Thin, Brittle, Mile

Every man's final journey is always the journey home.

Thin, Brittle, Mile is the story of brothers, Luke and Tyler Dearlove, who travel to the remote, sparsely populated Skidaway Island searching for their third missing sibling. The brothers soon sense that something is strange and wrong on the island and their inquiries, which stir up the most insidious of hornets' nests, are greeted at first with shrouded suspicion, then with open hostility followed by blunt threats and harassment and finally escalating violence.

For Skidaway Island is a place of extremes, as beautiful as it is bleak. From its unforgiving landscapes; crumbling and fierce, to its rugged coastline, where the cold waters of the North Sea cut like teeth into the shores. The entire sins of the world seem to hang heavy, ever present and un-ignorable, in the moist air like vapour. There, its melting pot of inhabitants, the last remaining original islanders, defying the mainland company trying to expatriate them, to the Eastern European and North African labourers, brought in to carry out the company's work, co-habit in a rising tension that seems to border on the fringes of all-out war.

As the Dearloves pick their way through the island's shrouded mystery on the search for their missing brother, the islanders seething embedded intolerance of one another and the all-pervading bitter conflict between them echoes parallels in their own relationship.

Luke, the younger of the two, a former soldier, recently returned from a tour of duty, physically unscathed, but left with a spirit which is broken, carries the plight of the lonely believer in a world beyond belief, battling on with dogged tenacity and quiet rage.

By contrast, Tyler, ursine and bombastic, quickly forms bonds with the original islanders and seems to fit more with them after sharing one night of drinking than he does with the younger brother with whom he has shared a lifetime.

Only mildly aware of his own limitations and failings, Tyler begrudgingly follows Luke's quest to find their brother, or, if not to find him, then at least to find the truth about his probable murder. Uncomfortable and inconvenient answers surface, not only about their missing sibling's fate, but also about their own tattered entwined lives. Finally, Tyler has no choice but to accept that his soul sick, traumatised younger brother simply wants to find the truth, even if only to lay down beside their lost sibling and join him in restful death.

However, others on the island have a more ominous agenda for the Dearloves and sinister troubling forces close in. Piece by piece the present begins to reveal the past and, as the brothers get dangerously close to the truth, Luke's military background marks him out as a target for both sides of the conflict to use in their war against each other.

Eventually, when the Dearloves realise that the island's treacherous mistrusting inhabitants will never allow them to leave, their venture into the land without pity ends in a cold and brutal dark night of the soul, leaving Tyler finally able to understand that the open and festering wounds of war are nothing compared to the scars war leaves on the human heart. And, with the final, cruellest twist of fate, that war itself is no longer confined to distant shores but, in our present times, can come upon us at any moment, in any place and savage us in every way.