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They gathered at the car park in the hour before dawn and waited to be told what to do. It was cold and there was little conversation. There were questions that weren't being asked. The missing girl's name was Rebecca Shaw. When last seen she'd been wearing a white hooded top. A mist hung low across the moor and the ground was frozen hard. They were given instructions and then they moved off, their boots crunching on the stiffened ground and their tracks fading behind them as the heather sprang back into shape. She was five feet tall, with dark-blond hair. She had been missing for hours. They kept their eyes down and they didn't speak and they wondered what they might find. The only sounds were footsteps and dogs barking along the road and faintly a helicopter from the reservoirs. The helicopter had been out all night and found nothing, its searchlight skimming across the heather and surging brown streams. Jackson's sheep had taken the fear and

scattered through a broken gate, and he'd been up all hours bringing them back. The mountain-rescue teams and the cave teams and the police had found nothing, and at midnight a search had been called. It hadn't taken much to raise the volunteers. Half the village was out already, talking about what could have happened. This was no time of year to have gone up on the hill, it was said. Some of the people who come this way don't know how sharply the weather can turn. How quickly darkness falls. Some of them don't seem to know there are places a mobile phone won't work. The girl's family had come up for the New Year, and were staying in one of the barn conversions at the Hunter place. They'd come running into the village at dusk, shouting. It was a cold night to have been out on the hill. She's likely just hiding, people said. She'll be down in a clough. Turned her ankle. She'll be aiming to give her parents a fright. There was a lot of this. People just wanted to open their mouths and talk, and they didn't much mind what came out. By first light the mist had cleared. From the top of the moor when people turned they could see the village: the beech wood and the allotments, the church tower and the cricket ground, the river and the quarry and the cement works by the main road into town. There was plenty of ground to cover, and so many places she could be. They moved on. There was an occasional flash of light from the traffic on the motorway, just visible along the horizon. The reservoirs were a flat metallic grey. A thick band of rain was coming in. The ground was softer now, the oily

brown water seeping up around their boots. A news helicopter flew low along the line of volunteers. It was a job not to look up and wave. Later the police held a press conference in the Gladstone, but they had nothing to announce beyond what was already known. The missing girl's name was Rebecca Shaw. She was thirteen years old. When last seen she'd been wearing a white hooded top with a navy-blue body-warmer, black jeans, and canvas shoes. She was five feet tall, with straight, dark-blonde, shoulder-length hair. Members of the public were urged to contact the police if they saw anyone fitting the description. The search would resume when the weather allowed. In the evening over the square there was a glow of television lights and smoke rising from generators and raised voices coming from the yard behind the pub. Doubts were beginning to emerge.

At midnight when the year turned there were fireworks going up from the towns beyond the valley but they were too far off for the sound to carry and no one came out to watch. The dance at the village hall was cancelled, and although the Gladstone was full there was no mood for celebration. Tony closed the bar at half past the hour and everyone made their way home. Only the police stayed out in the streets, gathered around their vans or heading back into the hills. In the morning the rain started up once again. Water coursed from the swollen peat beds quickly through the