



Bleak Spring

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The murder Scobie Malone, the hero of Jon Cleary's series of mysteries featuring him, must deal with in BLEAK SPRING touches his personal as well as his professional life. Will Rockne, a solicitor and acquaintance of Scobie and his wife Lisa, is murdered, and the case is assigned to Scobie.

His investigation, aided by his partner Sergeant Russ Clements, encompasses Kelpie Dunne, a former convict posing as a car mechanic; Angela Bodalle, a barrister friend of Olive Rockne, Will Rockne's widow; Bernie Bezrow, a wealthy bookmaker; Mr. Palady, the local director of Shahrivier Credit International, a shady bank; and Igor Dostoyevsky, a former KGB agent.

Dostoyevsky had five and a quarter million dollars to hide for the old Soviet elite in Russia. Bezrow put him on to Shahrivier International, and through George Rockne, Will's father and an old Communist, Dostoyevsky used Will to deposit the money in Shahrivier. Knowing that he was going to die soon of a brain tumor, Will transferred the money to his own account and left it in a new will to his son Jason and his daughter Shelley. He leaves nothing at all to his wife.

Why he does this, and the lies his wife tells Scobie, as well as her connection to Kelpie Dunne and Angela Bodalle lead the inspector to treat Olive Rockne as his prime suspect.

By the time Dostoyevsky kidnaps Jason Rockne and (by accident) Scobie's daughter Clarie to regain the money, Scobie is fairly sure who murdered not only Will Rockne, but, not long afterward, Kelpie Dunne and his wife. When Dostoyevsky promises to testify as a witness to Will's murder in exchange for his freedom, Scobie has the final piece of evidence he needs.

Jon Cleary's weakest suit is the social cliches with which he pads his narrative and some of his characters, and his strongest suit is the clarity with which he presents the interlocking elements of his plot.

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