



**ALDWYCH**  
*Ixion Trilogy Part III*

Security Novels Series  
Episode XXII



**John M Upton**

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## **Aldwych**

*Two Years After St. James's Park...*

Jack Regent looked up from his desk in the Transport Division office in Holborn when he heard his superior officer, Divisional Commander Jim Appleby returning, somewhat later than expected.

“There you have it Lieutenant Commander, it is official” Appleby declared as he entered the office, clearly frustrated, “The lunatics are well and truly running the Asylum now!”

“The Joint Security Committee meeting didn't go well I take it Sir?” Jack ventured.

“That is putting it mildly” Appleby confirmed, still clearly furious, “How the hell did we end up with such an idiot as Acting Prime Minister I will never know.”

“Because Jayne Grey wanted to go on a sabbatical for a couple of years and he was the only one dumb enough to take on the job?” Jack suggested.

“Probably...” Appleby reluctantly agreed.

“Brilliant timing by Grey though, she managed to avoid all that pandemic business rather neatly” Jack then mentioned.

“Well, anyway” Appleby then continued “The Acting Prime Minister has decided to declare without so much as a hint of consultation to bring in new legislation which will see the Army on the streets and a whole swathe of new tightened security measures if there are any further terrorist incidents, petty or otherwise.”

“Can he actually do that?” Jack asked.

“Unfortunately, thanks to the Crime and Security Act he railroaded through Parliament during the height of the Pandemic when he thought no one would notice, yes he can” Appleby explained, “That Act is basically a Trojan Horse full of sneaky sub-clauses and so-called Special Powers.”

“I bet the Acting Administrator General was not exactly impressed” Jack remarked.

“Oh no, he wasn't” Appleby confirmed, “Unfortunately when Matthews tried to argue the point, he was told not to interfere by some tin pot unelected advisor whereupon the Prime Minister merely broke into some rambling bullshit speech which made no sense whatsoever.”

“He still thinks he is the second coming of Winston Churchill then?” Lieutenant Commander Connor Shelby remarked as he came into the office.

“Second coming of Benny Hill more like” Jack responded.

“Jack, Megan's just arrived downstairs” Shelby then called.

“Oh, great” Jack enthusiastically replied, “Thanks!”

“Ah, in which case I guess you will have to be my driver this afternoon” Appleby called towards Shelby.

“I’ll go and start the car Sir” Shelby confirmed.

“Let Megan know I will be down in a few minutes will you mate?” Jack called out.

“Will do!” Shelby called back as he departed.

“So, what are we going to do Sir?” Jack then asked.

“I don't know Jack; I really don't know” Appleby despondently remarked.

Shelby arrived in the main Reception area a few moments later to see Megan still there, talking to the Receptionist.

“Jack said he would be down in a minute” Shelby confirmed as he passed by.

“Thanks!” Megan replied.

Appleby's official car was parked immediately outside in High Holborn, a dark blue Ford saloon whose only external tell-tale signs of being a Security Service vehicle was the blue flashing lights in the front grille and the substantial radio aerial on the back of the roof.

As Shelby approached the driver’s door, he became aware of a tall male of distinctly African appearance standing nearby, cold staring eyes seemingly watching him intently.

“Are you all right? Can I help you?” Shelby politely asked.

“Yes, you can” the man confirmed as he stepped forward which was when Shelby noticed the unusually large suitcase that he was carrying in his right hand which made him think he was a lost tourist or something similar.

“You look lost, mate” Shelby remarked.

“Not nearly as lost as you!” the man then loudly declared which was when he suddenly produced a large almost ceremonial style sword from beneath his long coat and thrust it into Shelby's abdomen with considerable force.

Shelby quickly collapsed to the ground as the assailant withdrew the sword and looked down with a gleeful expression whilst onlookers who had witnessed his attack suddenly realised what was happening and began to scream, panic and flee.

“The Revolution is coming, and you are not invited!” the man then loudly declared

before turning towards the main entrance of the Transport Division building whereupon he calmly threw his large suitcase in through the front doors.

“To Life Immortal!!” he then called, his arms held aloft before, with the bloodied sword still in his hand, he calmly walked away, laughing manically.

Megan had heard the screams and panic outside and was also the first in the building to witness the suitcase land on the floor in the Reception area which was when her instincts told her to run.

Moments later, the suitcase exploded....

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*Five Years after St. James's Park...*

“Sir!” came the shout down the corridor which caused Jack to stop and look up which was when he saw a Control Room officer approaching, bearing a piece of paper.

“Is this something exciting?” Jack asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“We have received an urgent call from London Underground Engineering Control” the Control Room Officer explained as she handed across the piece of paper, “A couple of their engineers were doing a check of the main cabling down in the old Aldwych platform level tunnels and came across a uniform tunic, one of ours.”

“Have any of our guys been down there recently?” Jack then asked as he read the piece of paper with considerable interest.

“I checked Sir” the Control Room Operator replied, “Last call out we had down there was the thick end of four years ago, you and Lieutenant Commander Shelby.”

“Ah, good old Connor” Jack fondly recalled his old friend and former colleague, “All right, I’ll take care of this personally so call them back and let them know that I will be there in about ten minutes” he then instructed.

“Yes Sir” the Control Room Operator confirmed before leaving again.

Jack thought for a moment before heading back towards his own office but then paused outside the office door of his superior, Divisional Commander Appleby before going inside.

Appleby's office was exactly the same as when he had left it over two weeks previously, having left to attend to what he only described as a pressing matter. Since his departure however, Appleby had vanished, no trace of him having been found despite extensive searching.

“Where the hell are you Guv?” Jack remarked before closing the office door again.

A few moments later Jack was back in his own office where he took the uniform tunic

off the coat hook on the back of the door and put it on.

On his desk were several pictures in silver frames, one of his foster parents, Tracy Caverner-Regent and the late Edward Regent, also known as The Commander, whilst in a separate photograph was the love of his life, Megan.

“See you later love” Jack remarked to Megan's photograph before heading out of the door.

Down in the basement of the Transport Division head office building, the former Kingsway Tram Subway that runs beneath the busy thoroughfare of High Holborn had been converted into vehicle accommodation and it was to here that Jack proceeded in order to get his car.

The old Tram Subway tunnels echoed to the sound of the powerful engine as he started it up before driving off, proceeding slowly up the ramp that led to street level.

The wrought iron gates that guarded the former Tram Subway's northern entrance opened automatically as Jack approached them whereupon he activated the sirens and lights before pulling out into the southbound traffic flow.

It was a vastly different London that Jack was driving through compared with a few years earlier, gone were the throngs of tourists who would have once been seen throughout the streets, replaced by army personnel on street corners, military checkpoints and random stop and searches in progress.

In the wake of the Holborn Attack three years earlier, the then Acting Prime Minister, Ian Bolson had used special powers to impose Emergency Special Measures, a de facto State of Emergency across Greater London and in several other major cities across England.

This had resulted in the National Police & Security Service being effectively sidelined to that of just civil policing matters whilst the military presence was charged with keeping law and order by force, something which subsequent events demonstrated that they had failed to achieve which only resulted in the iron fist approach becoming increasingly tighter.

Turning into The Aldwych, Jack's car was allowed through the Military Checkpoint that was located at the entrance to The Strand without checks but the queue of civilian cars that he passed were testament to how vigorously the Emergency Powers were being enforced even with the return of the duly elected Prime Minister, Jayne Grey a few months earlier.

Pulling left into Surrey Street, Jack brought his car to a stop immediately behind a white and blue London Transport Maintenance Services Department van that was parked outside the ornate red tiled west side entrance to the former Aldwych Underground Station.

As Jack got out of the car, the air was filled with the continuous and now everyday sound of military Chinook type helicopters flying over London, another aspect that

reflected the strange times everyone in the city was now living in.

“Transport Division” Jack called as he approached two men dressed in dirty orange overalls who were stood adjacent to the van, “Word was you guys found something?”

“Got it here mate” one of the Underground Engineers confirmed as he reached inside the van and produced an object familiar to Jack, a Security Service uniform tunic.

“Where did you find this?” Jack then asked as he took the tunic and looked at its various markings, the insignia and lapel numbers confirming his worst fears as it revealed it to belong to his superior officer, Divisional Commander Jim Appleby.

“In the lower levels, one of the unfinished old tunnels that lead off the platform that they never used” the other Underground Engineer explained, “We were checking the cable runs that go through here towards Charing Cross and found it hanging on an old, suspended cable.”

“Show me” Jack then prompted which prompted the first Underground Engineer to take out a battered old paper plan of the former station's subterranean levels and flatten it out on the bonnet of the patrol car.

“Around about here” he indicated on the plan, “There are a set of old tunnels that were meant to connect between the never used platform here and an extension that was never built.”

“Right” Jack responded, “Can I borrow this?” he then indicated the plans.

“Be my guest mate” the first Underground Engineer confirmed as he folded up the paper and passed it across.

“I am going to take a look” Jack confirmed as he went around to the boot of his patrol car and opened it, taking out a powerful battery-operated torch and momentarily checking it worked.

“The lift is on the blink again” the second Underground Engineer confirmed “You'll have to take the stairs.”

“Quite frankly, I am surprised it was ever working in the first place” Jack responded as he prepared to head inside.

“Oh, they repaired it for some project or other about five years ago” the first Underground Engineer confirmed, “Don't know what that was about though.”

“Right, stay here” Jack then instructed, “I am going to take a look around downstairs.”

“It's all yours, pal” the second Underground Engineer duly confirmed.

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“Oh, dear God...” Sir Richard Crowthorne remarked as he read the formal looking letter he had just opened whilst sat in his study at his home in the swanky area of Mayfair in west London.

The letter was just about the most formal it was possible to get, an official notification from Buckingham Palace jointly signed by the Queen and the Prime Minister.

“Barrett!” Sir Richard then loudly called as he read the letter again with an almost disbelieving expression.

“You screamed Sir?” Commander Eloise Barrett sarcastically responded when she appeared around the study door.

“Do you need a laugh?” Sir Richard asked as he offered the letter for her to read for herself.

“What's the problem?” Barrett then asked as she took the letter and then started to read it, “Oh...”

“Oh indeed” Sir Richard confirmed, “Are you sure someone in the office didn't quickly knock this up on the computer as a wind up?”

“I don't think so Sir” Barrett responded, “It looks pretty authentic to me.”

“Yeah, that was what I thought too” Sir Richard agreed with a definite sigh of resignation, “A peerage? What on Earth?”

“Lord Crowthorne of, err wherever” Barrett thought about it “It does have a certain ring to it.”

“What the hell could I have possibly done to upset the Prime Minister?” Sir Richard then asked.

“I could probably get you a list for that if it would help Sir” Barrett cheekily suggested to a scornful look from Sir Richard in response, “You can always take it up with the Prime Minister when you see her.”

“When am I seeing the Prime Minister?” Sir Richard asked, confused and looking in his desk diary.

“Right away” Barrett explained “She has just sent an urgent message requesting your presence at once.”

“Ah well, it beats sitting here drinking my own Scotch and feeling all down” Sir Richard admitted, “Far more productive to do it with someone else's Scotch instead, cheaper too.”

“On your way to Downing Street, you are required to collect someone who she also wishes to see” Barrett then added as she passed across the paper containing the Prime Minister's message.



“Oh...” Sir Richard looked puzzled when he read the name on the message, “I had better go find him I suppose.”

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Approximately ninety five feet below ground level, Jack arrived at the bottom of the one hundred and sixty step spiral staircase and stepped out into the semi-gloom of the passageways at platform level, deep inside the disused Aldwych Underground Station.

It was a complex series of tunnels and passageways down there, the station, located at the end of a short branch of the Piccadilly Line had not seen passengers pass through there since it was closed to traffic almost forty years earlier and some parts, still unfinished since the 1920's had never seen passengers at all.

The dim lighting forced Jack to resort to using his powerful torch in order to ascertain where he needed to go by looking at the plans he had borrowed a short while earlier which indicated to him to head via an old battered door through to the abandoned unfinished part of the station.

Here the tunnels were pitch dark, the tubular walls mostly bare, with the cast iron rings which formed the core structure clearly visible whilst the cement floor was dusty and littered with abandoned bits of cable and materials.

Searching carefully by sweeping his torch light from side to side, initially Jack found nothing and the only noise he could hear was the gentle breeze of air being pushed through the station by the movement of trains far away down the running tunnel on the main Piccadilly Line back at Holborn.

Suddenly, something appeared ahead reflected in the light of Jack's torch which caused him to move forward towards the object, a toolbox that he presumed had been left there earlier by one of the engineers and indicating he was heading the right way.

An old side passage partially blocked off with abandoned materials led off to Jack's left and as he shone his torch down it, the beam of light glistened off something shiny and metallic some distance away.

“This uniform is going in the laundry tonight!” Jack remarked to himself as he clambered over the pile of dust and grime covered discarded material and into the almost pitch-black passageway beyond.

Having got past that obstruction, he managed to make his way through and with a heavy heart approach the source of the reflection.

“Oh no...” Jack remarked with a heavy sigh as his worst fears were realised.

The reflection that had led him there was off the metal numerals on the shoulder epaulettes of a Security Service uniform shirt, that of his own Divisional Commander, Jim Appleby whose body lay before him, slumped in behind some old pipes and cable reels.

There was no need to check if he was still alive, it was clear from the state of the body that he had lain there for at least a week or more and that his demise was almost certainly to do with the head injury visible on the back of his head.

“Oh boss” Jack remarked with a heavy heart as he kneeled down and looked at him  
“What the hell happened?”

With care and respect, Jack closed Appleby's eyes before he took a careful look through his pockets but found only his car keys, his warrant card and some loose change.

Looking around the immediate area also revealed nothing untoward, no sign of a weapon and indeed Jack then noted, no sign of Appleby's firearm either which should have been present.

“Right then, time to call in the cavalry I suppose” Jack then concluded before heading back towards the main passageway where he consulted the plan again which led him onto the old platform where a stored three car 1967 Stock tube train, itself covered in a fine layer of dust, stood.

On the platform wall was a wooden box which when Jack opened it, revealed an old style Bakelite dial telephone and he was surprised when on picking up the receiver, the dial tone could be heard indicating that despite its age, it still worked.

The tunnels echoed to the mechanical whirring noise as Jack manually dialled a number and then waited patiently to be answered.

“Control?” Jack then called as soon as his call was answered “I am in the lower level of the old Aldwych Station” he confirmed, “I need a full forensics team and the associated circus down here ASAP” he formally requested.

“I've found him...”

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Sir Richard was driving through central London when the telephone in his car began to ring.

“Crowthorne” Sir Richard responded having used the steering wheel controls to activate the hands-free option.

“Sir” Barrett called “I thought you had better know, Lieutenant Commander Jack Regent is currently located at the old Aldwych tube station” she informed Sir Richard as he slowed down for a queue at a checkpoint on the Tottenham Court Road.

“Err right” Sir Richard responded with a slightly hesitant tone, “What is he doing there?” he then asked.

“Apparently he has located a body” Barrett confirmed, “Nothing officially confirmed

yet but it may be the missing Divisional Commander Appleby.”

“Oh no...” Sir Richard regrettably replied as, having shown his identification to the military officers at the checkpoint, he was quickly waved through without further question, “All right, thanks for letting me know, I'll intercept him there.”

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Anyone who was in the room at that moment in time would have seen the look of deep concern on the face of the Prime Minister, Jayne Grey as she looked out of the window on the first floor of Number Ten Downing Street down at the army guard post that was now a permanent feature outside the famous door of the premises.

She had returned to the post of Prime Minister a little less than a year earlier after taking almost three years off, this however was one of the worst times in all those years and the stress and demands of the last six months in particular had taken its toll on her as she had visibly aged by quite an alarming degree.

There was a polite knock at the door at that moment to which Grey merely called the visitor into the office without taking her eyes off the street outside.

“Prime Minister” her Personal Private Secretary politely called “The Justice Secretary is here.”

“Bill, come in” the Prime Minister called as she reluctantly turned back from the window and returned to her desk “Help yourself to a drink” she then indicated the decanter on the side to Bill Palmer, a tall distinguished middle aged man who had been in the position of Justice Secretary for little more than a few weeks now.

“Thank you, Prime Minister,” Palmer responded as the door was closed leaving them alone to talk in private.

“You might need a stiff drink after this” the Prime Minister admitted as she passed across a red folder with the word 'CONFIDENTIAL' ominously stamped across its face.

Palmer duly took the folder and opened it, taking out from inside the single sheet of paper with a hastily written report upon it.

“Divisional Commander Appleby was discovered dead in a disused Underground station about twenty minutes ago” the Prime Minister confirmed the report Palmer was now reading.

“Christ...” Palmer responded, “Do we know how yet?” he then asked with a notable tone of depression.

“The Transport Division guys are on the scene now” the Prime Minister explained “It may take a bit of time apparently, but I think we can safely assume that he did not die of natural causes.”

“That makes it six senior officers murdered inside of three months” Palmer confirmed “and that doesn't include those that MI5 and MI6 have lost in this little war of ours.”

“Five years this country has been all but held to ransom by extremists” the Prime Minister responded, “Nearly three of those under a military controlled state of emergency and yet these evil bastards keep staying one step ahead of us.”

“And every time we get close, someone gets bumped off” Palmer confirmed.

“And then there is this little matter we need to deal with too” the Prime Minister then passed across another document.

“Oh God...” Palmer responded on seeing the main summary of the document, “I take it this is a load of bollocks?”

“Of course it is” the Prime Minister duly confirmed “The trouble is, in this global village where everything is run through social media, mud sticks whether it is true or not.”

“What a mess...” Palmer concluded to agreeing nods from the Prime Minister.

“I have decided to initiate a little contingency plan that an old friend of ours put in place before his untimely departure” the Prime Minister then confirmed “It is time we brought in some reinforcements.”

“Last throw of the dice Prime Minister?” Palmer asked.

“The Government is split all over the place, the opposition have all but imploded through their own petty squabbles, the Security Services are in total meltdown and completely overwhelmed, morale amongst them, the Government and the public is basically at rock bottom and the extremists on several different fronts are imposing fear and murder almost at will” the Prime Minister grimly summarised “There is not a lot left in the toy box we can throw at them anymore.”

“What do you want me to do Prime Minister” Palmer inquired.

“Find the Home Secretary and get him here as quickly as possible” the Prime Minister requested, “I am expecting a couple of other guests soon, it is time we started to fight back.”

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The sound of military helicopters overhead and the arrival of a significant number of emergency service vehicles on site meant that Jack found the background noise almost deafening when he emerged into the daylight once more compared with the almost total silence of the deep level tunnels he had been crawling around in for almost an hour.

“Neil!” Jack called to one of the forensic scene examiners he recognised as he arrived “It's the boss, side passage in the old unused section at platform level.”

“How long has he been down there do you reckon?” Neil Adams, the newly appointed head of the Forensic Science Service Branch asked as he opened the side door of his van and got out a white paper overall which he started to put on.

“At least a week I would wager” Jack mournfully confirmed, “He has been missing for over two though.”

“In which case, I am going to need some help with this one I think” Adams confirmed whereupon Jack got the plans back out and blew the dust off it.

“Right about here” Jack confirmed, indicating on the plan “I have left a torch on by the body so you can find your way in but be careful, watch your step, there is a lot of grimy abandoned crap all over the place.”

“Tim!” Adams then called to one of his team as they arrived in a second van, “Bring the lighting rigs, we are going to need them.”

“And the lift is broken so you are using the stairs” Jack then added.

“Oh, today just gets better and better...” Adams remarked as he picked up his equipment box.

“Right, I had better talk to...” Jack looked around but then tailed off.

“Is something wrong?” Adams asked.

“Where are the two Underground engineer guys?” Jack asked as he looked across to his patrol car and realised that both the two men and their van were missing, just Appleby's tunic that they had found, now left on the bonnet of his car being the sole indication that they were ever there.

“There was nobody there when I arrived” Adams confirmed, “Maybe they decided to move their van around the corner to let us in?” he suggested.

“Maybe” Jack agreed although he had significant doubts “Except where they said they found my Guvnor's jacket; they were supposedly working on some cables but there is nothing down there.”

“Now, that is odd” Adams agreed.

“Whilst you are down there, there should be a yellow toolbox in the main passageway” Jack responded as a thought occurred to him, “It supposedly belongs to my two missing engineers, could you make sure it is secured, bagged, given your expert once over and then brought straight to me when you are done with it?”

“Will do Sir” Adams willingly confirmed before heading off with his team through the old entrance and into the station building.

As another military Chinook type helicopter flew low overhead, Jack looked on as a

sleek black Mercedes saloon made its way through the parked vehicles in Surrey Street and came to a stop a short distance from him.

“Here comes trouble...” Jack remarked to himself as from the driver’s seat emerged Sir Richard Crowthorne who looked on with a slightly awkward smile.

“Hello Jack” Sir Richard called.

“Long time, no see” Jack responded as they met up and shook hands, “To what do I owe the pleasure?” he then asked.

“Our presence has been requested at the highest level” Sir Richard ominously confirmed.

“The Archbishop of Canterbury?” Jack tentatively suggested, trying to inject a little light relief into what was a bad day which had come in the wake of a couple of bad years.

“Not that high up, the Prime Minister” Sir Richard confirmed.

“Oh...” Jack responded, somewhat surprised.

“So erm...” Sir Richard awkwardly asked, nodding towards the old station entrance “Is it...?”

“Yeah...” Jack regretfully confirmed.

“I’m sorry” Sir Richard offered his condolences.

“Thanks” Jack replied, “Best guess he has been down there at least a week.”

“How long has he been missing for?” Sir Richard then asked.

“Two, nearly three weeks now I think” Jack confirmed, “I have to admit with the crazy way the world is going around here these days, I rather seem to have lost track of time.”

“Somewhere in the world, it is always lunchtime” Sir Richard declared to a slightly quizzical look from Jack, “Something my old Guvnor used to say” he then explained.

“Quite wise actually” Jack then admitted, “So what does the Prime Minister want to talk to us about then?” he then asked.

“She didn't say apparently, only that you and I have been asked to attend right away” Sir Richard confirmed.

“All right” Jack reluctantly agreed, “Let me just hand over the scene and we will get going” he confirmed.

“No problem” Sir Richard confirmed before Jack headed off towards a couple of

fellow Transport Division officers who had just arrived.

He watched as the young man he had known for so many years now confidently went about his business, realising that here was someone who had grown up so much and so fast in such a short space of time.

A couple of minutes later, Jack returned.

“Let's get going, shall we?” Jack prompted as he got in the front passenger seat of Sir Richard's car, “We don't want to keep the Prime Minister waiting now, do we?”

“Perish the thought!” Sir Richard exclaimed as he returned to the driving seat and started the engine.

As he drove through the streets of central London, heading towards Westminster, Sir Richard looked across at Jack.

“How are you doing?” he then asked.

“People keep dying...” Jack mournfully replied, “There won't be anyone left at this rate.”

“I know how you feel” Sir Richard admitted as they were waved through another military checkpoint approaching Trafalgar Square, “What with the terrorist situation and the eighteen months of hell with that damn virus, it seems like we have all been put through the ringer in the last five years.”

“Still, can't get any worse surely?” Jack then asked.

“Nah...” Sir Richard agreed, “How is Megan by the way?” he then asked.

“Still undergoing surgery every so often, I think we are up to operation number seventeen now” Jack confirmed, “She says if she has three more then she gets a free tumbler.”

“That's the spirit” Sir Richard complimented, “She is made of tough stuff your girl.”

“She has to be to have survived having a ten-ton rigid steel joist on her legs for three hours” Jack admitted, “Do you know, we still have a bit of it at home from where the Fire Brigade cut it off when they pulled her out of the wreckage.”

“Really?” Sir Richard asked.

“Makes a great door stop” Jack confirmed, “Useful for her when getting through in the chair” he then explained.

“Oh, here we are” Sir Richard remarked as he brought the car to a stop at the fortified semi-permanent military checkpoint that guarded the entrance to Westminster, the entire area between Parliament Square and just west of Trafalgar Square now being completely sealed off to public access in a tightly controlled secure bubble.

“I hate this...” Jack admitted as a senior Army guard stepped forward and knocked on the side window.

“Sir Richard Crowthorne and Lieutenant Commander Jack Regent of the Transport Division, National Police & Security Service” Sir Richard called, both of them then passing over their identifications, “We are here to see the Prime Minister and before you ask, yes we are expected” he then confirmed.

“One moment please gentlemen” the guard responded politely yet formally as he took their identifications to be scanned in the sentry booth nearby whilst also consulting over an earpiece radio for instructions.

“I look forward to the day we get rid of these guys off the street” Jack remarked, “Don't get me wrong, some of them are great guys but really, military on the streets?”

“Until someone finds a way to annul the State of Emergency legislation, that isn't going to happen unfortunately” Sir Richard grimly confirmed “and that in turn isn't going to happen until we finally nail the lid well and truly shut on the various loonies still on the loose.”

“All clear to proceed gentlemen” the guard called as he returned and handed back their identifications, “They are waiting for you.”

“Thank you” Sir Richard responded as the guard indicated to his colleague in the sentry booth and the barrier ahead was duly raised allowing him to drive on.

Westminster leading into Parliament Street was effectively a military encampment now with tents, a command centre and numerous army vehicles, personnel and even two helicopters on what was once the lawn outside the Ministry of Defence building, now converted into a helipad complete with a small control tower building.

“Park here Sir” called one of the sentries on duty who directed Sir Richard to a parking space in the middle of what at one time a few years ago was the centre of a very busy thoroughfare.

“Well, at least something still survives” Jack remarked as he and Sir Richard got out of the car and looked up at the Cenotaph War Memorial which still stood tall and dignified in its rightful place despite efforts from the now departed Acting Prime Minister to try and relocate it a year or so earlier.

With the area in a military lockdown bubble, the old security gates at the entrance to Downing Street were superfluous and had since been taken down, just a couple of sentry boxes with a small guard detachment of four army officers on duty, specifically assigned to check everyone entering and leaving.

They waved Jack and Sir Richard through without hesitation and soon they were approaching the famous black door of Number 10, Downing Street.

If it had been four or five years earlier, there would have been a semi-permanent



encampment of the world's media on the opposite side of the street and a National Police & Security Service Metropolitan Division Officer on duty outside the door but not anymore.

The press had now been restricted to a specially built briefing room nearby, not allowed outside anymore and inside the military controlled security bubble, the National Police & Security Service no longer had any jurisdiction.

Watching from a first-floor window as the two men approached Number 10 was a figure in the shadows, looking out mournfully on the scene before her and thinking of how bad things had now got.

“I am trying to remember if I have ever been here before” Jack remarked.

“Oh, I have” Sir Richard confirmed “More times than I care to remember” he admitted as the two armed Army officers in full military fatigues inspected their formal identification once again before the door was opened and they were permitted to enter.

“Nice decor” Jack remarked as he looked around the interior once the door was closed behind them leaving him and Sir Richard alone for a few moments.

“Mock Georgian I think” Sir Richard admitted.

“Ah, looks like one of the PM's flunkeys is coming to meet us” Jack indicated up ahead where a figure could be seen approaching.

“Err, a little word of advice if you are going to be treading the corridors of power” Sir Richard quietly mentioned aside “That 'flunkey' is William Palmer, the Justice Secretary, one of the most senior parliamentary members of the nation's justice system.”

“Oh, so he is a flunkey with a lot of connections then” Jack confirmed his opinion.

“I can tell who taught you the business” Sir Richard remarked with a smirk.

“Sir Richard” Palmer greeted them “and you must be Lieutenant Commander Regent, welcome to Number Ten.”

“Thank you” Jack responded whilst Sir Richard simply nodded in acknowledgement.

“This way please gentlemen” Palmer then directed “The PM is expecting you.”

“Why do I get the feeling I am walking into a huge elephant trap here?” Jack asked as he and Sir Richard were escorted up the grand staircase to the first floor past the collection of official photographs of all the previous Prime Ministers who had resided there over the last two hundred years or more.

“Because you probably are?” Sir Richard responded “The PM did not choose a random Security Service officer, she specifically asked for you” he informed him.

“Remind me to check my life insurance when we are done here” Jack jokingly remarked “I’ve seen this sort of thing before, and it usually goes proverbially pear shaped sooner or later.”

The Prime Minister continued to watch out of the window until there was polite knock on the study door.

“Come in” she then called.

“Sir Richard Crowthorne and Lieutenant Commander Jack Regent” Palmer confirmed before showing them in.

“Thank you” the Prime Minister confirmed before stepping away from the window and facing them.

Sir Richard only just managed to hide his shock at her appearance as she emerged from the shadows into the light, clearly showing that over the last year of so, the stress of job and the circumstances she and the nation she served now found themselves in had seen her age badly, no longer the enthusiastic, confident and sprightly young woman who first stepped into Downing Street some six years earlier.

“Thank you for coming gentlemen” the Prime Minister then called, indicating with her hand for them to sit down in front of her ornate antique desk, “Err, can you ask the Home Secretary to join us as well please?”

“Yes, Prime Minister” Palmer duly confirmed before leaving.

A few moments later, the Home Secretary, Nigel Davis appeared and duly joined them whereupon the study door was quietly closed, leaving the four of them alone.

“Good to see you again Jack” the Prime Minister remarked “It’s been a long time.”

“That it has Prime Minister” Jack confirmed with a polite nod.

“All right gentlemen, I will get straight to the point” the Prime Minister then announced, “We are up the proverbial creek, far worse than anyone outside this room realises” she ominously declared.

“I figured as much” Sir Richard admitted, “Made all the more concerning by Jack’s discovery earlier this morning.”

“Is it him?” the Prime Minister was almost afraid to ask.

“I can confirm that the body of Divisional Commander Jim Appleby was discovered in the depths of the disused Aldwych Underground Station just over an hour ago” Jack formally informed her.

“Oh...” the Prime Minister slumped back in her seat.

“It is early days but there are indications he was killed deliberately” Jack then added.

“How long was he missing for?” the Prime Minister then asked.

“The thick end of three weeks I think” Jack confirmed.

“I think the words straw and camel’s back are appropriate at this point” Sir Richard remarked.

“You could be right” the Prime Minister regrettably agreed, “There is a story about to appear in the Evening Standard in the next few hours about the current Acting Administrator General, Stephen Matthews” she explained, producing a mock-up of the front page that she had received and handing it across.

“Where did you get this?” Sir Richard asked as he, Jack and the Home Secretary looked at the page, lurid large print headlines in true sensationalist tabloid style.

“A friend of a friend” the Prime Minister vaguely explained, “There is nothing we can do to stop it as that hits the streets and the Internet at about four o’clock this afternoon.”

“It’s a fit up!” Jack incredulously responded.

“I agree wholeheartedly” the Home Secretary responded, “I remember approving his appointment back in the days when my Office actually had some power, shortly before Tracy Regent left on her long-term sabbatical.”

“This is trash, tabloid fiction of the worst sort!” Sir Richard dismissively responded, almost enraged.

“Well, of course it is” the Prime Minister readily agreed “the trouble is that in this day and age, mud sticks and anything on the Internet must be true so the chances are, he will be forced to resign in the morning with immediate effect.”

“This is a good old fashioned smear campaign, plain and simple” the Home Secretary commented.

“Can’t we put a D Notice on this, get it stopped?” Jack asked.

“Alas, no” Sir Richard regretfully confirmed, “Since the Acting Prime Minister forced through his various bits of legislation, everything now has to go through ‘The Committee’ who clearly have an agenda to oust us old guard out and roll in their own more sympathetic people.”

“Well, we have to do something” the Home Secretary responded as they all then looked towards the Prime Minister as if in search of inspiration.

“I do have a plan, gentlemen” the Prime Minister confirmed “but first there is another unexpected issue I need to consider.”

“Prime Minister?” Sir Richard prompted after a few moments which was when she looked directly at Jack with a thoughtful expression.

“Sod it!” the Prime Minister then exclaimed, “Thanks to the various examples of outright political meddling that has been going on, I have virtually no powers left, so the few I still retain, I think it is time to well and truly abuse them!”

“Huh!?!” the Home Secretary responded, like the others present having no idea where this was leading as she stood up.

“Here we go...” Sir Richard muttered under his breath.

“Sir Richard” the Prime Minister addressed him directly “I am invoking clause sixty one of the National Security Act 1985 and placing the front line operations of MI5 and MI6 under your direct and personal control.”

“Err yes Prime Minister” Sir Richard responded.

“Your years of expertise should provide an invaluable support and a major kick start to get them back on track.”

“Does the National Security and Police Service come under his remit also?” Jack asked.

“Err no, I have someone else in mind for that job” the Prime Minister confirmed “but first I want you Nigel, and you Sir Richard to witness this.”

All three men in the room looked at each other briefly for a moment, uncertain where this was heading.

“Lieutenant Commander Jack Regent” she then formally addressed the young officer.

“Prime Minister” Jack formally responded in kind.

“Under article one six one of the National Security Act 1985 I hereby give you a field promotion to the rank of full Commander in the National Police and Security Service” the Prime Minister announced leaving Jack a bit flabbergasted.

“Err, thank you...” Jack began only to stop when the Prime Minister raised her hand whilst Sir Richard looked on with a somewhat astounded expression.

“I haven't finished yet, Commander” the Prime Minister pointed out, “Effective immediately I am also appointing you Acting Divisional Commander of the Greater London Transport Division and instruct you to use every and all available resources that rank and position grants to investigate the death of your former Commanding Officer and the circumstances surrounding it.”

“Congratulations” Sir Richard then remarked “You are now the second youngest ever Divisional Commander.”

“Second youngest?” Jack responded, “No prizes for guessing who I have been beaten by I suppose?”

“None whatsoever” Sir Richard confirmed.

“I thought she was going to make you National Administrator General for a split second there” the Home Secretary remarked aside to Jack who merely nodded in slightly embarrassed agreement.

“Right, now that is done, back to my plan” the Prime Minister then declared as she sat down once more, “Gentlemen, I want her back in New Scotland Yard by this time tomorrow.”

“What? You mean...?” Sir Richard began to ask.

“You both know *exactly* who I mean” the Prime Minister confirmed.

“She isn't going to like it...” Jack tentatively warned.

“Then you had best get up there, find her and ask her, nicely of course” the Prime Minister insisted, “and if she still has doubts, put me on the phone with her, I will set her straight!”

“What do you think?” Jack asked Sir Richard.

“Well, we have got to try something” Sir Richard admitted, “The Security Service is being gradually strangled by red tape and bureaucracy, it's Chief is about to get slimed out of office, numerous officers have either left, died or been forced out, I reckon we have not got many options left.”

“I cannot underestimate just how bad things are for this country right now” the Prime Minister confirmed “We have lunatics and terrorists on the streets, military checkpoints everywhere and whilst we are being constantly attacked from outside, we are also being constantly undermined from within.”

“All right” Jack agreed, “Sir Richard and I will go and see her, but no promises.”

“Thank you, gentlemen,” the Prime Minister responded.

“Come on Divisional Commander” Sir Richard then called, “I'll give you a lift back to Holborn.”

A few minutes later, Jack and Sir Richard were making their way back out of Downing Street and heading back towards their car.

“So young man, have you got any ideas?” Sir Richard asked.

“At the moment” Jack admitted as he got in the car “nothing that will result in either one or both of us getting shot, no” he confirmed “but I am working on it.”

“Maybe I should do the talking?” Sir Richard suggested as he started the car and began to drive off towards the boundary checkpoint which exited from the secure area into Parliament Square, “I can usually persuade anyone around to my point of view with enough determination and as I am old, I have a lot less to lose than you.”

“You forget something” Jack responded, “I don't have much left to lose any more.”

They passed through the military checkpoint and around Parliament Square where the once mighty Houses of Parliament now stood forlorn, clad in scaffolding where a multi-million pound rebuilding project had stalled several years earlier, leaving what was once the traditional seat of Government little more than a semi-derelict shell.

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Taylor looked out from the balcony window of his office, across the nearby rooftops towards King's Cross and smiled to himself.

The pieces of the jigsaw he had started to put together over so many years were finally starting to come together, the next step in his master plan being confirmed when there was polite knock on the door whereupon he stepped back into the room whilst a man came in bearing a message and the latest edition of the Evening Standard featuring their exclusive on the smear allegations against the Acting Administrator General, Stephen Matthews.

“Thank you” Taylor responded, taking the paper and the message and waiting until the man had left before returning to the balcony.

It was the newspaper that Taylor first looked at, reading the front page and then briefly looking through the further seven pages inside on the same story with a great smile of satisfaction.

“Oh excellent!” he then declared, the whole story being another part of his meticulously designed plan, totally fictitious but so carefully crafted that it would be easily believed by more than enough people to achieve his aim.

Then Taylor put the newspaper down and turned his attention to the message and that was when his demeanour noticeably changed.

“Ah...” he responded, slightly despondently as he read the message again just to make sure, “I wasn't expecting that.”

Taylor thought for a few moments before returning inside and heading past his desk to a discrete side room off his study where he proceeded to look among a significant number of files until he found the one that he was looking for.

“Well, my young friend” Taylor remarked as he looked at the photograph on the front of the file, that of Jack Regent, “It seems congratulations are in order!”

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“Megan?” Jack called as he entered the apartment with Sir Richard following behind.

“I’m in the kitchen love, hang on a moment” Megan confirmed.

A few moments later there was a whirring sound before Megan appeared, riding in the advanced electrically powered wheelchair to which she had been effectively confined since suffering crush injuries to her legs in the Holborn bomb attack three years earlier.

“Hi love” Megan called as she and Jack then kissed.

“Erm, you know Sir Richard Crowthorne, don't you?” Jack asked.

“Of course I do!” Megan responded, “Good to see you again.”

“And likewise, my dear” Sir Richard responded in kind.

“You will excuse me if I don't get up though” Megan wryly admitted, “Slight technical difficulties in the leg department” she subtly indicated the chair.

“I fully understand” Sir Richard replied.

“I just popped in to let you know about what's happened before you hear it from anyone else” Jack explained.

“Anything to do with the goings on down Aldwych?” Megan asked, “I was passing back from the office in a taxi an hour ago and saw all the activity going on” she then explained.

“I am afraid so” Jack regrettably confirmed, “I found Jim Appleby's body down there.”

“Oh no...” Megan responded with an understandable sense of shock.

“I reckon he had been down there a couple of weeks at least” Jack then remarked.

“So, he probably died not long after he was last seen then” Sir Richard concluded.

“Oh, poor sod” Megan remarked.

“I thought you would like to know straightaway” Jack then explained, “I am going to be busy for the rest of the day on a couple of matters courtesy of the Prime Minister.”

“Oh, when did she re-emerge from the woodwork then?” Megan asked.

“About an hour ago” Sir Richard explained, “We were duly summoned to Downing Street.”

“Oh...” Megan responded.

“Erm...” Jack began, slightly awkwardly “I got promoted, to Acting Divisional Commander” he then sheepishly admitted to a smirk in response from Megan.

“You should have seen the look on the Home Secretary's face when the Prime Minister suddenly announced it” Sir Richard then remarked “It was an absolute picture!”

“And so, another member of your infamous dynasty steps into a top seat in the Security Service” Megan summarised.

“Indeed” Jack admitted, “And now on the Prime Minister's orders, we have to go and persuade the other one to come back!”

“Surely not...?” Megan responded as she quickly realised the implication.

“Oh yes” Sir Richard confirmed, “We are going up to see her later today.”

“Well, that will upset a few people” Megan remarked, “The Police & Crime Commissioner for one.”

“Yeah, what a shame...” Jack responded with a broad smile.

“So, now that you are the Chief” Megan then inquired, “Who is your Number Two?”

“Do you know what?” Jack replied, “I hadn't thought of that, but now I come to think of it, I know just the man for the job.”

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“I don't give a toss about your risk assessments or regulations” Lieutenant Commander Easley of the Metropolitan Division called, “We have traffic backed up across three quarters of the West End, rush hour is not far away, and we need to get this lot shifted, now!”

As the on-call Operations Duty Commander, he had been called to attend a major road traffic collision which had occurred near Marble Arch, caused when a traffic light failure had resulted in several simultaneous conflicting vehicle movements and multiple minor collisions.

Unfortunately, when Easley arrived, he found a scene of utter chaos as both military and Security Service personnel were embroiled in an argument over jurisdiction, procedures and risk assessments, the latter being one of a number of inhibiting initiatives that had been forced upon the National Police & Security Service in the last couple of years.

“I am sorry Sir but there is a set protocol and procedure to follow” the army chief on the scene insisted “We have to formally investigate the potential that this could be a terrorist led incident.”



“That's a load of old pony!” Eisley swiftly responded, “Look, you are the army, right?” he then pointed out, “Get some of your lads to come over in of those sodding big green trucks of yours and start moving the less damaged vehicles on the periphery” he then instructed, “At least that way we can start to get some of this traffic moving” he suggested.

The army chief looked on, not entirely certain before deciding to give in.

“All right Sir” he then relented “I'll get my lads to start moving the blockage.”

“Good, thank you” Eisley responded before heading back to his patrol car where he was surprised to see an old friend standing there, waiting for him.

“Nicely handled” Jack complimented as Eisley approached.

“Jack!” Eisley responded as they met up and warmly shook hands “It's been too long.”

“That it has” Jack freely admitted, “So what is the SP here?” he then asked.

“Multiple vehicle collision when the traffic lights went a bit doo-lally for a minute” Eisley explained as they both looked across the scene where paramedic teams were helping the last of the injured away whilst the army officers were beginning the task of clearing some of the wreckage.

“How bad?” Jack then inquired.

“Fortunately, it was all low speed, so we have a load of bumps, cuts and bruises but not much more” Eisley confirmed, “The biggest problem when I got here fifteen minutes ago was that little tin pot dictator over there trying to pull rank and jurisdiction.”

“This whole situation is getting ridiculous” Jack admitted “If this continues on much longer, the Security Service will be reduced to issuing parking tickets and fines for dropping dog poo.”

“I erm heard about your Guvnor” Eisley then remarked, “I'm sorry.”

“Thanks” Jack responded, “Have you heard the rest of it?” he then asked.

“Eh?” Eisley responded before noticing the epaulettes on Jack's shoulders now read LT1, “Whoa...” he then remarked, raising his eyebrows in surprise.

“The Prime Minister personally promoted me earlier” Jack confirmed “and believe me, I am just as much surprised as you are!”

“Congratulations” Eisley called, “I am surprised they didn't make you Administrator General, whisper on the grape vine is that Matthews is getting the shove in the morning.”

“Off the record, he is” Jack discreetly confirmed “Smear story in the press, complete bunkum of course but enough to get him out which is clearly serving someone's agenda somewhere.”

“I wonder who our new Administrator General will be then?” Eislely wondered which was when he noticed Jack's expression that told him he knew something.

“You'll see” was all he would say on the subject before turning to a different matter, “Do you have a few minutes, I need your help with a little problem I now seem to have.”

“Well, it looks like, finally the army guys are doing as they are told” Eislely remarked as he looked back towards the collision scene around Marble Arch, “So, what can I do for you, Divisional Commander?”

“I want to offer you a job” Jack duly announced.

“A job?” Eislely responded, somewhat taken by surprise.

“I need a Deputy Divisional Commander and your name is top of the list” Jack confirmed.

“Really?” Eislely was somewhat taken aback by the offer. “Me?”

“You are a good officer, dedicated, don't stand for any nonsense” Jack explained “We have worked together before and most importantly of all, you are not afraid to speak your mind and I need that so that you can point out my mistakes, preferably before I make them.”

“Well, I have to admit getting out of West End Central would be a welcome change” Eislely admitted, “Since Commander Monroe got spirited away on some weird orders from that Police & Crime Commissioner, the ship has been rapidly sinking under the perfect storm of ever decreasing resources to meet ever increasing demand.”

“Yeah, it's a mess all right” Jack admitted “Fortunately, thanks to a paperwork oversight in the corridors of power, the PCC doesn't cover the Transport Division so that means, hopefully we manage to avoid the worst of the red tape lunacy the rest of the Service seems to be drowning in.”

“All right” Eislely then responded, “I accept!”

“Welcome aboard Deputy Divisional Commander” Jack confirmed as they formally shook hands.

“So, when do I start?” Eislely then asked.

“Tomorrow morning” Jack duly confirmed, “I can get the paperwork cleared through the Administrator General easily enough, all you have to do is get a change of uniform and turn up at Holborn, nine a.m. sharp tomorrow morning.”

“So, you do know who the new Administrator General is” Eisley concluded.

“In a manner of speaking” Jack explained, “Sir Richard and I just have to head up to her place shortly and try and persuade her to come back.”

“Oh wow...” Eisley responded when the penny dropped and he realised exactly who Jack was talking about, “That will put the proverbial cat among the pigeons!”

“Quite” Jack agreed “But erm, keep it to yourself until its official, okay?” Jack then wisely suggested.

“Absolutely Guv” Eisley confirmed with a broad smile, “My lips are sealed.”

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“Behold my friends; cast your eyes on the future!”

So proclaimed Lord Chaos, real name Michael Orbison, the founding father of the Ixion Brotherhood as he looked down from a balcony over the interior of a huge building located on a disused former Ministry of Defence training facility in the heart of Salisbury Plain in the county of Wiltshire.

Below him and his guests were approximately one hundred individuals, men and women all in army style fatigues, mostly engaged in small groups as they trained and practiced various skills including target practice with live firing, hand to hand combat, camouflage and rapid response attack and defence.

“At last, we can finally play our trump cards” Taylor responded as he and his associates from the Cato Group looked down in the scene.

“Eight years of planning, recruitment and training has led to this” Orbison confirmed as he beamed with pride, “The Brotherhood’s finest selected from around the globe, ready to go into battle for chaos and our new world order.”

“I was hoping to see out mutual friend if possible?” Taylor then formally requested.

“Ah yes, Mr Delfont” Orbison confirmed, “Come with me gentlemen, I will formally introduce you.”

With that pronouncement, the Cato Committee members led by Taylor duly proceeded to follow Orbison down the steps to the main floor where they walked between the training groups who continued undeterred by their presence.

One training group in particular caught Taylor’s attention and he paused for a few moments to watch the team of ten men carry out their exercises, their main target being a bullet ridden old scrap car which had clearly seen multiple mock attacks judging from its state.

“I’ve taxed worse...” Orbison wryly remarked to Taylor who smirked in response.

“Yeah, I remember that old beaten-up VW microbus you used to roll around the country in back in the day” Taylor fondly recalled.

“I’ve still got it actually” Orbison admitted “Needs a bit of work to make it roadworthy mind” he then admitted.

“Shall we...? Taylor then suggested moving on whereupon they duly continued with Orbison still leading the way.

Proceeding out of the huge building brought them to the heart of the old military campus which thanks to its location many miles away from any form of civilisation meant that once the large doors had closed behind, they were shrouded in near silence bar the tweeting of birds in the trees and a gentle breeze.

“Such tranquillity” Orbison remarked, breathing in heavily with his eyes momentarily closed, “I think when all this is over, I may convert this whole place into a new Citadel.”

“Not another one!” Taylor responded rather dismissively “You have five already!”

“Four” Orbison quickly corrected him “I lost the one under the Redhill tunnels, remember?”

“Oh yes, the rush removal job” Taylor recalled “All because of that meddlesome Jack.”

“Hopefully, that young man will be far too busy dealing with the departure of his old boss to be bothering us anymore” Orbison then remarked but then saw Taylor's look of slight reluctance, “What?” he then tersely asked.

“Err, I don't know how to soften the blow really Brother” Taylor sheepishly admitted, “but the Prime Minister has used her official powers and made him Acting Divisional Commander.”

“She promoted him?” Orbison responded, amazed, “Wow, mind you I expect he probably has earned it” he then remarked, “Hang on a minute, I thought you and your parliamentary insiders had stripped the Prime Minister of her powers?”

“Unfortunately, she still has a few remaining” Taylor confirmed “and that was one of them, the power to make operational decisions regarding the National Police & Security Service where conditions of national emergency exist” he explained.

“Ironically a national emergency we created” Orbison admitted, “Carefully crafted over so many years.”

“At least she didn't make him Administrator General I suppose...” Taylor concluded.

“Yet...” Orbison added.

“Oh, she can only advise on an Administrator General's appointment” Taylor

confirmed “and we already have our puppet ready to slip into the role, all that is required is some suitable influence and persuasion.”

As they reached one of the smaller buildings on the site, the sound of muted gunfire and shouting could be heard coming from inside.

“Ah, the beast is awake...” Taylor remarked, almost with a sense of pride.

“I don't think he actually sleeps” Orbison responded, “In fact I am not entirely convinced he is even human, just a sort of automaton.”

“If you were to think of him in military hardware terms, the likes of Reaper were heavy weaponry, this guy is more a weapon of mass destruction” Taylor remarked as they approached an old green door, the paint peeling and faded, a sign on the door ominously reading 'Danger - Keep Out!'.

“Yeah, well he scares the willies out of me” Orbison admitted “and that is saying something.”

“There was a good reason why The Hand decided to leave our boy in there at home when they came over five years ago” Taylor explained as they opened the door and proceeded inside, “Why bring a sledgehammer to a nut cracking party?”

They both looked on with a sense of pride as in front of them was a tall muscular dark skinned man with a look of evil determination, training alone on a set of old shop window mannequins, smashing them to pieces with a combination of lightning fast martial arts moves and then quickly grabbing a firearm and gunning them down.

“I do hope those are blanks...” Taylor remarked with a slight sense of concern.

“It took a bit of persuasion but yes” Orbison confirmed before calling the man over, “Brother Thistlewood!” he then called whereupon the man stopped suddenly and instantly snapped his head around to look directly at them.

“Barely lost a heartbeat” Taylor remarked as the man stood down from his intense training and came over to them, “Impressive...”

“Brother Thistlewood” Orbison then called “Brother Taylor, our mentor and the light that guides us to the dark glory that is almost at hand” he duly did the introductions.

The two men shook hands which was when Taylor noticed the extremely strong grip that he had, almost crushing his hand before he then let go.

“Blimey...” Taylor remarked, discreetly rubbing his hand after its near crush experience, “Hell of a grip you have got there lad.”

“Taylor, this is your man Thistlewood, better known as Alain Delfont” Orbison continued “The slayer of a thousand men, the Butcher of Mobuto, the mastermind of the Holborn attack plus numerous other accolades in the specialist field of warfare, violence and death, you could call him a Professor of Pain!”

“It is a pleasure to finally meet you at last Mr Delfont” Taylor agreed “I have read and heard so much about you since before we bought you here to the country, but I was always worried we were never going to actually meet.”

“Mr Taylor” Delfont replied, his deeply rich central African accent readily apparent “The honour and pleasure is all mine.”

“Colonel Delfont has been hard in training for the last six weeks now” Orbison continued “and has been co-ordinating the training programme for our showcase New Model Army of Chaos that you have already seen.”

“Excellent work all round gentlemen” Taylor complimented “Believe me gentlemen, our day is almost at hand, just a couple more chaotic days on the streets, carefully coordinated by our people on the ground of course, and then we will be ready to move.”

“I am looking forward to it” Delfont responded, a distinct tone of menace in his voice.

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“Do you know, in my lifetime of service to the nation, I have faced terrorists, revolutionaries, murderers, schemers, liars, pretty much every form of fearsome scumbag imaginable” Sir Richard remarked as, sat in the front passenger seat of the Transport Division patrol car with Jack driving, they headed up a narrow country lane, “but all that pales into insignificance when it comes to this task I tell you.”

“You'll be fine” Jack responded as he paused at a junction and consulted his satellite navigation display before indicating right, cancelling the indicator, indicating left and then carrying on.

“That's easy for you to say, Divisional Commander” Sir Richard responded.

Jack momentarily looked across at Sir Richard with a slightly scornful look.

“I forgot to ask earlier, did Commander Easley sign on to Team Jack?” Sir Richard then asked.

“He starts at nine o'clock tomorrow morning” Jack confirmed, “Given how depleted our budget and resources are at the moment, he will probably have to sew a Transport Division badge onto his existing Metropolitan Division uniform himself and I will have to root around in the old biscuit tin in the stores cupboard to make up enough metal numerals for his epaulettes, but we'll manage.”

“So how did you get this snazzy new car out of the Security Service's crack team of accountants?” Sir Richard asked as he looked around inside the extensively equipped patrol car.

“I learnt from you that in this firm, it's not what you know but who you know that is most important” Jack explained, “Appleby and I managed to cook the books last year

during the great upheaval when the Acting Prime Minister stood down and the resultant political fallout distracted the bean counters.”

“Nice...” Sir Richard complimented.

“If you look at the official accounting records this car is in fact recorded as a bicycle in Lowestoft” Jack then admitted “The Transport Division has a lot of bicycles in Lowestoft...”

“You're a sneaky sod, aren't you?” Sir Richard remarked.

“The sneakiest in the business” Jack responded with a broad grin.

Soon they reached a small village approximately ten miles outside of Carlisle in the north of England, not far from the border with Scotland and a couple of minutes later, Jack turned the car into a gateway off to the right.

The wheels crunched quite loudly on the gravel track as Jack then brought the patrol car to a halt, a short distance from an isolated country cottage a short distance ahead.

“Here we are” Jack then declared which was when he turned off the engine and looked across to Sir Richard and saw the look of apprehension on his face.

“Right...” Sir Richard slowly replied, continuing to stare straight ahead.

“I am sure you will be fine” Jack tried to reassure him.

“Of course I will” Sir Richard then admitted “that is why you are doing the talking” he then declared, looking across at Jack with a gleeful smile.

“Thanks, old friend” Jack responded with a noticeably sarcastic tone as they both got out of the car, “Really, thanks!”

“My pleasure” Sir Richard replied, “Shall we?” he then indicated the path ahead leading up to a glorious country cottage set in a marvellous colourful garden that was at its best in that late spring afternoon.

“Never had her down as the horticultural type” Sir Richard remarked as they walked up the central path past the beds of flowers and vegetables neatly planted either side and approached the front door of the cottage.

“Everyone has hidden talents you know” Jack responded.

“Easy for you to say” Sir Richard replied, “I can't even grow mould.”

They both approached the front door and looked at the doorbell, neither of them all that willing to initiate the first contact.

“Go on, you are the one in uniform” Sir Richard prompted.

“All right then” Jack responded before reached out and ringing the bell which sounded somewhere inside the cottage.

The two men stood there apprehensively waiting an answer, Jack rocking back and forth slightly on his heels but there was no answer.

“Perhaps she's gone out?” Jack ventured.

“Good afternoon gentlemen” came a familiar voice from behind them causing both of them to turn around whereupon they saw Tracy Caverner standing there, a trowel in one hand and a wooden trug of freshly picked fruit and vegetables in the other.

“Hi!” Jack responded.

“Well, if it isn't the prodigal son and the ghost of Christmas past” Tracy then jokingly remarked “What brings you two reprobates all the way out here?” she asked.

“Erm...” Jack awkwardly began “could we talk inside?” he then suggested.

“Go ahead, the door is unlocked” Tracy motioned ahead whereupon Sir Richard opened the door before proceeding with Jack inside and she duly followed.

“Nice carrots” Sir Richard remarked on seeing the fruit and vegetables Tracy had brought in with her which she placed on the side before showing them through to the living room.

“Thanks” Tracy responded, “So I take it this isn't a social call then?” she asked.

“We are here at the specific request of the Prime Minister” Jack began to which Tracy rolled her eyes upwards and carried on through to the kitchen to put the kettle on, “She was quite insistent.”

“How is she?” Tracy asked, “I saw her on the television the other night, looked pretty stressed I thought.”

“She's has aged terribly, practically been stripped of all her powers and quite frankly is at the end of her tether” Sir Richard confirmed “it's not general knowledge but the country is probably a few days from falling apart completely.”

“Anything in particular?” Tracy asked.

“London is in a de facto state of Marshall Law, the security and intelligence services are at breaking point, the Government is split into rival factions who are spending most of their time slinging mud at each other in the popular press and as for the opposition, well one party was all but wiped out at the last general election, the other has managed to elect a complete moron as their leader and effectively self-destructed which leaves the Scottish lot who don't give a toss about anything south of Carlisle” Jack summarised the situation “meanwhile the Ixion Brotherhood are still causing mayhem everywhere and someone is making a very good job of wiping us out one by one.”



“That is pretty much what I feared” Tracy admitted, “I heard about Jim Appleby” she then added to slightly quizzical looks from both Jack and Sir Richard.

“Err...” Sir Richard began.

“This isn't the middle of nowhere you know” Tracy explained “I keep in touch with what is going on down there; there are still a few members of the Service who keep me discreetly updated.”

“And I thought I was the sneaky one” Sir Richard remarked.

“I learnt from the best” Tracy duly complimented, “So Jack, they made you Administrator General yet?” she then jokingly asked.

“Erm, not quite...” Jack awkwardly replied, discreetly indicating his shoulder epaulettes.

“Eh?” Tracy responded before noticing the LT1 numerals on Jack's shoulders, “Oh, congratulations!” she then called as she realised the significance.

“The Prime Minister's idea” Sir Richard explained “exercising one of the few powers she still has left.”

“Which brings us to the reason for our visit...” Jack then reluctantly continued.

“Here we go...” Tracy murmured under her breath, already pretty certain where this conversation was leading.

“The Prime Minister wants you back in the centre seat” Jack explained “the Security Service is on the brink of total collapse under the weight of red tape, bureaucracy and demand, and Acting Administrator General Matthews is being slimed in the press as we speak and will be forced out by the morning.”

“Someone is using a smear story in the popular press to get Matthews out so they can parachute their own sympathetic person into the chair” Sir Richard concluded, “However the Prime Minister has managed to find a loophole.”

“She does know I have technically retired, doesn't she?” Tracy then asked.

“Actually, you are on an extended leave of absence” Sir Richard countered, “Gardening leave, rather literally and that is the loophole, it means the Prime Minister can reinstate you at any time without consultation.”

“The fact is, we need you” Jack reiterated, “The country has been gradually going to hell in a hand cart” he then added “The state of emergency, the constant attacks, the military checkpoints, the increased border measures, rumours of secret operations, all fuelled by a hopelessly biased press, unchecked social media and all constantly adding to the paranoia that the public have been living under for the last few years.”

“And the Prime Minister wants to drop me right back in the middle of it?” Tracy asked, “Thanks but no thanks, I have done my bit for Queen and Country thank you very much.”

“You still keep your hand in” Sir Richard pointed out “I know you do help out the local Security & Police Service from time to time around these here parts.”

“There is a hell of a difference between this one-horse village out in the sticks and the chaos that is London and the Home Counties” Tracy pointed out.

“Hmmm” Sir Richard responded as he took out his mobile phone and speed dialled a number before handing it across “Perhaps this will help?” he suggested.

“Really?” Tracy responded as she took the phone before putting it to her ear “Hello?” she then answered.

“Commander Caverner, Prime Minister Jayne Grey speaking” came the call from the other end to which Tracy straightened up her stance as if standing to attention.

“Good afternoon” Tracy responded.

“Look I am not going to bullshit you” the Prime Minister declared “and I am willing to go down on my knees to plead with you, if necessary, we need you back, and the country needs you too.”

“Oh please...” Tracy muttered under her breath with a wry smile.

“In a nutshell, we are up shit creek without a paddle” the Prime Minister continued “The Security Service is on the brink of collapse under the pressure.”

“And whose fault is that may I ask?” Tracy tersely responded, “From what I have seen there has been so much interference and micromanaging of the Service from the Civil Service minions and God knows who else that none of the officers can even so much as fart without having to fill in half a dozen forms and three risk assessments!”

“Yeah...” the Prime Minister reluctantly agreed “it does seem to have gone rather wrong.”

“Look, err, Prime Minister” Tracy then replied as she thought about her response “Can you give me a couple of minutes to think about this.”

“Yes of course” the Prime Minister responded.

“I’ll call you back” Tracy then confirmed before handing the phone back to Sir Richard.

“Wow” Jack remarked “Did you just hang up on the Prime Minister?”

“I did say I would call her back” Tracy wryly pointed out “Would you excuse me please gentlemen? I will be back in a little while, help yourself to tea and biscuits.”

“Now you are talking” Jack remarked as he gleefully leaned forward and grabbed a couple more biscuits whilst Tracy left them, ascending the wooden staircase upstairs.

At the top of the stairs Tracy turned left and stepped through the old wooden door into the bedroom where she then went over to the window and looked out across the garden towards the rolling hills in the distance.

“All right love” Tracy then remarked, looking across to the dressing table where a photograph of her late husband, the Commander took pride of place “What do you think?” she asked.

After a few moments she then walked over to the antique wooden wardrobe and opened the door revealing her Security Service uniform hanging up inside.

“All right then” Tracy then remarked, looking back to the photograph of the Commander again “I guess I will give it a go.”

Both Jack and Sir Richard looked up when they heard the footsteps coming down the stairs and Tracy returned to the living room whereupon she indicated to take the phone back.

“Dialling now” Sir Richard confirmed as he handed the telephone back to her.

“Prime Minister” Tracy then called as soon as the call was answered “Tracy Caverner” she confirmed.

“Thank you for calling me back” the Prime Minister responded, “Have you come to a decision?” she asked eagerly.

“All right” Tracy confirmed “I will come back...”

“Yes!” the Prime Minister quietly exclaimed in response.

“...but there are conditions” Tracy then added.

“Name them” the Prime Minister responded.

“Full autonomy over the running of the service” Tracy declared with a very insistent tone “and that means no interference whatsoever from the Civil Service, that idiot Police & Crime Commissioner, the Government and any associated flunkeys, hangers on, minions or other assorted cretins. Any of them try to interfere and I shall personally throw them out of a window on the top floor of New Scotland Yard.”

“No argument here” the Prime Minister confirmed.

“Also” Tracy then continued “I personally oversee all major operations and reserve the right to hire, fire, allocate and move whoever I choose, whenever I choose.”

“You got it” the Prime Minister agreed who by that point would have agreed to anything by that point if it got Tracy to sign up.

Tracy paused for a few moments to consider her next response before continuing “All right, I will come back but for a probationary period only. If I say I quit then I quit, no arguments, no debate, I walk and that will be it. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Commander Caverner” the Prime Minister instantly agreed.

“One last thing” Tracy then responded, “When I return, I come back under my married name, there has to be a certain continuity I feel.”

“Very well Commander Regent” the Prime Minister duly corrected herself “When can you start?” she asked.

“I’ll be at New Scotland Yard for eleven a.m. tomorrow morning” Tracy then confirmed “but no press, no circus, no welcoming committee” she then insisted “I simply want to slip into the office nice and quiet and just get on with it.”

“Very well” the Prime Minister responded, hiding her disappointment that she would no longer be able to make a big splash in the press over Tracy's return “Give me a call when you have settled in as we have a lot to talk about.”

“Good day Prime Minister” Tracy called before hanging up.

“I give it about twenty minutes tomorrow before all hell breaks loose” Jack remarked to Sir Richard.

“Such cynicism in one so young” Sir Richard responded, “Half an hour surely?” he then suggested.

“You two are a right pair” Tracy remarked.

“Well in your absence over the last few years it has been down to us to assume the mantle of the United Kingdom's Police, Security and Justice services official suppliers of mayhem and chaos” Sir Richard wryly remarked.

“I’m mayhem, he’s chaos” Jack then confirmed with a broad smile which served to cheer Tracy up a great deal.

“Well, in the midst of the chaos, any chance you could rustle me up some transport for tomorrow?” Tracy asked as she checked some train times on a tablet computer “I should be at Euston at ten thirty all being well” she then confirmed.

“On behalf of the London Transport Division, I will see what I can do” Jack confirmed.

“Great” Tracy responded “That just gives me until tonight to get the uniform sorted out, it's been a while. I just hope I can still fit into it!”

“You'll be fine” Sir Richard reassured her.

“There is a couple of things I need before tomorrow though” Tracy then pointed out, “I will need all the intelligence and incident reports for the last six months at least and also, I want everything we have on Acting Administrator General Matthews, the accusations, his personnel jacket, the lot.”

“I can have that sent over to you electronically within the hour” Sir Richard readily agreed.

“I best get back to the office myself” Jack remarked “I am officially introducing myself and my new deputy to the rest of the team at nine thirty tomorrow morning” he explained.

“Oh crikey, you have appointed a deputy already. You do work fast” Tracy commented “Who is it?”

“I hope you don't mind; I have poached Commander Eisley from the Metropolitan Division” Jack confirmed.

“Oh, excellent choice” Tracy complimented.

“Yeah, I thought so” Jack agreed, “I did try and run it by Commander Monroe over at West End Central, but he seems to have disappeared on secondment apparently, nobody seems to know where he is.”

“On the contrary young man” Tracy replied, “I know exactly where Commander Monroe is.”

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Deep beneath the streets of the City of London, not far from The Monument is the former northern terminus station of the old Central & South London Railway at King William Street, one of the first deep level tube railway lines ever built but closed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1900, when the line was diverted on a new route that is now the City Branch of the London Underground Northern Line.

Although abandoned as a railway station for over a hundred and twenty years, the former platform tunnel and associated passageways had in the last couple of years, assumed a new role as a classified special operations nerve centre for a secretive branch with the Security Service, X-Ray Division.

The secretive X-Ray Division had been effectively dormant for a while, only in the last couple of years had it been quietly reactivated by Tracy herself, soon after which she managed to obtain Metropolitan Division Operations Commander Andrew Monroe to become its new Chief of Operations.

X-Ray Division's reactivation had to be done very discreetly in modest stages over the course of three years, the process beginning in the aftermath of The Commander's death five years earlier but only really stepping up significantly a few days after the

Holborn bomb exploded and one of the final stages in its rebirth was Monroe taking up his new position.

The heart of the operation was a specially built communications and control room located at the western end of the former platform tunnel of the old station where reports and intelligence were being received, processed and analysed all the time by a team of specialists recruited from across the Service and associated agencies.

“Sir!” called one of the X-Ray Division's data analysts, “Incoming call on the blue scrambler” she announced.

“Thank you” Monroe responded before picking up the blue telephone handset on his desk and pressing a button to take the call.

“X-Ray One” he then announced.

“X-Ray One, this is Thamesider” came the response, all using code names, but Monroe knew who it actually was on the other end of the line, “Angel One returns tomorrow, I repeat, Angel One returns tomorrow.”

“Message received and understood” Monroe responded, barely able to contain his delight at the news, “X-Ray Command, out.”

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“Read all about it!” the newspaper vendor called, proffering the traditional half folded copy of the next newspaper from the stack in front of him, “Top cop forced to resign following scandal accusations!”

“You know it's all cobblers, don't you?” Jack remarked as he handed across his fifty pence and took the paper before looking down at the lurid headline on the front page with a despondent look.

“Of course it is” the newspaper vendor readily agreed “but in this day and age, newspaper editors know that hum drum and everyday ain't sexy.”

“You can say that again...” Jack responded, “Thanks.”

Sir Richard watched from the front passenger seat of the patrol car as Jack returned, getting back in the driver's seat and then passing the newspaper across.

“It's official” Jack confirmed, “Matthews is out of the door.”

“Not necessarily” Sir Richard proceeded to sound a note of caution.

“Huh?” Jack replied as he started the car and prepared to pull back out into the traffic.

“By now young man, you should have learned that not everything is what it seems” Sir Richard evasively explained, “Sometimes things happen for a reason.”

“You mean this is a setup?” Jack asked.

“Well of course it is a setup, a work of total fiction” Sir Richard confirmed, “the question however is not what has happened but who set this up” he indicated the headlines, “All we have done is take full advantage of the opportunity it has presented and use it to bring Tracy back into the game.”

“I bet whoever is behind this didn't reckon on that happening” Jack remarked.

“Indeed” Sir Richard readily agreed, “They are going to be well annoyed in the morning when they find out!”

“In the meantime, do you want to pick up anything for the journey home?” Jack then asked, “It's a long drive back to London.”

“Got all the essentials I need right here” Sir Richard confirmed, indicating the silver hip flask in his coat pocket and smiling.

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Tracy was washing some carrots she had just harvested from her vegetable garden when the news came on over the radio that was playing in the kitchen.

“Go on then BBC, depress me...” Tracy sarcastically urged as the six o'clock news began.

'Following damning revelations in the media over the last couple of hours, sources in Westminster are saying that the Acting Administrator General of the National Police & Security Service, Stephen Matthews has formally submitted his resignation with immediate effect.'

“Total fit up” Tracy responded as she finished washing the carrots and began to sort out some beans.

'As of yet there is no indication of who will step in to replace Matthews but the National Interests Committee is reported to be preparing a response which will see the Police & Crime Commissioner put temporarily in charge for the duration.'

“We will see about that!” Tracy called.

'In the Old Bailey, the trial of the former Mayor of London, Alfred Oscar has been adjourned again, the seventh time the proceedings have been suspended in the two years since the trial began. Legal arguments continue between the defence and the prosecution over the reliability of evidence and claims to have the defendant certified as clinically insane following reports that his mental state had suddenly deteriorated in the last few months.'

“You are not wriggling out of it that easy...” Tracy casually warned.

'Also in Westminster, the Pyramid Inquiry has been formally concluded following the

court ruling last year that much of the stated evidence that had been given to the Inquiry since it began seven years ago was now inadmissible. In a statement to formally close the proceedings, Sir Richard Crowthorne, the Inquiry Chairman simply said that this was a 'sad day for the slowly dying dream of free democracy, justice and security.'

"Just about sums it up..." Tracy then commented as she started to bag up her harvest for safekeeping.

In other business, the National Interests Committee has voted unanimously to extend the State of Emergency Powers Act by a further six months, despite objections from the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and others. In a statement, the Chairman of The Committee simply said, this was in the interests of national unity and the greater good.'

"Bollocks..." Tracy tersely responded before turning off the radio, she had heard enough.

Looking out of the kitchen window for a few moments, Tracy watched as a Robin flew past, landing on the top of an apple tree before singing merrily.

"It's all right for you, mate" Tracy remarked towards the bird, "You get to stay here in the fresh air; I have to go back to the city where the air is somewhat stale, literally and figuratively."

The Robin flew off at that moment, disappearing from sight down the garden and on into the woodland beyond.

"Ah well" Tracy then sighed, "I had better go and blow the moths off I suppose..."

A few moments later, she ascended the old wooden staircase and went through to her bedroom where, in the corner there was an old antique wardrobe which she proceeded to open. Pushing aside the numerous items of everyday clothing that were neatly hanging, she revealed her Service uniform of three different types, standard, formal and ceremonial, the latter she had not worn since her husband's funeral five years earlier.

"You will do" she then remarked as she took the formal uniform set off the rack and then laid it neatly on the bed, the ray of early evening sunshine that was coming through the window casting an almost ethereal glow across it.

Slipping off her one-piece flowery summer dress, Tracy took a moment to admire herself in the full length mirror where a few faint scars from battles past could still just about be made out here and there but for a widow in her early forties, she still looked trim and fit with a body someone half her age would be more than happy with.

"Not bad, girl" Tracy remarked to herself with a satisfied smile as she spun around a bit and looked at herself in the mirror, "not bad at all."

It took a couple of minutes for Tracy to get dressed, carefully putting the various



elements of her uniform on, making sure each part was correctly fitted, neat and straight.

“There, that's better” Tracy then remarked as she returned to the mirror and looked at herself again, now fully dressed in her uniform before looking over at the silver frame photograph of her late husband, The Commander on the bedside table nearby, “What do you think love?” she then asked towards the photograph, “Yeah, you preferred how I looked before I put this lot on, I know” she then added with a cheeky smile.

“Well, at least it still fits” she then remarked to her reflection in the full-length mirror as she finished fastening the front of the uniform tunic and checking it was still in good condition.

The time it had spent sitting in her wardrobe had dulled the bright shiny finish of the 'A1' numerals, crown and crossed swords symbols on the epaulettes, the medal ribbons were a little wonky and there were some bits of dust here and there but overall, her uniform has survived storage pretty well.

“Hmm...” Tracy mused as she dusted off the shoulders and adjusted the medal ribbons back to their correct place, “It'll have to do.”

“I don't know what you are looking at love” she then remarked aside to the photograph of her late husband again, “Your uniform was rarely impeccable was it?” she reminded him with a wry smile.

After one final check, Tracy took her uniform tunic off and carefully placed it over the back of the chair where she then got out a handkerchief and proceeded to polish the shiny embellishments, bringing out their proper shine once more.

“There, that is better” she then declared with a hint of satisfaction, “I just wish I knew what happened to my sword...”

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Tracy's ceremonial sword had been missing for over six years now, its absence a long held mystery that was never really properly investigated, this being through a combination of lack of time and also the relative unimportance in the grand scheme of things.

Unbeknown to all bar a few, its exact location was in fact in a room, located deep underground in one of the Citadel Complex's of the Ixion Brotherhood where, ever since its disappearance, it was one of the prizes of Orbison's personal treasured collection of objects celebrating crime and crime fighting from the last two hundred years.

It was on display, mounted on a specially made stand in a large wood and glass cabinet, and even had a little explanatory handwritten label adjacent to it.

The sword was not alone either, there were now a total of three swords present, the others being The Commander's which Orbison had acquired in the immediate

aftermath of his death five years ago, the third was the most recent acquisition, Jack's sword that was recovered by the Brotherhood's dedicated followers from the rubble and wreckage of the Holborn bomb three years ago.

As Orbison entered the room, the lights came on automatically and he approached the display cabinet where the three swords were proudly on show.

He stood there for a few moments, admiring them along with the numerous other items in his collection but the three swords together were definitely the most important things to him.

“Brother O'Dell, approach” Orbison then called towards the door whereupon a very shout stout young man in his early twenties appeared, dressed in the black gown of an Ixion Brotherhood junior follower.

“My Lord” O'Dell called as he bowed reverently towards Orbison, “To Life Immortal.”

“To Life Immortal my Brother” Orbison responded in kind before gesturing towards the swords, “There they are, the three swords, all together, the pride of the collection.”

“May I, My Lord?” O'Dell then requested.

“Of course, Brother, that is why you are here, it is your calling” Orbison confirmed, “You may proceed.”

“By Your Command, My Lord” O'Dell bowed once again before standing fully upright and removing the hood of his cloak whereupon he then approached the three swords before him.

Orbison watched with great interest as O'Dell took out a small magnifying device with a built in LED light that he then used to examine Tracy's sword in extreme close-up detail.

It was a good few minutes of intricate searching before O'Dell suddenly stopped and doubled back to a particular part of the sword hilt and moved in still closer for a more detailed look.

“Success Brother?” Orbison asked, the excitement tinged with tension obvious.

“Blessed Day My Lord, we have it!” O'Dell the declared with a smile.

“Is it all there?” Orbison then asked, practically dancing from one foot to the other in excitement.

“One third of it is, as we were informed by Brother Taylor's reliable sources My Lord” O'Dell confirmed before carefully replacing Tracy's sword onto its display stand and moving onto The Commander's “and it looks like we have the next part here too, same place as on the first one.”

“Now all we need is the third part...” Orbison remarked as O'Dell moved onto Jack's sword and went directly to the same location on the hilt where he had discovered what he was seeking on the other two.

“Oh, Blessed Day...” O'Dell then called, “We have them all.”

“Excellent, most excellent!” Orbison excitedly declared “In which case, we can proceed...”

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Deputy Divisional Commander Massimo 'Mos' Eisley looked up at the Transport Division coat of arms above the main entrance to the Division's headquarters building in Holborn and took a deep breath before stepping forward, showing his identification to the two army sentries on guard and then proceeding inside.

“Hi!” Eisley then called to the Receptionist “Erm, I am...”

“...our new Deputy Chief” the Receptionist confirmed from behind her desk with a welcoming warm smile, “Welcome, we have been expecting you” she then confirmed.

“Oh, thank you” Eisley responded, slightly taken by surprise.

“I am Alison by the way” the Receptionist formally introduced herself whereupon they shook hands, “Guardian of the front door irrespective of what the meat heads outside say.”

“Reassuring to know” Eisley agreed.

“Divisional Commander Regent is expecting you” Alison then confirmed, “Fourth floor, take the lifts down there” she indicated away to her right.

“Thank you” Eisley responded, now more relaxed.

“You're welcome, Sir” Alison confirmed before with smile, Eisley duly left her and headed for the lifts.

A minute or so later, Eisley was exiting the lift on the fourth floor and duly followed the signs towards the Command Offices located at the far end of the north corridor.

He paused for a moment outside the Divisional Commander's office door before knocking whereupon he heard a familiar voice from inside beckoning him in.

“Good morning, Sir” Eisley called as he walked into the office only to find Jack halfway up a stepladder, trying to hang a picture on the wall.

“Hi!” Jack called back just as he finally, at the fourth attempt manage to hang the picture straight and then stepped down whereupon they both looked at the photograph, a professional shot of the late Divisional Commander Jim Appleby in his formal dress uniform.

“Nice picture” Easley complimented.

“Yes, I thought so” Jack agreed, “I thought it only right and proper to have him hanging around, literally so to speak.”

“I met him a few times over the years” Easley admitted, “Good man I thought.”

“One of the best” Jack confirmed “I have some very big shoes to fill” he admitted.

“Indeed” Easley agreed.

“Oh, here” Jack then reached across to his desk, picked up a pair of uniform epaulettes and handed them across, “You'll need these.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Easley responded as he looked down at the metal lettering that read 'LT2' before putting them on his shoulders.

“I hope they are all right” Jack then explained, “Megan sowed the letters on last night using whatever spare bits I could find in the old biscuit tin full of odd uniform bits in the store cupboard, we are rapidly running out of T's.”

“They are great Sir” Easley confirmed.

“Do sit down, we have a lot to do” Jack then prompted.

“Any luck on your mission yesterday?” Easley then tentatively asked.

“Yes” Jack duly confirmed, “She is on her way, my opposite number in the northwest area section confirmed she should be arriving at Euston at about eleven o'clock.”

“Does anyone know yet?” Easley then inquired.

“Very few” Jack replied, “It's going to be a big surprise!”

“For some more than others I reckon” Easley added thoughtfully.

“Right, to business” Jack then clapped his hands together and sat down himself behind the desk, “The Yard are sending over your files later today, I have transferred your firearms licence and registered weapons to our lists and apart from finding you some desk space and most importantly of all, showing you where the best cup of tea and bacon sandwich can be found around here, we are pretty much good to go.”

“Does the team know about the changes here yet?” Easley then asked.

“Some have been briefed but we are going to do the big welcome speech in a few minutes in our main briefing room upstairs” Jack confirmed, “Like I said, we have a lot of work to do.”

“Any word yet on Appleby's death?” Easley inquired.

“Forensics are looking through the old station passageways but nothing much has come up” Jack confirmed, “He was hit over the back of the head with some sort of blunt object but whatever it was, it is nowhere to be found now, plus the two Underground Engineers who supposedly found the body, rang us up and then vanished don't seem to actually exist.”

“Huh?” Eislely responded.

“According to Engineering Services over at London Transport, there are no active cables or indeed any in service equipment in that area, there was no reason for either of them to be down there and none of their engineers have been recorded as having been sent down there in almost two years” Jack explained.

“I do enjoy a good mystery” Eislely remarked.

“So do I, but we also have another urgent matter to attend to” Jack ominously warned, “Now that I have been placed in charge, I am going to reopen the Holborn Bomb case as I reckon someone has been trying to get rid of Appleby for quite some time now and that was their first attempt, it may all be linked.”

“I thought the Holborn Bomb investigation got canned following orders from on high?” Eislely recalled, “Political pressure from whatever quango the Acting Prime Minister set up at the time if I recall.”

“Well remembered” Jack complimented his new deputy, “but with this new angle and a more sympathetic Prime Minister now back in Downing Street, I am exercising some emergency powers I have just happen to have granted myself and reopening the case.”

“That'll ruffle a few feathers” Eislely pointed out.

“Good” Jack eagerly responded, “I do like being a pain in the backside, and now I am the Chief, I get to do it with more style and power, your job is to watch that I don't step in 'owt I can't get out of.”

“You got it Sir” Eislely agreed.

“Oh, and err I can't get used to all this people calling me Sir bit” Jack then remarked, “Call me Jack or Guv or something” he then suggested.

“You've got it Guv” Eislely duly confirmed.

“Right then, let's go meet the team, shall we?” Jack declared as he stood up with Eislely following suit before they headed out of the office and then up the back stairs.

The Transport Division has always been a far smaller section of the Service than many of the other sections, especially when compared with the huge Metropolitan Division but it was formed of a close-knit dedicated team, practically an extended

family and many were gathered in the large Main Briefing Room on the top floor.

There were murmurs and whispers amongst the fifty or so officers present when Jack and Eisley arrived in the room, but these soon died down.

“Good morning, everyone” Jack called as he reached the front of the room and faced his audience whereupon he looked around and saw so many familiar faces, so many friends but still thought for a moment about those who were absent, lost and destined never to return.

“For those of you who don’t know yet, I will fill you all in on what we know so far” Jack then declared, “The body of our Guvnor, Divisional Commander Jim Appleby was discovered yesterday morning in the tunnels of the disused Aldwych Underground Station.”

There was an understandably sombre mood in the room as Jack continued.

“I can confirm that he was killed by a sharp blow to the back of the head and had probably been dead for almost two weeks” Jack then confirmed, “In the light of this news, the Prime Minister has appointed yours truly as Acting Divisional Commander of this Division and believe me I am just as surprised as you are” he then added.

Jack was pleased to see that, looking around the room, no one appeared to be in any way objecting to his appointment, so he carried on.

“Despite the dire situation we find ourselves in, that is this Service, this City and the country thanks to the tumultuous events of the last four or five years, we have a duty to perform, we need to keep going no matter what and I hope you will all support me as I settle into this role” Jack continued.

“Best man for the job, Guv!” one officer called from the back of the room to nods and murmurs of agreement throughout.

“Thanks Dave” Jack responded, “At this point I would like to introduce you to my Deputy” he then gestured towards Eisley to step forward, “Some of you may already know him, for those who don’t it gives me great pleasure to introduce Commander Massimo or Mos Eisley whom I have poached from the Metropolitan Division.”

“Good morning, everyone” Eisley called, receiving warm welcomes from the room in response.

“Please make him feel welcome, he is one of us, one of the family now” Jack called.

“Oh, does that mean I get invited to the Divisional Christmas Party?” Eisley joked.

“Absolutely” Jack confirmed with a smile, “First round is on you seeing as you are the new boy...”

“Thanks Guv!” Eisley responded amid laughter around the room.

“Right, to business” Jack then moved on, “I have personally intervened and insisted that the investigation into the death of our old Guvnor remains here in house, it happened on our watch, on our jurisdiction and to one of our own” he passionately called, “I shall be putting together a special investigation team over the next hour or so, I will personally head the inquiry and I also want to reopen the Holborn Bomb Attack files as I believe the two events may be connected.”

“There are going to be a few people in the corridors of power who won’t like that” one officer cautiously pointed out, “They shut the whole thing down pretty damn fast last time.”

“Yeah, well if anyone decides to play politics this time, they will have me to answer to” Jack determinedly pointed out, “And rest assured they will feel my wrath if they try to interfere again.”

“I am glad to have booked my ringside seat, Guv” Eisley remarked.

“Mos, I am putting you in charge of the Holborn Bomb investigation team” Jack then instructed, “We need all the files, evidence and statements released from whatever Government bunker they were sealed in, and we need them now, I want you to go through the whole lot with fresh eyes.”

“You got it Guv” Eisley agreed, eager to begin.

“For some reason, the whole affair was sat upon from a great height by person or persons unknown” Jack then continued “I want to know why, and I want the man who killed Connor Shelby and launched that bomb.”

“If it's there, I'll find it” Eisley confirmed.

“Meantime, I shall be taking charge of the Aldwych investigation” Jack announced, “and I am going to start with finding out why our old boss was down there in the first place and try and trace those two missing Underground Engineers.”

-----

Back at their apartment, Megan was reading the morning paper with large print headlines devoted to the alleged scandal involving the National Administrator General.

“Does anyone actually believe this crap?” she remarked to herself before turning several pages in rapid succession to locate some different news instead.

On page twelve she found a different article, by comparison with the Administrator General storyline, it was a tiny two paragraph story shoved in a corner but to her, it was deeply significant, reporting the discovery of the body of Divisional Commander Jim Appleby but giving little other detail.

“Oh...” Megan then exclaimed as she suddenly recalled something from many years earlier which prompted her to proceed in her electric chair across to her home office

desk located in the corner.

On the desk was an antique jewellery box, tatty and worn, not worth very much other than sentimental value. With care Megan removed the contents consisting mostly of her personal jewellery items, some old coins and a couple of safety pins kept in there for emergencies.

With the contents removed, she then turned it over and took off the bottom part to reveal a secret compartment built into the base.

From the compartment, a small black USB memory stick fell, landing in the palm of her hand, the same memory stick that Divisional Commander Appleby had given to her over five years earlier with strict instructions that were anything to happen to him, she was to give it to Jack.

In those intervening five years, so much had happened, the world had completely changed in ways no one would have imagined and, understandably she was wondering what to do now.

“If in doubt, seek advice” Megan then declared as she reached for the telephone on the desk and speed dialled a number before putting it on speakerphone.

The other end of that call was an office in the lower-level basement of a building in the centre of the City where, with the ringing of the telephone, its sole occupant stopped writing, carefully placed his gold pen down and answered the call.

“Sir Richard Crowthorne” he duly announced.

“Hi, it's Megan” she called, slightly hesitantly.

“Megan? Are you okay?” Sir Richard asked, clearly concerned.

“I have a little problem” Megan confirmed as she looked at the memory stick in her hand, “Jim Appleby left me a little something many years ago with instructions of what to do if a particular situation arises and it has.”

“Ah, you are the one who has it” Sir Richard responded, almost with a sense of relief.

“Huh?” Megan replied, understandably confused by his response.

“I am guessing it is a memory stick of some sort?” Sir Richard then ventured “We suspected for some time that Appleby had lodged a copy of his pet project files with someone, but we had no idea who.”

“I would have mentioned it earlier” Megan explained “but Appleby gave me strict instructions.”

“Oh, not your fault my dear” Sir Richard reassured her “Just doing your duty, very commendable.”



“So, do I give this to Jack as per instructions is my next question” Megan then explained, “Only with him being so high profile what with the promotion and so forth and the way the country has basically been shipped to hell in a handcart...”

“I fully understand your caution my dear” Sir Richard agreed, “Perhaps it would be a good idea to bring it in first, I think it is time we brought Jack into the Circle.”

“I agree” Megan confirmed “The chances are he is going to stumble into our little group sooner or later, we both know how tenacious and determined he is.”

“Quite” Sir Richard responded, “Very well, this evening, I will send over what you need and arrange the transport” he confirmed.

“Thank you, Sir,” Megan replied.

“No problem my dear” Sir Richard reassured her, “See you later.”

A few moments later after hanging up, Sir Richard swivelled around in his sumptuous office chair to look over at a number of framed photographs on his office wall before returning to the telephone and making a call.

“Barrett” Sir Richard then called as soon as his call was answered, “Code Twelve pick up for this evening, I need you to organise it.”

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“Right ladies and gents, gather around” Jack called as he entered Operations Room B on the third floor of the Holborn building, leading a number of officers drawn from across the Transport Division who proceeded to sit around the large meeting table.

He waited until the half dozen officers were settled before taking his seat at the head of the table and beginning the briefing.

“Thank you all for coming at such short notice” Jack began, “The six of you have been personally selected from the Transport Division across the Greater London and Southeast area” he explained “Some of you probably know each other, others are new in town so I think let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves, shall we?”

He then indicated to the first officer to his left, a young woman to begin the introductions.

“I always seem to go first” she remarked with a smile, “Err hello everyone” she then slightly nervously began “I am Lieutenant Melanie Grant, specialist in detail analysis and when I have not got my nose stuck in a history book, I am a patrol officer based at Kingston upon Thames.”

“Oh, the posh bit of town...” Jack jokingly remarked.

“Hardly Sir” Grant replied.

“Hello, I am Lieutenant Commander Art Cornell” the next officer introduced himself  
“I am based at Southwark and always seem to be the nearest Transport Division officer on call whenever there is a one under on the railway network, hence my nickname of Doctor Death...”

“You can't be very squeamish then?” Jack asked.

“Err no Sir” Cornell confirmed.

“Good, because I am, so if any icky stuff is encountered, you will be going in first” Jack informed him.

“Hi” the third officer around the table then called when Jack indicated him to proceed, “I am Lieutenant Commander Ryan Russell, also from Southwark and I am the one who usually deals with the mess caused by the mess my colleague Doctor Death here is dealing with!”

“I like this” Jack remarked with a smirk, “Next...” he then prompted.

“Oh, is it me?” the fourth officer responded, “Err right, hello everyone, I am Commander Sol Baxter, normally to be found behind the main control room desk over at Caledonian Road so it is nice to be let out for some fresh air.”

“Commander Baxter and I have worked together before” Jack added to an agreeing nod from Baxter, “He is our top man when it comes to communications, a technical genius which is why I have asked him to join us today as I am pretty sure we will wind up with communication difficulties at some point.”

“Thank you for inviting me Sir” Baxter confirmed.

“Hello everyone” the fifth officer then announced at Jack's prompt, “I am Commander William Tarbett, specialist surveillance is my game, based out of Baker Street for the last five years but active all over the city on various undercover operations targeting specific crimes, etcetera.”

“Welcome one and all” Jack then called, “You all bring a specialism to the table, some of you are still pretty new to the job, others more experienced veterans if you don't mind me calling you that.”

“Not at all Sir” Baxter confirmed with a smirk.

“Okay, we all know why we are here” Jack then continued, “We are going to find out what happened to our old Guvnor, who killed him and why” he announced.

“To do this” he then continued “we need to break this down into segments, firstly there is Appleby's last movements from when he left here at approximately ten thirty on the morning of Thursday the sixteenth which is where the trail goes cold so, start pulling every bit of CCTV you can find, we need to know where he went, who he met, what he did.”

The officers gathered were all making copious handwritten notes as the briefing continued.

“The second aspect we need to concentrate on is tracing and analysing anyone and everyone that Appleby has come into contact with over the last couple of years who may hold some kind of grudge, have an axe to grind or just didn't appreciate him poking his nose in their business” Jack then continued.

“That could be a heck of a long list” Tarbett ominously warned.

“Quite probably” Jack agreed “but I am willing to bet that somewhere, he rubbed somebody up the wrong way and his death was the result. I know it is a bit needle in haystack time, but the answer has to be there somewhere, go back further if you need to.”

“Yes Sir” Tarbett confirmed.

“The next aspect to investigate is where his body was found and the circumstances surrounding it” Jack carried on, “Was he actually killed there or somewhere else, why the dark forgotten bowels of a disused Underground Station? Is there a significance?”

“Who discovered the body in the first instance Sir?” Cornell asked.

“Supposedly he was found by two London Underground engineers, but they seem to have vanished” Jack explained “London Underground know nothing about them, there was no active equipment or cabling in the area where Appleby was found which means there was no reason for them to be there in the first place so, I want these two guys found and quickly, that is your job Lieutenant Grant.”

“Yes Sir” Grant confirmed as she made further notes, clearly eager to get to work.

“Knock on doors, make phone calls, kick over rocks, piss off whoever you need to” Jack then instructed, “do whatever you need to do to find them and bring them in,”

“I have a couple of contacts over at Transport for London who owe me some favours, I'll give them a call” Grant confirmed.

“They left behind a toolbox at the scene” Jack then added “The Forensics Unit are sending it over along with Appleby's effects and the latest lab results within the hour” he confirmed “Make sure that you take delivery personally, I don't want any evidence to go wandering off into the sunset either through our negligence or more likely through the interference of third parties.”

“I will guard it with my life Sir” Lieutenant Grant determinedly confirmed.

“I am going to re-examine the Aldwych scene this afternoon” Jack then declared “Any of you who needs to get up to speed with the setting of this little conundrum, feel free to come along, we will meet outside the Strand entrance at two o'clock, bring a torch and I hope no one here is afraid of spiders...”

“Is there any possibility of accessing Appleby’s personal files?” Baxter asked.

“I have got Commander Fuller over at New Scotland Yard working on it” Jack confirmed “Unfortunately it seems his personal files are encrypted which means that whatever he was working on off the books is still a mystery to us at the moment.”

“Unfortunate” Baxter then commented, “I reckon some of the answers to this may very well be found in those files.”

“Cross your fingers, as soon as Commander Fuller has something he will let me know straight away” Jack then checked his watch “in fact speaking of which, I need to be over at the Yard in one hour.”

“Has anyone heard who the new Administrator General is going to be yet?” Grant then asked around the room.

“News media keep suggesting that an interim AG is being put in place, the Police & Crime Commissioner would you believe?” Baxter remarked.

“That woman couldn’t run a bath let alone the National Police & Security Service” Grant responded, “Must be the usual speculative crap the papers are always making up.”

“All I can say ladies and gents is that the matter is in hand” Jack evasively reassured them, “You’ll find out soon enough.”

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“Come in!” Taylor called in response to the polite knock at his study door whereupon it opened and a short, stout and formidable looking woman in her late forties entered.

“Mr Taylor, good morning” the woman formally called.

“Ah, Harriet my dear!” Taylor enthusiastically called as he got up out of his seat and went around the desk to shake her warmly by the hand, “Welcome, welcome!”

The woman was Harriet Burgette, the duly elected Police & Crime Commissioner for Greater London, an initiative set up by the now departed Acting Prime Minister during his chaotic two years in office that had left behind a seemingly permanent legacy of red tape, contradictory legislation, bureaucracy and chaos, all in fact part of the grand plans of Taylor’s Cato Group.

“Thank you, Mr Taylor” Burgette responded before they both sat down, either side of the desk facing each other.

“So, you know what is happening my dear?” Taylor then asked, the anticipation of what was coming almost too much to contain.

“Indeed Sir” Burgette confirmed, “With the departure later today of the Acting

Administrator General, I am to execute Clause 55 of the Emergency Powers Act and assume command of the National Police & Security Service as the new National Administrator General.”

“Exciting times” Taylor then remarked, “We have been building up to this phase of our operation for five years now” he recalled, “Mind you, having an easily manipulated imbecile of a Prime Minister and a hugely damaging pandemic at the same time were merely the icing on the cake, we could have not wished for a better combination of events to help our cause.”

“What are my orders Sir?” Burgette then asked.

“As the new Administrator General, you will report directly to The Committee but continue to ensure that the Service is buried under so much red tape that it effectively burns itself out under the pressure” Taylor explained.

“Effectively undermining it from within” Burgette summarised.

“Exactly, my dear” Taylor agreed with a broad smile, “We will make sure the Service is kept busy over the next couple of weeks, all you have to do is saddle them with so much bureaucracy and red tape that they effectively give up, that is when we send in the military, and we take full control.”

“Many of the officers on the front line are deeply loyal to the Service Sir” Burgette then pointed out, “They may not accept me as their new Chief easily.”

“They don’t have to, that’s the beauty of it” Taylor confirmed “I want to see internal division, conflict, the Service tear itself apart from within. Morale is reportedly already pretty low; you can steamroller it still lower until it breaks.”

“When do I waltz in and take over?” Burgette then asked.

“The Prime Minister is supposed to be visiting New Scotland Yard in just under an hour” Taylor checked his watch carefully “and that will be your cue to waltz on in there, show the paperwork we shall provide you with, move on in and make yourself at home.”

“By Your Command...” Burgette duly agreed.

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Two patrol officers from the Transport Division watched as the train forming the 10:38 West Coast Railways arrival from Glasgow via Carlisle glided into platform seven of London Euston mainline railway station.

Neither of the two officers knew why they were there exactly, only that they had received a request from headquarters in Holborn to meet an unspecified VIP off that specific train and escort them through the station to a car that would be waiting outside.

“So, who do you reckon Dave?” the first Transport Division officer asked his colleague as they both watched the train come to a perfect stop six feet short of the buffer stops.

“Some sort of celebrity maybe?” the second Transport Division Officer suggested, “Can’t be a politician or a dignitary, that would be a VIP Protection Division job.”

“Good point” the first officer agreed as the door hustle alarm sounded, the orange indicator lights on the sides of the eleven carriages illuminated and the passenger doors began to open.

The two officers were stood in front of the first passenger door immediately behind the leading driving end where the First Class section was located.

“Holy...” the first officer remarked in amazement as the door in front of them slid open and revealed Tracy standing there, resplendent in her full dress uniform.

“Morning guys” Tracy called with a smile as she stepped off the train onto the platform where the two officers quickly got over the shock of seeing her, regained their composure and stood to attention, saluting.

“Good morning, Ma’am” the two officers immediately called.

“Err, no one told you it was me coming, did they?” Tracy then awkwardly concluded.

“No Ma’am” the second officer confirmed, “Just a VIP that we had to meet and escort to your car” he then explained.

“In which case gentlemen, lead on” Tracy then urged.

“Yes Ma’am” the two officers confirmed before they headed off, one either side of Tracy as they proceeded off the platform and through onto the bustling concourse.

This was the first time Tracy had been in London in over a year, not much had really changed at first glance but looking closer revealed a noticeably larger military presence all around, people being stopped and checked at random and an overall atmosphere of fear, suppression and control.

A few people on the concourse noticed as Tracy and her two escorting officers passed through but overall, she went generally unobserved as they headed for the west exit.

Tracy’s car was waiting for her in Eversholt Street just outside the west exit of the station and it was as she stepped into the daylight that she recognised a familiar face waiting for her.

“Commander Kinderley” Tracy called as she approached her official driver, an old friend.

“Administrator General” Kinderley responded in kind, lowering his head in respect momentarily, “Your chariot awaits” he indicated the late model black Ford Mondeo

saloon car, only the extra aerial on the roof and the discrete extra blue flashing lights marking it out as being any different from any other example of the type on the roads.

“Thanks Terry” Tracy called as Kinderley opened the rear passenger door and she got inside whilst one of the Transport Division officers duly handed over her bags which he then put in the boot.

Kinderley then returned to the driver’s seat and started the powerful engine along with the blue flashing lights.

“Dave” the first Transport Division officer remarked to his colleague as they watched Tracy’s car depart with an accompaniment of four Security Service motorcycles in close escort, front and behind, “I think things are about to get interesting..”

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“WHAT!!” Taylor responded, a mix of shock and anger exploding from the normally placid and calm man.

The caller then confirmed the news that they had just delivered, that Tracy Caverner-Regent was returning to her old post of National Administrator General, a revelation that put a major spanner in the works of his carefully crafted plans.

“Who the hell authorised this?!?” Taylor then demanded to know before being told the answer.

“Damm it!!” he then responded, “Right, that’s it!” he then declared, “Advise the Committee, I want the Prime Minister’s wings well and truly clipped. Any powers she still has, make sure she is stripped of them right away!!”

Taylor listened for a few moments as the caller confirmed his instructions.

“See to it at once” Taylor then reconfirmed, “We move...”

As soon as he had hung up the telephone, Taylor could be seen to be furious still, cursing and snarling in anger at this news before reaching for the telephone again.

“This is Number One” he then called as soon as his call was answered, “alert Burgette right away, we may have a problem....”

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Tracy was reading through some files whilst sat in the back of the car when something on the radio caught her attention and made her put the papers down and listen more intently.

“Terry, turn that up, will you?” she then asked.

“Yes Ma’am” Kinderley confirmed as he turned up the volume and the messages that were being exchanged became far more audible.

“...I repeat, any unit in the area, we have a live shooter in the street” came the urgent sounding call from a female Metropolitan Division patrol officer, “Unknown description tall individual in a full haz-mat suit, semi-automatic firearms and firing indiscrimi... Jesus!!” the transmission was suddenly punctuated by the sound of rapid gunfire which cut off the caller in mid-sentence.

Tracy immediately responded by leaning forward between the front seats and grabbing the radio set in order to answer the call.

“Where are you?” Tracy called over the radio.

“Part of the way along Haymarket, just south of Piccadilly Circus” the officer confirmed with more gunfire apparent in the background, “Can you help? The Army guys have buggered off and left us in the shit with this lunatic! Gerry, get your bloody head down, for Christ’s sake!”

“Hang tight, help is on the way” Tracy confirmed before looking over at Kinderley, “Take the next left here and burn rubber!”

“You got it Ma’am!” Kinderley confirmed as he executed a handbrake turn and turned sharply to the left, leaving the four motorcycle escorts trailing in his wake.

Kinderley did not need directions, he already knew the city very well and the sight in the distance as they approached of a vehicle clearly on fire just beyond Piccadilly Circus meant they were most definitely heading in the right direction.

“I think this is the place Ma’am” Kinderley confirmed as he braked sharply to a halt just short of the burning barricade of three vehicles, two taxis and the remnants of a Security Service van.

“What the hell...?” Tracy remarked as she got out of the car and surveyed the scene where an individual could be seen in the centre of the road some distance ahead, dressed from head to toe in a bright yellow haz-mat suit and carrying numerous weapons which he was firing indiscriminately in all directions.

“Where are the Army guys then?” Kinderley asked.

“A bloody good question Terry” Tracy readily agreed as she drew her weapon from its holster and checked it, “Requisition those four motorbike officers and anyone else you can round up and get this area completely sealed off.”

“Yes Ma’am” Kinderley confirmed before setting off away from the scene to see what he could do.

Scanning around, Tracy managed to spot the officer who had made the urgent call over the radio a couple of minutes earlier, taking cover along with three others behind a badly damaged red London bus.

“Did someone call for backup?” Tracy remarked as she joined them where they all



looked somewhat stunned at her arrival.

“Erm, yes” the officer who had made the call confirmed “Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent Ma’am” she introduced herself, “One of the few remaining members of the thin blue line around here” she then admitted.

“And our friend over there?” Tracy indicated the gunman, ducking a bit further down as more random gunfire rang out, some of it ricocheting off the bus they were hiding behind.

“Apparently he walked into McDonalds, demanded a burger and then started shooting the place up Ma’am” Brent explained, “We got here within a minute or two of the first call to find he had moved on to shooting the shit out of everything in the street instead, which unfortunately, also included us.”

“Where are the Army guys then?” Tracy asked, “I thought their remit was to support us in countering terrorist lunatics like this?”

“They told us, just before they retreated to the other side of Piccadilly and left us to it that apparently they are not permitted to intercede once we are on the scene as it is not their jurisdiction and the correct risk assessments had not been carried out” Brent confirmed.

“No wonder this country is going to hell in a hand cart” Tracy remarked.

“Yes Ma’am” Brent readily agreed.

“Right then” Tracy decided it was time to take charge, “You two” she indicated two of the officers “Join forces with the guys that Commander Kinderley over there is rounding up and keep this end of the street sealed off.”

“Yes Ma’am” the two officers confirmed before carefully retreating and heading off.

“Lieutenant Commander Brent and...” Tracy then looked at the remaining officer.

“Lieutenant Gary Long” the officer confirmed.

“Come with me” Tracy then called.

“Shouldn’t we complete the official risk assessment first?” Long then asked, clearly confused.

“Gary!!” Brent responded with obvious frustration.

“You are not serious, are you Lieutenant?” Tracy asked with a disbelieving look.

“It was the specific instructions of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Ma’am” Long initially tried to explain.

“Let’s just get on with it the old-fashioned way, shall we Lieutenant?” Tracy then

urged.

“Shoot first and ask questions later?” Brent asked.

“Exactly Lieutenant Commander” Tracy confirmed, “I commend your attitude; you’ll go far in this business.”

“Whoa!” Brent then responded as a nearby vehicle that had been hit by gunfire a few minutes earlier began to explode as the fire that was consuming it took hold and intensified.

“Right, let’s use that” Tracy declared, realising that the burning car was now providing suitable cover and distraction, “Brent, take Mr Risk Assessment here and make your way down the right hand side of the street, I will take the left, then we close in on him.”

“Yes Ma’am” Brent enthusiastically confirmed as she checked her firearm.

“I still think we should have risk assessed this...” Long quietly suggested.

“Where did we find him?” Tracy asked Brent aside.

“He is one of these new Graduate apprentice programme recruits” Brent explained, almost embarrassed about it, “Another of the Police & Crime Commissioners new-fangled stupid ideas.”

“Err, right...” Tracy responded, well and truly unimpressed before taking a further look down the road towards the gunman who was now shooting up a phone box, apparently just for fun.

“Don’t worry Ma’am, I will make sure he doesn’t get himself shot” Brent reassured her.

“Okay, let’s go” Tracy then urged.

The gunman was still casually strolling down the centre of the street, randomly opening fire on anything that took his fancy.

“Wakey wakey everyone!!” he then called with a maniacal laugh, “The Revolution is here!!” he declared before once again randomly opening fire, this time in the air.

Whilst he was making his proclamations, Tracy was discreetly making her way down the east side of the street as Brent and Long headed down the opposite side.

At the same time, Kinderley was bringing a further group of armed officers around to the opposite end of the street using the cover of the surrounding buildings.

Meanwhile, the gunman opened fire once more, riddling a black taxi with multiple rounds and then laughing manically once more before releasing the now empty magazine which clattered to the ground.

Tracy looked directly across at Brent and nodded whereupon they moved in on the target.

“Freeze!” Tracy called as she stepped out of the shadows, her gun trained directly ahead at the gunman’s head.

The gunman looked over his left shoulder and raised his hands slightly but then realised he was also now in the line of sight of Brent and Long who were covering him from the other side.

“Ballsy...” the gunman remarked with a smirk but then noticed the end of the street ahead, as a large number of Security Service officers moved in and blocked the road ahead.

“Give it up, you have had your fun, but now you have nowhere to go” Tracy strongly advised, not taking her eye or her aim off the gunman for even a split second.

“The Revolution is here, and you...” the Gunman began.

“...are not invited, yes I know” Tracy finished the sentence, “Now, be a good boy and put the guns down, slowly.”

“I am not afraid to die, are you?” the Gunman then looked around directly at Tracy.

“Nope...” Tracy honestly admitted which was when the Gunman made a move towards her only to be suddenly stopped when Brent reacted, opening fire and striking him in the legs, sending him to the ground where she quickly stepped in and kicked away his weapons.

“Life’s a bitch...” Tracy sarcastically remarked to the Gunman.

“...and then you get shot by one” Brent added with a certain sense of satisfaction.

Long looked on in disbelief as Tracy and Brent checked the Gunman over for any more weapons before taking an arm each and hauling him back up and then unceremoniously slamming him face first into the bonnet of an adjacent car.

“There you go Lieutenant” Tracy remarked to Long as he continued to look on in bewilderment, “Risk assess that!”

Within a few moments, reinforcements moved in to take away the Gunman whilst the Fire Brigade were also now allowed into the area to tackle the various burning vehicles and street furniture.

“Lieutenant Long” Tracy called, “How long have you been an officer?” she asked.

“Eighteen months Ma’am” Long confirmed.

“Really?” Tracy responded with some sense of surprise, “Well in that case if you wish

to make it to two years, I strongly suggest you buck up your ideas pretty damm quick” she then recommended.

“Err, yes Ma’am” Long reluctantly agreed.

“Dismissed Lieutenant” Tracy then called whereupon with a brief nervous salute, Long swiftly left the scene.

“Oh, I despair...” Brent remarked.

“He’ll be all right” Tracy reassured her, “Still a bit wet behind the ears, he just needs more experience and to find his niche speciality.”

“I hope you are right Ma’am” Brent responded, “because if you are not, he is going to get his ass blown off sooner or later.”

“Join me...” Tracy then motioned to the Lieutenant Commander whereupon Brent, somewhat surprised, proceeded to walk with her back towards the car.

“Nice work Lieutenant Commander” Tracy then complimented, “How long have you been in the job?” she then asked.

“Four years Ma’am” Brent confirmed, still a little in awe at walking alongside Tracy, someone who she has always seen as a role model, hero and almost mythically God like.

“You handled yourself well, didn’t stand for any nonsense from Mr Risk Assessment over there and acted decisively when you needed to” Tracy complimented her, “Well done.”

“Thank you, Ma’am,” Brent replied, a little taken aback.

“In case you were wondering why I am back in town” Tracy then went on to explain as they reached her car, “I am taking back the top seat again.”

“That is the best news I have heard in months” Brent responded.

“I want to put together a small team of advisory officers” Tracy then continued, “What I am looking for are people who have been on the front end throughout all the recent chaos who can provide me with insight into what has really been going on, if you know what I mean.”

“I think so, Ma’am” Brent agreed.

“I like you” Tracy remarked, turning to face her with a knowing smile, “You’re trouble...”

Brent smiled knowingly in response...

“Do you fancy a secondment to New Scotland Yard for a bit?” Tracy then asked, “I

would love to have you on my team if you are interested.”

“Well, erm, yes Ma’am, I would be honoured” Brent replied, still not quite believing what she was hearing.

“Good” Tracy responded, “Get back to your Nick, freshen up and then come over to the Yard at about twelve thirty.”

“Yes Ma’am, thank you” Brent responded.

“See you later” Tracy then called as she got back in her car and Kinderley duly started the engine.

“Wow...” Brent responded as she watched Tracy’s car with its escort of motorcycles depart.

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Jack was about to leave for New Scotland Yard when the telephone on his desk rang and he double backed to answer it.

“Regent” Jack responded just as Easley politely knocked on the door and he was gestured in.

Easley waited patiently whilst Jack took the call.

“All right, I will be down in a minute, thanks” Jack then confirmed before hanging up.

“Problem boss?” Easley asked.

“Isn’t there always?” Jack responded semi-sarcastically.

“Yeah...” Easley agreed.

“Apparently there is a Security Service Courier downstairs with a package for me” Jack then explained.

“Have you been buying stuff off eBay again?” Easley then asked.

“No, not since this morning” Jack confirmed, “Anyway, it’s probably nothing. What can I do for you Mos?” he then asked.

“My team have started working through the material we can find concerning the Holborn Explosion, three years ago” Easley confirmed, “Trouble is, we don’t have much to go on.”

“I figured as much” Jack responded.

“Requests put into various secure archives seem to meet with the usual requests for forms signed in triplicate, sent in, sent back, lost, found, subjected to public inquiry,

etcetera, etcetera, ad-infinitum” Eislely explained.

“The old Westminster Two Step” Jack agreed, “A dance as old as the hills and twice as irritating.”

“I’ll keep my team nagging away at any and all who will listen” Eislely confirmed, “A couple of things have come up though by using some good old fashioned ingenuity and approaching things from a different angle, for one thing, an old London Underground CCTV archive tape from that day came up with this” he then handed across a yellow envelope.

“Who is this dude?” Jack then asked as he looked at the photographs contained inside, all showing the same individual.

“It’s your bomber, or at the very least a ‘Person of Interest’ as they say these days” Eislely confirmed, “It turns out that when The Committee sent in the cleaners to mop up everything to do with the case and spirit it away, they missed this. At the late Divisional Commander Appleby’s personal request, the Station Manager over the road has been sitting on it ever since, waiting for the proverbial rainy day.”

“Can I take these?” Jack then asked, indicating the photographs.

“Of course” Eislely confirmed, “I am having copies made, lots of them, just in case.”

“Very wise” Jack agreed, “I had best get going” he then checked his watch.

“What about your courier with the package?” Eislely then reminded him.

“Oh, yes” Jack remembered, “Let’s go and see what that is all about.”

A few moments later they arrived on the ground floor, exiting the lift, and heading towards the Reception Area.

“Oh, one odd thing came up” Eislely then recalled, “You remember that multiple traffic collision I was attending yesterday when you rolled up?”

“The major fender bender at Marble Arch and the attendant army meat heads?” Jack responded.

“The same” Eislely confirmed, “I got a call from an old mate of mine over in the Traffic Division, it turns out that glitch in the traffic lights controlling the area wasn’t a glitch after all, someone deliberately hacked into the central traffic control system and had a little play with the lights.”

“Are you saying it was deliberate?” Jack responded, intrigued by this revelation.

“It would appear so” Eislely responded, “I have asked my friend to keep me informed if anything else turns up. With everything else crazy that has been happening around here lately, I thought this might be worth keeping an eye on.”

“I agree” Jack confirmed as they reached the Reception Desk where the Security Service Internal Courier was waiting with a large maroon plastic archive crate.

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent?” the Courier called.

“That’s me” Jack confirmed.

“Special Delivery for you” the Courier indicated the crate.

“Who from?” Jack then asked as he took the clipboard from the Courier and looked at the official despatch paperwork which caused him to raise an eyebrow in surprise.

“Divisional Commander James Appleby” the Courier confirmed.

“Huh?” Easley responded, “How does a dead guy send a parcel?”

“Quite simple really” the Courier explained, “He lodged it with the secure section of the National Archives at Kew with specific instructions for it to be delivered only when his death was confirmed by The Service.”

“Where do I sign?” Jack then asked whereupon the Courier indicated two boxes on the form which he then proceeded to sign.

“There you go Sir” the Courier then pushed the crate across to him.

“Thanks” Jack confirmed before the Courier duly departed.

“What do you think is in it?” Easley asked.

“Sandwiches, cake, socks, his life’s work?” Jack wondered, “Who knows?”

“You are due at The Yard in twenty minutes, Guv” Easley then reminded him.

“You’re right” Jack confirmed as he checked his watch, “Take this up to my office” he then indicated the crate, “Don’t let anyone anywhere near it, guard it with your life and we will take a look through it when I get back.”

“You got it, Guv” Easley readily agreed.

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“Hmm, so much for low key...” Sir Richard mused as he walked around the corner off Embankment and proceeded towards the front entrance of the recently relocated New Scotland Yard, now located on the north bank of the River Thames but still with the famous rotating three-sided sign on guard outside.

The reason for Sir Richard’s remark was the large throng of press gathered behind safety barriers directly opposite the main entrance.

As the officer on duty at the main entrance nodded in respect, Sir Richard proceeded through the automatic doors and inside where he found the main Reception Area extremely busy.

“Oooh, this is a bit posh, isn’t it?” Sir Richard remarked as he looked around the bright, modern airy reception area, this being the first time he had stepped through the door since the Security Service relocated to the new building from the old 1960’s site in Broadway just over a year earlier.

“Well, well, well” came a familiar voice from across the Reception area, “If it isn’t the ghost of Christmas past!” which caused Sir Richard to look towards the main Reception Desk and see Janice Cassini beaming back at him.

“Always nice to see a familiar face” Sir Richard responded with a smile as he went up to the desk and they shook hands, “How are you settling into the new digs?” he then asked.

“Very nicely, thank you Sir Richard” Janice confirmed, “Not only did I get to design the Reception Desk to my own personal specification; I also got to take the old one home as a souvenir.”

“I bet your husband loved that when you brought it home” Sir Richard jokingly remarked.

“It is rather cluttering up the garage I admit” Janice agreed, “but I couldn’t let it wind up in the skip when the builders moved in and gutted the old place.”

“Ah, there he is” Sir Richard then remarked as he looked up at the wall above the Reception Desk where there were pictures on proud display of various notable senior officers from over two hundred and fifty years of law enforcement in London going right back the original Bow Street Runners of 1749, the most recent photograph being of The Commander, Sir Edward Regent who was killed in the St. James’s Park bomb attack over five years earlier.

“Well, it wouldn’t be the same without him watching over us” Janice admitted to which Sir Richard nodded in agreement, “Rumour has it, his ghost has been seen in the corridors of the top floor of the old building late at night.”

“Wouldn’t surprise me in the slightest” Sir Richard remarked before looking around at the gathered officers and other dignitaries that were progressively filling the Reception Area, “So, I take it you have heard you know who is on her way back?” he then asked.

“Rumours started circulating this morning” Janice explained, “Then there was an announcement by The Committee that the Police & Crime Commissioner was taking over but then we heard about the firearms incident in Haymarket about fifteen minutes ago and we knew she was back in town for certain.”

“Not exactly the low-key arrival she was hoping for though” Sir Richard then remarked, “Half the Service seems to have turned up.”



“The Prime Minister is due in a few minutes as well” Janice then added, “Since the press heard about Administrator General Caverner-Regent’s antics over in Haymarket, I think it is safe to say the cat was well and truly out of the bag, so the PM is going to make a big thing of it after all.”

“Speaking of Security Service royalty...” Sir Richard then remarked as Jack appeared through the automatic doors, looking somewhat perplexed himself at all the activity and approached the Reception Desk.

“Divisional Commander, good morning” Janice greeted Jack.

“Hi!” Jack replied, “Do you know, I still haven’t got used to that yet, heck I never got used to being called Lieutenant Commander when I got my previous promotion.”

“With great power comes great responsibility” Sir Richard casually reminded him.

“...and great piles of paperwork” Jack added with a wry smile.

“That is what deputies are for” Sir Richard quietly advised with a smirk.

“Right, thank you” Janice called over the telephone before hanging up, “Stand by your beds everyone, the Prime Minister is arriving now.”

“Be still my beating wallet...” Sir Richard dismissively responded.

“Did I miss anything?” Commander Simon Fuller asked as he joined the others.

“The Prime Minister looks pretty fed up” Jack commented as, amid a cacophony of questions and camera flashes, she appeared through the doors, “She is getting it in the neck from all sides lately it seems.”

“Is she here yet?” the Prime Minister asked as she joined them.

“Still a few minutes away, Prime Minister” Fuller confirmed, “She ran into a little bother on the way over from Euston Station it would seem.”

“Why am I not surprised?” Jack remarked, rolling his eyes upwards a little.

“It is almost like we are back to normal already” Fuller added before looking down at Jack’s uniform with a quizzical expression.

“Something wrong?” Jack asked, seeing Fuller’s slightly concerned look.

“Where is your ceremonial sword?” Fuller asked which rather took Jack by surprise.

“Lost it when the Holborn bomb happened” Jack explained, “It was in my office, but they never recovered it from the rubble, so it’s probably crushed in a pile of waste aggregate under a bypass by now.”

“Yeah, probably...” Fuller reluctantly agreed.

“Hey, isn’t that...?” Jack motioned towards the door where Burgette could be seen marching in through the doors, a look of anger on her face and making straight for the Prime Minister and the others.

“Oh, here we go...” Sir Richard discreetly commented.

“Prime Minister!!” Burgette called directly, “I must protest in the strongest possible terms about your actions!”

“I’m sorry, you will have to narrow it down a bit” the Prime Minister tersely replied, “Or is this one of your general authority challenging rants?”

“Madam!” Burgette rudely replied “You know *exactly* what I am talking about!”

“Oooh, catfight!” Sir Richard coolly remarked with a wry smile, “Break out the popcorn, this should be good...”

“I have a suggestion” the Prime Minister then responded, “Why don’t you stand over there in the corner where you can seethe to yourself all you want whilst I handle the matter at hand?”

“This isn’t over, not by a long shot!” Burgette declared, reluctantly standing down as she was about to be intercepted by the Prime Minister’s personal bodyguards and then wisely thought better of it.

“Sorry, pardon me” Jack remarked as Burgette bumped into him as she was beating her retreat.

“Oh, it’s you” Burgette disdainfully remarked to which Jack merely smiled in response which was when she noticed his uniform, “Who the hell made a pain in the backside like you a Divisional Commander?” she then demanded to know.

“Your best friend over there” Jack sarcastically responded, indicating the Prime Minister who merely smiled sarcastically in response.

“For Christ’s sake...” Burgette remarked to herself in disbelief as she stormed off.

“Always a pleasure...” Jack responded with a smirk before returning to the main group.

“I see she was delighted about your promotion then” Sir Richard sarcastically remarked.

“It may just be some sort of sixth sense” Jack replied, “but I get the distinct impression she doesn’t like me very much.”

“Her loss...” Sir Richard reassured him.

“She’s coming!” Janice then called out which saw the gathered officials, officers and other dignitaries make their way towards the front and look out of the windows that oversee the north side Thames Embankment road.

“You know Terry, I could have got the bus” Tracy remarked as her driver turned sharply off Westminster Bridge onto The Embankment with the motorcycle escort in full siren and lights mode.

Tracy felt a little embarrassed by the, in her opinion, rather over the top arrival at New Scotland Yard but with the press getting wind of her return coupled with her presence at the Haymarket shooter incident a short while earlier, the secret was well and truly out.

With pure precision, Terry turned left and braked the car to a halt perfectly in line with the main entrance whereupon he got out and went around to the rear passenger door where a cacophony of camera shutters and calls from the press accompanied Tracy emerging from the car, her full dress uniform glinting in the sunshine in the shadow of the famous revolving three sided sign.

“Well, I’ll be damned!” one Security Service officer on duty, keeping the press pack back remarked on seeing Tracy, “Angel One is back...”

Tracy chose to say nothing to the press other than to pose by the sign for photographs for a few moments before with an acknowledging wave she then headed inside.

There was a round of applause and even some cheers when Tracy came through the doors which made her look on with a mixture of surprise and slight embarrassment.

“Erm, thank you” she then responded before approaching the Reception Desk.

“Administrator General” Janice then called, “Welcome back.”

“Thank you, Janice,” Tracy responded, “It’s good to know that some things still are the same.”

“New building, new desk, same old me” Janice gleefully confirmed.

“Administrator General, I cannot begin to tell you how much I am pleased to see you return” the Prime Minister then declared.

“Before we continue, I have decided to drop the Administrator General title and reinstate the more traditional title of Chief Superintendent” Tracy then announced, “I do hope this does not meet with any objections?”

“Fine by me” the Prime Minister readily agreed.

“So, I have been studying the reports and, dear God we have a lot of work to do” Tracy then remarked, “For a starter, what the hell happened to our specialist armed response teams?”

“Disbanded following recommendations enforced by The Committee” Sir Richard confirmed “Not in line with a conducive policy of peaceful national unity, or some such cobblers” he then explained.

“I think I need to meet this Committee and set them straight on a few things” Tracy determinedly responded.

“Oh, no one sees the Committee” the Prime Minister explained, “Not even me.”

“I bet I could wangle an invitation” Jack suggested.

“I wouldn't advise it young man” Sir Richard cautioned.

“Prime Minister!!” came the strongly protesting voice of Burgette from across the room.

“Oh no, not her again...” Sir Richard remarked, rolling his eyes upwards.

“Who's this clown?” Tracy asked as Burgette came storming across towards them.

“What do you want now?” the Prime Minister tersely responded.

“This is Ms Burgette, the Police & Crime Commissioner” Sir Richard discreetly confirmed to Tracy.

“She doesn't like me very much” Jack then added.

“Once again, I must strongly protest at the way you are riding roughshod over official procedure and undermining the integrity of my office!” Burgette then complained.

“Hah! Integrity, that's a good one...” Sir Richard remarked to a glower in response from Burgette before she continued her ranting; only stopping just short of the point where the Prime Minister's bodyguards would have physically intervened.

“Administrator General” Burgette then addressed Tracy directly, “I am Harriett Burgette, the duly elected Police & Crime Commissioner and I am in charge here.”

“Tracy Caverner-Regent” Tracy formally introduced herself, “Chief Superintendent, Commander in Chief and your worst nightmare” she then casually declared.

“Oh, this is getting good...” Sir Richard remarked aside to Jack as they and the other dignitaries and officers gathered watched with interest.

“All senior appointments to this dinosaur of a Service are the sole responsibility of my Office and at the designation of The Committee” Burgette then attempted to impose her authority.

“You know what, I had a feeling you were going to say that” Tracy calmly replied as she took out a document and handed it across, “Take a look at this, the official Charter

of the National Police & Security Service as drawn up by the United Nations Security Council in 1978 and, with amendments, still in force to this day.”

“Are you going to enforce bureaucratic paperwork on me?!?” Burgette responded, disdainfully.

“Pot, kettle...” Sir Richard began.

“...black!” Jack finished the sentence, both clearly thinking on the same lines.

“This extensive and detailed legal document clearly states in very clear terms that a civilian, namely you, has no authority or right to influence any major decision affecting the structure, operation or personnel of the Service” Tracy then explained.

“I am a duly elected representative of the people!” Burgette protested.

“I wouldn't call thirty percent of the vote on an eleven percent turnout elected exactly” the Prime Minister pointed out, “Count Bin Face got more votes than you at the last Mayoral elections for crying out loud.”

“Under the terms and conditions of this document” Tracy then continued to calmly explain “You have no authority here, your actions are illegal and right now, you are trespassing, and I would like you to leave, right now.”

“This is an outrage!” Burgette attempted to strike back but her face was getting redder by the minute, and she unwisely tried to push forward towards the Prime Minister which saw her bodyguards leap into action.

“This is due legal process” Tracy confirmed as the bodyguards moved Burgette back and then slowly let her go again “which means by the terms of this document and my rank of National Chief Superintendent I am morally and legally obliged to tell you to sling your hook before you get it slung for you.”

“Go to hell!” Burgette retorted.

“Lieutenant!” Tracy then formally called to a patrol officer stood nearby whom in response stepped forward.

“Ma'am” the Lieutenant duly replied.

“Please show Ms Burgette here the door and see her off the premises” Tracy then duly ordered, maintaining her stare on Burgette who was fuming.

“Yes Ma'am” the Lieutenant confirmed before duly attempting to usher Burgette away, but she was having none of it and pushed the officer away.

“Right, if that is the way you want it...” Tracy then responded whereupon she duly nodded towards the Lieutenant.

A few moments later the press pack outside the main entrance looked on with

amazement as Burgette was forcibly ejected from the premises, being frogmarched out of the door by Tracy and the Lieutenant, each holding an arm before letting her go.

“Goodbye” Tracy then sarcastically called as Burgette turned back and gave such a stare of pure hatred towards her, “Feel free to never darken our door again.”

“I’ll see you burn in hell you bitch!!” Burgette screamed across towards Tracy who simply looked on, completely unfazed.

“That’s Chief Superintendent Bitch to you” she then calmly retorted before smiling and then heading back inside.

“Well, that was fun to watch” Sir Richard remarked as Tracy re-joined the group in the main Reception area.

“You know how I feel about bureaucratic jobsworths with personal agendas” Tracy reminded them, “She is lucky she only got thrown out of the door...”

“Ouch...” the Prime Minister remarked.

“Right, first order of business, get this shambolic mess back on track” Tracy then declared before turning to Janice, “Would you be so kind” she then requested of her “I need you to track down Commander Bob Thompson, when you locate him, could you ask him to come over and see me immediately?”

“Yes Ma’am, right away” Janice eagerly confirmed.

“Erm, I believe a statement to the press may be in order, Chief Superintendent?” the Prime Minister then tentatively suggested to which Tracy rolled her eyes upwards in response.

“Tell them, fifteen minutes” Tracy then confirmed, “It will give time for Ms Burgette to slink away back under her rock and there is a little business I need to take care of upstairs first.”

“By all means...” the Prime Minister confirmed as Tracy duly headed off towards the lifts.

“Where is she going?” Jack then asked.

“I think I know...” Fuller confirmed.

Up on the top floor, the outgoing Acting Administrator General, Stephen Matthews, was clearing his desk and preparing to move out of the office he had occupied for just over a year.

It was with a reluctant sigh that he removed the small etched nameplate from its

holder on the leading edge of the desk before dropping it into the cardboard box he was using to gather his things together.

He had almost finished when there was polite knock at the door.

Matthews took a deep breath before calling out.

“Come in!” he duly announced.

“Morning Steve” Tracy called as she came in.

“Erm, oh...” Matthews stuttered in response “Administ...” he then began to reply before correcting himself, “Err I mean, Chief Superintendent.”

“Don't panic, I don't bite” Tracy reassured him, “Well, not usually...”

“I will be out of here shortly” Matthews then confirmed as he hastily picked up the last few of his things off the desk, “Sorry...”

“That's a lot of effort just to move next door” Tracy then remarked to which Matthews gave a somewhat puzzled look in response.

“Erm, Ma'am?” he then asked.

“You're staying” Tracy then explained, “I have reviewed the so called evidence that has been presented to the Ombudsman's Office and the Press and I can categorically say that it is, without doubt, the biggest load of cooked up claptrap ever committed to paper, the ex-Acting Prime Minister's rambling nonsense had more substance than this load of old pony” she indicated the file in her hand before casually discarding it on the desk with all the disrespect she felt it deserved.

“You mean...?” Matthews began to reply, still in a sense of disbelief.

“You are staying, as Acting Divisional Commander Operations, Metropolitan Division” Tracy then explained, “I have already talked to Ombudsman Glock and he agrees with me that these so called allegations have no basis whatsoever.”

“Erm, right” Matthews was feeling understandably a bit overwhelmed.

“Get yourself settled in next door, have some lunch and then join me in the Main Briefing Room at one thirty” Tracy then instructed before realising something, “Erm, you will have to tell me where it is though” she then slightly sheepishly admitted.

“Far end of the corridor on the right with a nice view overlooking the River Thames” Matthews confirmed, now somewhat more composed as he picked up his box of personal items.

“Terrific” Tracy responded as she held the door open for him, “I'll see you at one thirty.”

“Yes Ma'am” Matthews confirmed as he left, “Err, thank you.”

With the door now closed, Tracy was all alone in the office whereupon she went over to the large panoramic window that looked over the river towards the south side embankment, a far better and clearer view than had been the case with the office in the old Scotland Yard building.

Presently, she turned back to the desk and sat down before looking around and smiling on noting that The Commander's original choice for the paint colour had indeed been applied to the walls even though the decorators work occurred years after his death.

Reaching into the side pocket of her briefcase, she extracted a two-aperture folding silver photo frame that she opened and placed carefully on the desk, proudly displaying her wedding photograph plus a shot of her late husband smiling in his full dress uniform.

“Well, you old rascal” Tracy then remarked towards the photographs, “It looks like we are home...”

Tracy almost jumped when the silence was suddenly interrupted by the telephone on the desk ringing, and she leaned forward to answer it.

“Chief Superintendent” she then declared to the called, “Oh thanks, send him in please” she then prompted before hanging up and standing up to receive her visitor.

“Good morning Chief Superintendent” declared Commander Bob Thompson as he entered the room, “It's good to see you back where you belong.”

“Thanks for coming so quickly Bob” Tracy then responded whereupon they shook hands warmly, “Do you know, I think this the first time in all the years I have known you that I have seen you in ordinary uniform.”

“It's uncomfortable as hell I will admit” Bob confirmed as at Tracy's invitation he sat down.

“Yes, the quality of the uniform is one of the items on a very long list of problems I need to sort out here it would seem” Tracy freely admitted.

“I heard about your dismissal of the Police & Crime Commissioner” Bob then commented, “Good riddance to her I say.”

“Getting rid of that bureaucratic cow should help a bit” Tracy confirmed “But I can't help thinking she may still stir up trouble, she no doubt has powerful connections I expect.”

“Oh, undoubtedly” Bob readily agreed.

“Right, two things I wanted to see you about” Tracy then moved on to business, “Firstly, I want you on my Advisory Group I am setting up, first meeting at half one



this afternoon” she explained.

“My diary is looking pretty clear at the moment” Bob admitted, “I would be honoured to attend.”

“Good” Tracy responded, “The next issue is the disbanded Specialist Firearms Unit” she then continued, “What do you need to start it up again?”

“Well...” Bob sat back for a moment and considered his response, “I can probably have the Unit, certainly one team back up and running inside of an hour” he confirmed, “You see, when the PCC’s disbandment order came through, we didn't exactly execute it word for word, sort of kept hold of our gear on the QT like.”

“Nice...” Tracy responded with a knowing smile.

“So, with that in mind, an hour or two on the phone, ringing around the squad members, sorting out gear, equipment and transport” Bob deduced, “We can probably be fully operational inside of twenty four hours.”

“Brilliant” Tracy responded in delight “I knew there was a reason I promoted you to Chief Divisional Commander” she then declared.

“Wow...” Bob responded, somewhat taken by surprise, “Thank you Ma'am.”

“My pleasure, you've earned it” Tracy confirmed, “Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go and talk to the press.”

“Oh dear...” Bob remarked.

“Yeah...” Tracy openly admitted, “I am not exactly thrilled by the prospect either.”

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As Jack pulled up in his patrol car outside the Surrey Street entrance of the former Aldwych Underground Station, he could see that Lieutenant Grant and Lieutenant Commander Cornell from his investigative team that he had called together earlier were waiting for him.

“Afternoon everyone” Jack called as he got out of his car and they all met up, “Anyone else coming?” he then inquired.

“Ryan and William are chasing up CCTV and Baxter is rifling through dusty archives to see if anyone in Appleby's past may have something to do with this” Grant confirmed.

“All sounds very industrious” Jack remarked, “In which case let’s get on, follow me please” he then prompted as he led the way towards the old entrance which was already open.

“Do we need a torch Sir?” Grant asked as they entered the old ticket hall.

“Indeed, we do” Jack confirmed as he led them through to the spiral staircase that led down into the deepest part of the old station, “Also some fitness and stamina too, there are the thick end of a hundred steps down and the same back up again.”

“How long does it take to go down the stairs Sir?” Cornell then asked as they reached the top of the steps and began their descent.

“Depending on fitness, maybe five minutes each way” Jack confirmed.

“Well, that doesn't fit for a starter” Cornell then remarked, “Will and I were checking the CCTV from the University campus building across the way earlier, and those two engineers were only in the building for a matter of a few minutes before they emerged again which was when they supposedly called us.”

“So, there was no way near enough time for them to make it to the platform tunnel level, wander around, stumble across Appleby's body and make it back up again?” Grant asked.

“Exactly” Cornell agreed, “Not even close.”

“Which raises a number of questions” Jack then remarked, “Firstly, how did they find a body that there was no way of discovering, secondly why were they here in the first place and thirdly, if it isn't theirs, whose toolbox was left down here?”

After a couple of minutes, the officers reached the bottom, emerging onto the old lift landing tunnel before Jack consulted his plan of the tunnels and then led them off towards the never used parts of the former station where Appleby's body had been discovered the day before.

“Well, this is where we found him” Jack then confirmed, shining his torch ahead where it illuminated a couple of marker signs that the Forensic Service Branch had left to mark where the body had lain.

“There is nothing here” Cornell then commented, “no cables, equipment, signs of any activity other than a few thousand spiders.”

“Indeed” Jack confirmed “so we need to urgently establish why he was down here.”

“Assuming of course that he came down here himself” Grant then pointed out, “We cannot rule out that he may have been killed somewhere else then brought here.”

“Which would explain the total absence of blood and a weapon at the scene where the body was found” Cornell then added.

“Very good” Jack complimented them

“If he was killed somewhere else and then brought here” Grant then asked, “What would be the point, I mean why here and not say, dumped on a bench in Green Park for example?”

“Because whoever did this wanted us to find him here?” Cornell then suggested.

“Someone who knew that the chances were pretty high that I would be the one who found him” Jack then remarked thoughtfully, “In fact maybe that was their intention, to make sure I was the one who found him.”

“Both entrances to the station in Strand and Surrey Street are well overlooked” Cornell then pointed out, “Surely if someone brought in a body by either of those entrances, someone would have seen them?”

“Maybe, maybe not” Grant countered, “Are there any other ways in and out of here apart for the way we came in?” she then asked.

“Two” Jack confirmed as he led them onwards through the dark passageways, “the first being here” he then declared as they emerged onto the old platform where in the semi gloom, a stored three car train of 1969 type Tube Stock was stabled, shut down, dark and silent.

“This leads back up to Holborn, right?” Grant then asked,

“The old platform 6, hidden behind a blank door off the eastbound Piccadilly Line platform” Jack confirmed.

“If they came in or went out that way, the CCTV at Holborn would have picked them up” Cornell pointed out “and any odd extra train movements would have set off alarm bells right away.”

“You said there was another way out, Sir” Grant then remarked.

“Follow me...” Jack responded, gesturing them onwards with a wave of his finger.

Jack duly led the way off down the platform before proceeding through a door into another passageway, seeming dark and long forgotten.

After a minute or two of clambering through dusty dark brick and concrete passageways, they stepped down into what was obviously some sort of Underground line running tunnel, the cast iron segments being very distinctive but with no track on the floor and a dead-end blank wall blocking it off behind them.

“Where the hell are we?” Grant then asked, understandably confused as was Cornell.

“Welcome to the eastern most extremity of the Fleet Line” Jack duly announced to looks of bafflement from the two officers.

“Right Guv...” Grant replied.

“When they built the original part of the Jubilee Line in the late 1970's, it originally ran to Charing Cross and from there was supposed to head due east along the Strand towards Docklands and was originally to be called the Fleet Line” Jack explained,

“This is the stub of the running tunnel beyond Charing Cross and as far as the second phase of the original plan ever got.”

“So, if we head that way, we come out at Charing Cross?” Cornell then asked.

“Exactly” Jack confirmed “and with the old Jubilee Line platforms at Charing Cross now disused and sealed off from public view, it gives a nice little unobserved back door into Aldwych for the very small number of people who know about it.”

“So, it is far more likely that Appleby's body was brought through here from Charing Cross, effectively by the back door rather than in the front” Grant concluded.

“Which means, alas we need to spread our search a tad wider” Jack then confirmed, “Come on, let’s get back to the office” he then declared as he led them back through to the main Aldwych tunnels again, “We have a lot of work to do, lunch to eat and I have a crate to look into.”

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“Ladies and gentlemen...” the duty officer outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard called as he tried to get the attention of the press and get them to some sort of order, but he failed so was forced to raise his voice.

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!!!” he then called loudly which finally had the desired effect and he got their attention, “The Chief Superintendent will make a statement very shortly, so if you could all please step back in an orderly manner, there will be an opportunity for some questions at the end of her statement, thank you!”

There was much murmuring amongst the gathered members of the press and television news media who had swelled in numbers in the last half an hour as soon as the news had been confirmed of Tracy's return and the dramatic ejection from the building of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Inside the Reception Area, Tracy was brushing down her uniform and making sure she looked presentable before heading out.

“Don’t worry, you’ve got this” Sir Richard advised with a reassuring smile.

“Are you sure?” Tracy then asked.

“Never more certain in my life than now” Sir Richard then confirmed.

“All right then, here I go” Tracy then declared before holding her head up high and proceeding purposely towards the doors that glided serenely open and allowed her through.

The press saw her emerging from the building and immediately tried to push forward against the barriers amid a cacophony of questions and a barrage of camera flashes.

Tracy merely stood, looked on with an authoritative stare before raising her left hand

for silence which she immediately got as the press pack settled back.

“Thank you” Tracy then called, “For those of you who haven’t worked it out yet, I have at the request of the Prime Minister agreed to return to The Service as its Commander in Chief” she then confirmed, “Following a review of the overall structure and the way The Service is perceived in these strange times, the title of National Administrator General is being discontinued and replaced by the more traditional title of Chief Superintendent” she then announced.

Her words were being broadcast live across several television news channels and also online media feeds and the audience continued to grow substantially as Tracy continued.

“My predecessor in the role, Acting Administrator General Steven Matthews is to remain here at New Scotland Yard as Commanding Officer (Operations) of the Metropolitan Division” she then continued with clear authority, “The baseless accusations that have been made against him in certain areas of the press are nothing more than an elaborate fabrication cooked up by nameless individuals in a failed attempt to manipulate this Service for their own ends, and he has my full and unequivocal support.”

The press were hanging on her every word as Tracy paused for a moment, looked at her notes and then continued.

“Sadly, through a combination of bureaucratic interference, political agendas and overwhelming external pressures, this Service has suffered considerably in the last two years” Tracy then declared, “Today that will change, there will be no more political interference allowed on my watch, we are a Service, we swore an oath to protect and defend the citizens of this country and that is exactly what we intend to do.”

“The first stage of the process to restore this Service to its former glory has already taken place with the removal of the bureaucratic waste of space and resources that was the Police & Crime Commissioner” Tracy continued, “The remaining PCC’s across the country can expect to be removed from office and their positions abolished over the next few hours and days.”

Among the many watching the live news broadcast as Tracy continued was Taylor, sat in his study and looking on with large brandy in his right hand as he considered her words carefully.

“If it’s a fight you want my dear, then a fight you shall have” Taylor then declared, practically relishing the possibility, “Game on...” he then remarked, raising his glass.

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“So, what’s the plan Guv?” Cornell asked as he and Grant followed Jack back through the main entrance of the Transport Division’s headquarters in Holborn.

“I reckon it is going to be a long night looking at CCTV from every possible access

point into the Underground that leads to the far end of Charing Cross and into the depths of Aldwych, and for the last three weeks” Jack admitted.

“That is a hell of a lot of ground to cover Sir” Grant remarked.

“Quite possibly the understatement of the year” Jack readily agreed as the three officers entered the lift and the doors closed.

When the lift doors opened on the fourth floor a few moments later, they were met in the corridor by Eisley and Commander Baxter.

“How did it go back at the Yard, Sir?” Eisley inquired as they all headed down the corridor together with Jack leading.

“Quite interesting” Jack admitted, “The best bit being when that idiot Commissioner got unceremoniously shown the door by the Chief Superintendent.”

“I saw that on the canteen television” Baxter confirmed, “Most amusing...”

“It was, rather” Jack readily agreed as they reached his office door.

“Well Sir, we may potentially have some good news at last” Eisley then called, “Baxter...” he then prompted the young officer.

“I went through the personal effects that were found on Appleby when he was discovered” Baxter began to explain as they filed into Jack's office, “Nothing much overly interesting, the usual wallet litter, etc but the collection did include his car keys.”

“So, Appleby must have been driving at some point” Jack concluded, “Where is his car?” he then asked as he sat down behind his desk, “It's not at Aldwych.”

“No, it isn't Sir” Eisley confirmed.

“It has been located in Hampstead Sir” Baxter then confirmed, handing over a Traffic Division report.

“Hampstead?” Jack responded as he read the report, “What the hell was he doing there?”

“Did Appleby have any relatives, Sir?” Grant asked.

“Wife died a few years ago, no children, might be a cousin in Bognor Regis I think” Jack vaguely recalled, “Certainly nothing in Hampstead though.”

“Perhaps he drove there and then took the Underground back into central London?” Cornell mused.

“Which would make sense except that his car was found nowhere near an Underground Station” Baxter responded.

“According to this report, it was found in Hampstead Way, which is...” Jack got up again and went over to the shelf nearby and extracted a large London A to Z atlas which he swiftly flicked through, “There...” he indicated a point on the map.

“Conveniently already marked I notice Sir” Grant commented, noting the hand written asterix on the page.

“This was Appleby's, I inherited it with the office” Jack explained.

“What's in Hampstead Heath?” Cornell asked.

“Trees...” Eisley began.

“Hills...” Grant added.

“Spy's meeting their contacts if you believe the old movies” Eisley added.

“Could he have been meeting someone there?” Grant then asked, “After which he walks to the nearest Underground Station which would be...”

“Err, Hampstead or Golders Green” Jack checked his Tube map on the wall.

“Travels towards central London, meets someone who thumps him over the head and then proceeds to dump him in the bowels of Aldwych?” Grant then concluded.

“It's a theory that fits the facts, Guv” Eisley agreed.

“Follow it up” Jack confirmed, “Check traffic cameras, CCTV at the stations and on the trains, follow his journey and see where he goes, who he meets.”

“I am on it Sir” Cornell confirmed before he and Grant duly left.

“Keen, aren't they?” Eisley remarked.

“Exactly why I chose them, Mos” Jack confirmed.

“The crate from Appleby” