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See you soon,  Heather  **PS Don't forget!** If you want friends, relations and neighbours to benefit from the free novella, get them to sign up for the newsletter at www.heatherpeckauthor.com  There's not much time left!  Now, here's the short story:  **Noxious Fate**  It was at the village fete that people began to comment. Maisie and Viv, setting up the WI cake stall, demanded to be moved across the green. ‘I’m sorry,’ said Maisie, ‘but no one’s going to buy cakes surrounded by an aroma of rotting silage, and frankly I’m not spending all day standing in it either.’   The donkey rides and their child clientele were judged to be less picky and were relocated from their spot by the bus stop. With Viv now muttering about diesel fumes, the WI trestle-tables and gazebo were swopped for water buckets and a pile of head collars. The donkeys were happy. They had more shade and were unmoved, as far as anyone could tell, by the aroma.    The sun came out in the afternoon and the smell got stronger, out-competing even the ‘Happy Chompers’ fast-food van. The complaints intensified and a deputation went to the local farmer to ask if anything could be done. Muttering to himself about incomers, and ‘this is the countryside you know’ he went to investigate. With clear memories of winter complaints about mud on the footpaths and the demand that he concrete them, he wasn’t expecting anything other than normal FYM (or farmyard manure as he translated it for the benefit of those who didn’t know). He got a shock when he entered the field and a reek sufficient to lift his cap hit him squarely in the chest.   ‘That’s not normal,’ he exclaimed, ‘and it’s nowt to do with farming neether. That smells like a body. A dead one,’ he clarified for those who weren’t keeping up with developments, and the rumour flew round the Fete faster than a greased ‘Big Willie’, as the Happy Chompers’ large frankfurter was tastefully termed.   Within minutes, the Star Wars re-enactment society and the Vikings of Ormby were mingling with blue uniforms and blue lights. The Raptor display team put their charges back into their cages in a hurry, in case they got over-excited, and a lot of punters stood around open mouthed, balls and bowls dropping from surprised hands in front of the coconut shy and ‘Bowl For A Pig’ respectively. Despite police officers and crime scene tape, a small posse followed officialdom to the adjoining field, headed by the last rat-splatter still holding the mallet.   The closer they got to the charnel house reek now emanating with renewed virulence from the copse adjoining the village green, the more the pace of approach dropped off. Hands went over mouths and a few of the most affected started to retch. By the time they reached the hedge, everyone was more than happy to leave it to the police to finish the investigation. DCI Geldard, unlucky to be in the vicinity when the call went out on the radio, paused to smear Vick on his upper lip, and reflected that this smell was worse than the one he’d just left at the post-mortem of a ‘floater’ picked up after several days off the coast of Yarmouth. With considerable reluctance, he followed two uniformed officers through the hedge and into the copse. The posse on the edge of the village green tensed, and then emitted a horrified groan when, after a pause, a silent cloud of disturbed flies rose like a puff of noxious smoke and dispersed in the rays from the sun.    Apart from fidgeting from foot to foot, no one moved. No one spoke. The only sounds audible were the incongruous tinkling of the abandoned ice cream van. There was a rustling as police moved through the undergrowth and then the murmur of hushed voices. Someone seemed to choke off a laugh and the crowd started to look at each other. ‘This was no joke! How could they? What were the police coming to these days!’   The rustling grew louder and Greg Geldard reappeared through the hedge, holding his nose with one gloved hand and the other hefting something shapeless, red and dripping into the air. The crowd recoiled in horror. ‘It’s a head!’ screeched someone, and as one the crowd broke and ran.   Greg paused by the hedge and put down what he was carrying, stripping off his gloves and stepping away from the smell emanating from the package by his feet.  ‘Someone get over there and stop the rumours fast, or the papers will have announced the return of Jack the Ripper by this evening. And get on the phone to the Borough Council. They have a clean-up job to do.’    The police walked away, now laughing openly, rolling up their crime scene tape as they went. Behind them, the fly-tipped chest freezer and its rotting collection of fish fingers, chops and steaks awaited the refuse collectors.  Copyright: H L Peck 2022 | | | |