

# Finding the bog body

*by* Alison Wells

The bulldozer judders, throwing sound across the bog's wide valley back to the jagged hills.

In the broad sweep of a valley, the heron's wings beat determined across the fretful sky, the crickets sing. Over the ground moves the breath of dragonflies and moths, ticks and red ants. Small birds scratch among the lichen, tracking beetles. A hawk hangs in the ether.

The driver takes slices off the skin of the bog. He peels back the carpet of woven sedge, heather, moss, the wings of insects, feathers of bog cotton, leaves of clover. The blade of the bucket cuts into it, making a scar through the tapestry of green. It opens up the seeping interior, accesses the bog's bitter ale...

The driver sees something in the ground. He throws the machine into neutral. He powers down the roar. He jumps out of the cab onto the springy turf, the mud going into the grooves in his soles. The spring adds a lightness to his mood. This is a man who gets up before his wife and teenage children, puts his sensible sandwich and a flask of tea in the car and drives to the site as the light fills in around the edges of the landscape's developing photograph. He plays Springsteen and Cohen and the Blades and Thin Lizzy. He has a good voice. It attracted his wife's attention before she was his wife when he was just one more rugby head watching the match with his lager aloft. Later someone gave him a guitar and he sang Sarah and it happened to be her name. He thinks of his wife, leaning against the breakfast bar that sly wry smile on her face. He bloody fancies her still, the curve of her in those black jeans, she keeps herself well, no messing.

It's a bitch of a day, devious. It started out calm and then those monsoon showers hit. The lads legged it back to the vans for a bit of a warm sup. He was going to follow them. The rain machine-gunned the window. He bent his head against it before he figured he was in the cab. He said he might as well continue while it poured. Then he

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spotted whatever it was. He goes to investigate. The sun comes out to make a fool of him and the drips are speed-bombing off the door as he reaches the ground. The rain slides into the run of his wrist, his hair is splattered.

The bog still stretches for miles, blends into the hills, runs up the face of it until the crags split it, solid heather hewn hunks hurtling off the rock face, clinging to the crag underside.

He almost trips on it, this coagulation of leaves, this what, this shrivelled thing, rag and bones. Above his head a hawk cries, dips his wing. The roar of lorries on the arterial is silenced. The hawk halts at this present moment. Waits for what has been found.

