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WHO IS THE BOY IN THE BOX?

In 1957, a young boy was discovered dead in the woods in Fox Chase, his head poking from a cardboard box. It would become Philly's most famous and baffling unsolved murder. Forty-six years later, long-retired investigator Bill Kelly is still on a quest for answers.

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An old man sits on an aqua couch in a pink room. Soon he will visit a little boy's grave. But first he leafs through the white binder in his lap, turning its plastic pages with a patient hand. Here is the typewritten autopsy report, dated February the 25th, 1957. Here are fading aerial photographs of the farms and woodlands surrounding the crime scene, taken with his own Speedgraphic camera. Here are photos of the battered boy laid out on a metal gurney, nude but for a white handkerchief draped over his groin for modesty's sake. Here are copies of newspaper clippings from the 1950s, '60s, '70s and so forth, the past bleeding into the present. And here are snapshots of the old man himself, and of his police department colleagues, through the years. Black-and-white pictures of them in the '50s, young and purposeful and efficient-looking in high-waisted pants and short ties. Color four-by-sixes of them today, in white slacks and baseball hats, thicker around the middle and a little worse for wear but still alive and kicking. Still searching for that thing—that one thing. It's the thing they have yet to resolve, the one thing they still haven't made right. It's the one thing the old man needs to take care of before it's too late.

The little boy would be 50, 51 years old if he were alive today, but in Bill Kelly's mind he is still a child. Time has stood still for the boy, but not for the man. He has circulation problems now, and age spots on his skin, and white hair he combs neatly back each morning, and a plastic pillbox of medicines he takes daily, some with food, some on an empty stomach. He's been living on God's green earth for 75 years. He's seen a lot during that time—some of which he'd rather forget, frankly—and yet Kelly remains singularly haunted by this case, by this one little boy, who has been on his mind for the better part of 46 years. It's the one case he couldn't close, the one mystery he couldn't solve. Kelly knows time is running out. He leans in to study a close-up of the boy's face for the umpteenth time. *Who are you?* he wants to ask. *What is your name?*

Time to go.

The ridges of the little boy's footprints are burned onto the insides of Bill Kelly's eyelids. Kelly can still see them clearly, can fix the image so he can zoom in on the loops and whorls that pattern the boy's flesh. It's like standing next to a painting on a wall and peering closely enough to make out the individual brushstrokes—the elements of creation. But take a giant step back, and the whole picture comes into terrible focus. The four round bruises stippling the boy's forehead. Blue eyes whose lids have fluttered partly open, as though the boy were waking from sleep. The small, dry lips parted and crusted with blood. Tiny ribs like chicken bones etched through the skin. The little tummy already greenish with rot.

That February day in 1957, 29-year-old fingerprint expert Bill Kelly had lifted a little foot from the

metal gurney and examined its sole. Sometimes it's easier to step in as close as you can, to concentrate on details so small that you don't see the larger picture at all.

The boy had been found hours earlier. A La Salle College junior was tramping through the woods of Northeast Philly's Fox Chase neighborhood, checking on some rabbit traps—or so he said; more likely, he was trying to sneak a peek into the nearby House of the Good Shepherd home for wayward girls. At the edge of the woods, he noticed a cardboard box with what looked like a doll inside. It spooked him enough that he telephoned police to make sure. Patrolman Elmer Palmer drove through a morning drizzle to the location, a secluded dirt path off of Veree and Susquehanna roads. Locals used the area as a dumping ground, and the place was strewn with garbage and rusting appliances. A large rectangular box lay on its side in a tangle of underbrush. One end was open. A head and small shoulder were sticking out. Palmer knew right away it was no doll.

The little boy was 40 inches tall and just 30 pounds, with a full set of baby teeth, putting him between four and six years old—he was so malnourished, it was hard to tell his age for sure. His nude, badly bruised body was wrapped in an Indian-patterned blanket of rust and green. His blond hair had been recently cropped in a homemade crew cut; his torso was dusted with the clippings. Other than that, his body was clean; his nails were trimmed. The skin of his right hand and both feet was pruny, as though they'd been immersed in water immediately before or after death. There were surgical scars on the boy's ankle and groin, and an L-shaped scar under his chin. The chilly weather had preserved the body somewhat, but he'd been dead long enough—from three days to two weeks—that the pull of gravity had sunk his eyeballs back into their sockets.

