

She waved her torch in the direction of the voice, her breath escaping her lips in short bursts, until the beam fell upon a length of material that lay across the tracks.

She blinked, and then the material moved.

‘The train’s coming! Help me!’

Elsa cried out, and covered her mouth with her hand, before dropping the torch. Close up, she could still make out the wriggling form.

A rumble in the ground sent a small shockwave up her legs, and her head jerked to the right.

Smokey began to bark, excited by the roar of the approaching train, and the man’s terrified screams.

‘Oh God, oh God.’

Elsa wrapped her fingers around the mesh of the metal fencing and tried to prise it from

the post, but it wouldn't yield. Her breath escaped in short, panicked gasps as she rattled the wire mesh in an attempt to find a weak point, a way through.

The man continued to squirm, his body against the nearest rail, and his head furthest away from her.

'Get up, get up!' she urged. 'The train's coming!'

Why isn't he moving?

Only metres away from where she stood, the rails began their familiar song as the weight of the train's wheels bore down, coming closer.

The horn sounded once more.

The man began to scream, begging her to hurry, to stop the train, to help him, but the wire refused to yield under her touch.

The train rounded the corner, its light

bearing down on her, and she lifted her gaze to the rails.

The man had managed to raise his head, and was staring at her, terrified.

The train's brakes squealed as the headlights picked out the form in its path, but it wasn't going to stop in time. It was simply too heavy and going too fast.

Elsa screwed up her eyes in a vain attempt to shut out the vision before her, a moment too late.

The man's screams were drowned out by a sickening crunch, blood exploding across the front of the locomotive.

The wheels screeched against the rails as the train shuddered to a halt, the ensuing silence only broken by the hiss of air brakes.

The dog whined once before pushing its

trembling body against her legs, and then Elsa turned and vomited into the undergrowth.

TWO

Detective Sergeant Kay Hunter pulled the car in behind a white four-wheel drive vehicle emblazoned with the British Transport Police logos across its paintwork, and swallowed.

A death on a railway was never easy to deal with, and she'd only had to attend a scene such as this once before in her career – a long time ago, when she was still a police constable.