

A MAN FROM THE NORTH EAST



BEATRICE HOLLOWAY

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CHAPTER ONE

The steel, folding gates of the lift cage clanged shut behind George, Joseph his father, his cousin, Thomas and other members of the crew. As it began its journey downwards with a jolt, George felt the usual frisson of fear. As the lift settled and dropped more smoothly down the shaft he spoke quietly to Joseph standing beside him, hoping not to be overheard by the others. 'I'm packing it in on Friday, da. Giving in me notice.'

Joseph turned sharply towards him, and peering up at his son in the gloomy light afforded by their Davey lamps, asked, 'What's that you said, son?'

George knew his father had understood what he had said, but he'd made up his mind. 'I've had enough. I'm finishing on Friday I'm thinking.'

'Thou'll do nowt of the kind,' Joseph snapped back.

The lift stopped and as the gates opened to release the miners, George blurted out 'I'm twenty-one today, da. Thou can say what thou likes but you've no longer a say in my affairs.' George stumbled behind his father along the narrow, uneven tunnel towards the coalface. 'I'm away to London. Our Jessie will see me right. Wrote and told me plenty of jobs going down there.'

Joseph stopped dead in his tracks, almost causing a domino effect on the men behind. 'You leave our Jessie out of this. Shut your trap for now, lad. We'll discuss this at home. No need to air our differences down here.'

George sighed. Jessie had been Joseph's favourite daughter, and George knew her absence had made the old fellow crotchety, even though he'd acknowledged that girls had to work until they wed. George knew Joseph missed her, and the other sisters in service, and