friends, women or family he exists in a cold and isolated world of work and the complete abstinence of anything that could cause him to feel something remotely resembling emotion. He is, in short, a man who has avoided warmth and compassion for so long he now seems incapable of it.

Not intent to let the scoop of the century pass them by, the Insider's Chief Executives resort to some below the belt manipulation and politely-dressed blackmail to force Darien onto a train and up to West Proctor.

Darien reluctantly arrives in Proctor. Beneath the raw emotion and the widespread waves of violence it is a place Darien appears to know well and it transpires that he is George's estranged son, having changed his last name and left his hometown and his family after his father's confession to the series of brutal crimes.

Their initial reunion is of such dark intensity and emotional fireworks that it leaves Darien exhausted and broken and he departs the prison vowing to return to London even if it means career suicide.

However, just as he is set to board his train he touches upon truths which have laid buried and dormant over the years but suddenly resurface, throwing George's guilt into doubt and forcing Darien to question everything he thought he knew.

With defiant will and grim determination Darien digs through ten years of layers of lies, intimidation, revenge, cover-up and guilt. Tenaciously battling against his father's shrouded truth, authorities who will stand against anything that causes the first execution to be disrupted and a small group of George's former friends within the dirty mean town who grow increasingly concerned as Darien probes into their dark past.

And the murky grey docking town of Proctor, which clearly holds its own grim secrets, seems to revile the fact that her returned son is so intent on poking through the slime and uncovering a story that would otherwise have gone with George Effenev to his grave.

With so many walls bearing in on him, and the ever-present ticking of the clock that counts persistently down to the execution day, Darien's own self built prison walls begin to crack and he finds himself open to feelings that have long lain dormant and his quest moves from being that of career advancement to a desperate all-consuming need to save his father's life. However, as time runs out, and Darien comes dangerously close to the truth, the condemned George Effenev's fears are far from his own fate but of the fact that an evil sadistic killer is almost certainly closing in on his strong but vulnerable son.