By the time Bill Kelly arrived at the morgue, the entire police department was talking in low voices about the discovery. They were normally stoic guys, men of few words, most of them vets who'd served in World War II or Korea. Hardened guys, you might say. But they were also men raised in a simpler era, who as boys had worn sailor suits and played with marbles—raised during a time when trashmen came around in a horse and carriage, milkmen delivered bottles to your doorstep, and families spent evenings gathered around the radio. A gentler time. Children died, of course—of polio, scarlet fever, TB—but rarely were they murdered. They certainly never met their ends the way this boy had, thrown away like a piece of trash. And so he made a deep impression on the police force. One seasoned captain got sick at the crime scene.

Kelly methodically set his inks and rollers on the morgue table. He'd seen dead children before, in Korea, but tried not to think about that. He tried not to think of his own four-year-old son, who was towheaded like this boy, or of his three-year-old daughter, or of his wife Ruth, five months pregnant with their third. The Kelly family was growing so fast that despite Bill's standing in the Philadelphia police force—he was head of the Identification Unit—he supplemented his earnings by moonlighting as a wedding photographer. It was all worthwhile, though; Kelly loved his children, loved children period, and wanted as many as God would grant him. At the end of his shift that day, the little unknown boy lingering on his mind, Kelly would return to his Northeast rowhome and hug his kids extra tight, their happy faces shining with holy innocence.

For now, though, Kelly was first and foremost a fingerprint expert, a coolheaded man of science and reason. He inked the little boy's fingertips and feet and pressed them onto paper. Someone would come forward to claim this boy; of that, Kelly and the police were certain. The case would no doubt be solved by Monday morning.

Bill Kelly steers his silver Grand Marquis westward from Northeast Philly, toward the boy's grave. His hand rests lightly on the wheel; the insignia on his gold Knights of Columbus ring is worn smooth with time. Too many graves to visit these days; an old man could fill his retirement years just paying his respects. There are the graves of his parents to see, the graves of relatives and dear friends. Old Rem's grave. The grave of—it gives Kelly's heart a squeeze to think of it—his little girl Irene, fourth of his six children, dead since September 2002, a stroke victim at 41. In his prayers, Kelly asks Irene to keep an eye out for him here on earth. He asks the same of the little unknown boy, who has been dead longer than Irene was ever alive. Kelly's sure both children are in a far better place now.

The boy's discovery created a nationwide sensation once an alert was broadcast to all 48 states via police teletype; headlines dubbed him "The Boy in the Box." Locally, the case was inescapable, with 400,000 flyers of the boy's likeness printed up courtesy of the *Inquirer* and handed out on street corners, hung in shop windows, enclosed with every gas bill. Hundreds of leads came in. A New York airman thought it might be his kidnapped son Steven. A West Philly boy was sure it was his kid brother. A Lancaster woman wondered if it was her son, who was supposed to be in the care of his good-for-nothing father. No, no and no. A man called to say he'd driven past the Fox Chase location days earlier and had seen a woman and a boy of about 12 standing by the trunk of a car; when he called out asking if they needed help, the lady had shaken her head, and he'd driven off. No, he never saw her face, her back was turned—making his call just one more in a string of well-meaning but vague tips. Police canvassed neighborhoods and checked with every orphanage, foster home and hospital in the region, but every last child was accounted for. Two hundred and 70 police-academy recruits combed the crime scene, finding a handkerchief, a child's scarf, and a dead cat wrapped in a man's sweater—trash, or clues? And what of a child-sized blue corduroy cap discovered nearby?

The leads soon fizzled, baffling police. It seemed impossible that no one would recognize this boy and come forward—no relative, no neighbor, no teacher, playmate or doctor. Investigators redoubled their efforts. They ran an article in a pediatric journal describing the boy's surgical scars, but got no response. They figured out that the box originally held a baby's white bassinet, 11 of which had been sold for $7.50 apiece at the Upper Darby J.C. Penney. Police actually managed to track down nine of the purchasers—quite a feat in the days before credit cards—but got no closer to an answer. They tracked the blue cap to the Robbins Bald Eagle Hat & Cap company in South Philly, which had no meaningful customer records. "This case is written on ice," a detective told Bill Kelly; all traces had melted away.

Kelly, meanwhile, had begun his own volunteer mission. Nearly each day before or after work, he would spend two or three hours in hospital records departments and unheated warehouses, sifting through badly organized maternity files. All babies' footprints are recorded at birth; if the boy had been born anywhere in this area, Kelly reasoned, his footprints would be on file *somewhere*. The police department couldn't pay the overtime for such a needle-in-a-haystack search, but that was okay. The way Kelly saw it, the boy's murder was a crime almost beyond imagination, but his being robbed of an identity was a crime against the very order of things. Everyone deserved a name. Perhaps Kelly would be able to set things right again.

"Good luck, hon—maybe today you'll get a winner," Ruth would tell Kelly as she kissed him goodbye each morning. When he returned home at night, she'd shoot him an expectant look, and he'd wordlessly shake his head no. In the hours between, Kelly would go through the same routine over and over again: pulling a set of prints from a folder, laying them flat beside the boy's footprints, then

staring hard at the images. Sometimes he could tell at a glance that they weren't a match, while others required close scrutiny through a magnifying glass. Occasionally the prints were nothing but an ink splotch, impossible to read, and Kelly would despair: *Is that you?* When his enthusiasm flagged, he would remind himself of Scripture: "Seek, and ye shall find." Religion and hard science were the twin pillars of Kelly's life; he aspired to respect both and keep them in balance. (Later in life, he would be astounded to learn that the science of fingerprinting is mentioned in the Book of Job—"He sealeth the hand of every man, that all men may know his work"—thus uniting Kelly's two passions.) To cover his bases, when Kelly went to the Good Shepherd girls' home to request adoption records for out-of-wedlock babies born there, he asked the nun to pray for his success.

He wasn't the only person preoccupied with the boy. A medical examiner's investigator named Remington Bristow, a quiet man with a craggy face, had also been trying to solve the case on his own time. Drawn together by their shared interest, Kelly and Bristow would often meet in one or the other of their City Hall offices. They agreed on one thing from the start: The boy's abusive parents or caretakers must have killed him. Considering the boy's grooming, perhaps it had happened during bath time; he'd resisted, and been smacked around harder than usual. Certainly the four bruises across his forehead could have been dug in by rough fingers trying to keep his head still during a haircut. Or maybe his hair was cut postmortem, to disguise his identity.

But how to lure the parents out of the woodwork? A year or two into the case, Bristow cleverly planted an idea in the newspapers that perhaps the boy's death had been accidental and his loving family had been too poor to afford a funeral. Bristow didn't believe it, of course, but hoped to bring the killer forward. It didn't work. Even so, Bristow's determination grew with each passing year. In year five, he consulted a psychic, which raised some eyebrows. In year six, he offered a $1,000 reward from his own meager salary for any information leading to the boy's identity. To observe the 10-year mark, Rem Bristow organized a Christmastime cemetery visit with a group of ME investigators. Bill Kelly still cherishes a black-and-white picture taken that snowy day; it's in his white binder. The group is crowded around the grave, an American flag flapping behind them; Rem's expression is grim as he gazes down at the little boy's headstone. Poor Rem. Somewhere along the line, Kelly learned that Bristow had a daughter who died in infancy, of crib death. Maybe that explained some things.

As for Kelly, after nine years of poring through maternity records, he finally ran out of records to search. It had taken him countless hours—time he could have been earning extra cash as a shutterbug, or spending with his family. At least some good came of it, Kelly consoled himself: He became so well-known to the hospital staffs that he'd been called in to resolve a couple of delivery-room mix-ups. Could that have been the divine reason he'd been set on this case? If he couldn't find the boy's identity, maybe he'd been meant to restore the identities of those other little boys and girls. Kelly tried to find comfort in that notion. But he was deeply bothered by his defeat, and by a memory that had disturbed him throughout his years of searching. Four months after first visiting the nun at the Good Shepherd home, he'd gone back for a follow-up, bearing a box of Whitman's chocolates.

"By the way, Sister, did you say a prayer for me? Because I'm still searching," Kelly had said, half-joking. He was frozen by her response.

"Oh, every day, Mr. Kelly," the nun had answered serenely. "Maybe God said no."

A person can't go through all that Bill Kelly has—four years at war, first on a destroyer in WWII and then on the ground in Korea; 16 years with the Philadelphia police department, and another 15 with the adult probation department—without some things sticking with you, and not in a good way. Bill Kelly'd probably be on the funny farm by now if he hadn't found an outlet for his disquiet: He spends one long weekend each year in silence at the St. Joseph's-in-the-Hills Retreat House in Malvern. Kelly went on his first retreat right after Korea, and the ritual has kept him sane ever since. He's gotten even more involved with the retreat house since his 1984 retirement. In fact, Kelly had just left a board meeting in early '99 when he came home to something that threw him for a loop. Ruth was watching the evening news in her living room chair. Bill had barely hung up his coat when Jim Gardner appeared onscreen and said something about a breakthrough in the case of the Boy in the Box.

The hairs on Bill Kelly's arms stood on end. He'd heard that a couple of retired guys his age had revived the case: a detective named Sam Weinstein, and a guy from the medical examiner's office, Joe McGillen. Could they actually have done it? Kelly sank into his armchair and waited impatiently through a commercial.

He had never forgotten the boy. No one had, it seemed; each time Kelly visited the grave, it was strewn with flowers and toys. Some were from other investigators, but most were left by regular citizens, prompted by some shared sense of loss. Maybe they truly grieved for the boy; then again, perhaps he had become a symbol in their minds, a way of giving shape and expression to their individual sorrows. Sometimes Kelly wonders whether *that* was the boy's purpose, that he was meant to be a tragic reminder of the fragility and helplessness of little children. Kelly would always murmur a prayer at the grave: "Guide me where to seek, that I may find the identification of the little unknown boy. Or, as I've come to call him, Sean." Then, mindful of the Good Shepherd nun, he'd add, "Thy will be done." Sean was a good Irish name, just for use until the boy's true name surfaced. Oddly enough, when Kelly's daughter Eileen became pregnant with the sixth of his 10 grandchildren, she told him she planned to name her baby Sean, a coincidence that had startled Kelly. Sean is 17 years old now, president of his class at Father Judge.

Maybe the elderly detectives working the case had found the answer. But as the news flashed a black-and-white picture of a boy with a bowl haircut, Kelly was overwhelmed with disappointment.

"I know who that is," he told Ruth heavily. "I already identified him."

They'd been so sure of that lead back in '65. He and Bristow had brainstormed that since the boy had no vaccination scars, perhaps his parents had lived under the radar, were some sort of itinerants. For a while, they'd turned their attention to a family of carnival workers. Then they considered that maybe the boy had been a recent immigrant. Going through newspapers one day, Kelly came across a 1956 article about the tide of Hungarian refugees—and there, in the accompanying photo, was the little unknown boy. It *had* to be—the ear looked just like his. With the assistance of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Kelly sifted through 11,200 passport photos before finding the Hungarian boy's picture, and located his family in North Carolina. State troopers found the family at home, the boy playing safely in the yard.

Well, it seemed that the investigators going through the old case file had come across that same photo, and got a little excited, and put it on TV. Kelly phoned the police department the next morning to set them straight. "I heard you were dead!" homicide detective Tom Augustine exclaimed.

Kelly just laughed: "Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated." He unearthed his box of files from the basement, and he and Sam Weinstein and Joe McGillen met for coffee at a diner. And just like that, Bill Kelly was back on the case.

It didn't take long to bring him up to speed. After Rem Bristow's death in 1993, with the investigation still open but no one manning it, the Vidocq Society—a group of local investigators devoted to solving old murder cases—had suggested Weinstein and McGillen get on it. Their point person within the police department was Detective Augustine, who'd been but a boy himself when the Boy in the Box was murdered and never forgot the mutilated face on those posted flyers.

There was one danger Kelly was aware of as he plunged back into the case, one that Rem himself might have succumbed to: wanting an answer too badly, believing in a certain resolution despite its shaky logic. Bristow had grown more obsessed with each passing year. One time, while on vacation in Mexico, he was struck by the idea that perhaps the reason no one recognized the boy was because he'd been raised as a girl. Right then and there, Bristow paid a street artist to draw a picture of what the boy would have looked like dressed as a girl, working off of an autopsy photo he always carried. After retiring, Bristow had devoted himself to the case full-time, crisscrossing the country on any thin lead he found. He also paid repeat visits to the psychic, who Bristow became increasingly convinced was on to something. Bill Kelly once visited Rem Bristow at home after they'd both retired. There on a desk in Bristow's living room lay the boy's white plaster death mask, swiped from the office. Rem had cradled the little face in his hands and stroked its forehead as he told Kelly his latest theory.

He'd grown positive that the boy died at a foster home near the crime scene. The psychic had visualized a log cabin near a body of water, and a wooden porch railing. Lo and behold, Bristow had discovered a small cabin and a pond behind the stone foster home, whose porch was bordered by a wooden railing. Years earlier, in '61, Rem had toured the home, and noticed a dusty baby's bassinet in the basement. Now Bristow was sure he'd come up with the answer. He'd convinced himself that the boy's death had been an accident after all. The foster-care boys had lived on the third floor of the home; the unknown boy could have fallen out a window and then, dazed, collapsed at the edge of the pond, with both feet and a hand immersed. When the caretakers found him, they panicked, and hastily prepared him for burial in a makeshift coffin. But on the verge of burying him, they'd been frightened off, and never returned.

Kelly had nodded along with Rem's theory, but was rather taken aback. It was as though Bristow had gotten too close to the boy, until he couldn't bear the idea of intentional harm coming to him. It seemed clear that he was bending the facts to fit his theory—after all, a bassinet and a pond do not a case make. Besides, police records showed the children at that foster home were accounted for. Perhaps all Rem really wanted by that point was a resolution, any resolution.

In 1998, though, there was new, hard science to pursue: The Vidocq Society arranged for the little boy's skeleton to be dug up for DNA testing. At the exhumation, Weinstein was struck by the disgraceful state of the boy's grave in the potter's field in Holmesburg, littered with condoms and beer bottles and Kotex pads. When it came time to rebury the boy, they decided to give him a little more dignity; Ivy Hill Cemetery in Mt. Airy donated a lovely triangular plot by the entrance.

By the time Bill Kelly joined up in '99, the elderly investigative team had its hands full. The reburial had attracted lots of attention, including a segment on *America's Most Wanted*, spawning dozens

of leads for Weinstein, McGillen and now Kelly to follow up on. They turned out to be nothing but nebulous recollections, viewer suggestions (''Did you check with hospitals?''), and nut jobs who sent drawings of what the ''cult'' had done to the boy. The DNA was a wash, too; they had a sample, but no one to match it to. Then Sam Weinstein fell ill, leaving Kelly and McGillen to work the case on their own. Hoping for inspiration, they managed to locate the crime scene—a challenge, considering how the lush, green Fox Chase of 1957 had changed. The patch of wooded ground where the boy once lay is now just to the left of someone's driveway, by the side of a wide paved road lined with brick homes; Kelly and McGillen were only able to find it thanks to a telephone pole that was still across the street. Standing there amid the whizzing traffic, Kelly thought about how much the world had changed through the years, and yet how little the case had. How were they supposed to name the little boy now? It seemed hopeless. Maybe the nun was right. Maybe Kelly wasn't meant to find the answers.

And then. And *then*. The morning of February 25, 2000, a Saturday, the homicide division received a call from an Ohio psychiatrist concerning one of her outpatients. Since Kelly is sworn to keep the patient's identity a secret, he'll call her Mary. In the still-dark hours of that very morning—the 43rd anniversary of the boy's discovery—Mary had awakened in a panic and picked up the phone. She wanted to report a murder. She needed to get it off her chest, after all these years.

With the psychiatrist acting as a middleman, the investigators began a two-year correspondence with Mary, slowly piecing together the details. She claimed to have grown up in Lower Merion, the only child of schoolteachers. She remembered being 10 years old and driving with her mother to a house in a neighborhood she didn't recognize. The woman who answered the door held a toddler in a soaked diaper. A male voice came from inside the house: ''Did you get the money?'' Mary's mother handed over an envelope, and was given the child in return. She took the boy home, shut him in the basement, and never allowed him to leave the house. The boy never spoke a word. Something was physically wrong with him—Mary later wondered if he might have had cerebral palsy. He was terribly abused and underfed; they both were.

After such a long drought, Bill Kelly and Joe McGillen were ecstatic at this new stream of information, even if it *was* slightly bizarre. They rushed to verify the details as each fragment was revealed, nearly giddy with urgency. When they received a letter the day before Palm Sunday 2002, mentioning the name of Mary's childhood street, the pair couldn't wait; as soon as Mass let out, they drove to Lower Merion, still in their church suits, knocking on doors until they confirmed that Mary's family had indeed lived there. At long last, in June 2002, Mary agreed to a face-to-face meeting. Because of McGillen's fear of flying, they rented a van for the trip to Ohio, with McGillen driving, Tom Augustine riding shotgun with the directions, and Kelly with his legs up across the backseat for his circulation's sake.

It took Mary three hours to tell the whole story. She was 12 when it happened. She remembered the boy had thrown up after eating some baked beans. She remembered her mother, enraged at the mess, throwing the boy in the bathtub and then beating him, slamming his head again and again against the bathroom floor. The boy let out a shriek, the only sound Mary ever heard him utter. Then he was silent. Her mother cleaned him up, cut his untended hair, wrapped him in a blanket, and carried him out to the trunk of the car. Mary went with her, wearing her raincoat against the February drizzle. She remembered driving to a forlorn place, getting out and standing by the trunk. Her mother stiffening as a man stopped his car: ''Do you need any help?'' Her mother shaking her head no. After the man drove on, her mother stashed the dead boy in an empty box lying nearby.

Mary had memorized the route home, so that one day she could return for him. He wasn't her real brother, but she loved him all the same.

The investigators were rapt. *What was his name?* they asked hungrily.

It comes down to this, an old man standing over a boy's grave. Bill Kelly is at ease here. He brushes some twigs from atop the headstone, crouches to straighten out a small flag someone has poked into the ground. As always, there's a new batch of toys around the stone: a soldier figurine, a race car, a ceramic teddy bear, a couple of plastic orange fish that are probably bath toys. Flowers, too—the Ivy Hill manager says that when people come to visit a loved one, they often pause by the boy's grave and pull out stems from their bouquets. Kelly once left a green ball belonging to his grandson Sean, thinking that if Unknown Sean were alive, he'd probably like to play with it. Kelly visits twice a year, usually. He'll be back again on November the 11th, when the Vidocq Society sponsors a memorial service to commemorate five years since the boy's reburial.

Kelly and McGillen have corroborated everything of Mary's story they can. They traced the route she described, and found it indeed leads between her Lower Merion home and where the boy was discovered in Fox Chase. They located a college roommate of Mary's who said Mary once confided that her mother had killed someone. For what it's worth, the psychiatrist believes Mary is sincere, and says her story has remained consistent over a decade of therapy. It all seems to add up. But the police department doesn't think the theory holds water. For one thing, Mary has been in and out of psychiatric care for much of her adult life—who's to say this isn't some crazy fantasy? Many of the details she provided are a matter of public record; the part about the Good Samaritan driving up, for example, was reported in the *Evening Bulletin* in 1957. She isn't a blood relative of the boy's, so the DNA does nothing to prove her claims. Her parents died years ago. Mary admitted that when they bought the boy, they were only told his first name—which may not have been his actual birth name, so there's no way to check his identity against a birth certificate. Anyhow, in Mary's old neighborhood, no one ever heard of a little boy living in her family's house. To Kelly and McGillen, that's proof the boy was kept prisoner in the basement, as Mary said, but to the cops it confirms that her tales are the delusions of a madwoman.

That frustrates Kelly. Of course Mary had mental problems—who wouldn't, after the things she witnessed as a child? But he wearily accepts that there's further work to be done. Not that he doesn't have other things to do with his golden years, mind you. He lives a good life. His days are filled with church activities, meetings of his various clubs, joyous visits with his grandchildren—everyone calls them "Kelly's Angels," and they in turn call him Pop-Pop—and too-frequent doctor appointments. But Kelly always finds time to spend a few hours each week going through his notes, flipping through his binders. He and McGillen have worked up an extensive genealogy of Mary's family in the hope of finding other living relatives. They've come up with yearbook photos of Mary's parents, and interviewed one of her mother's former co-workers. They tracked down and reinterviewed the Good Samaritan. Kelly and McGillen feel Mary is telling the truth. Bill Kelly looked her in the eye, and he firmly believes her. What choice does he have, really? Because if not this answer, what then?

Kelly understands now why Rem came to believe his theory about the foster home. Maybe sometimes what we call truth is simply the answer we choose to live with, a way to reassure ourselves that we've done all we can. In the end, maybe we all want to believe in *something*, even if we can't quite connect the dots, even if it's a belief in something we can't see. Maybe it all comes down to faith. Bill Kelly wants to have faith in Mary. He wants to have faith that the answers are close at hand, and that

he will finally do right by this little boy. And he wants to have faith—in faith. Perhaps it comes down to accepting that sometimes, life doesn't match up neatly like the loops and whorls of a fingerprint. In time, Kelly is sure he'll find the true answers to the mystery of the boy's identity—if not in this life, then in the next. And so maybe he has found a set of answers he's willing to live with, for now.

Bill Kelly lingers at the grave for a moment longer, then touches the headstone with an affectionate palm.

''Goodbye, Jonathan,'' he says gently. ''I'll see you again soon.'' ■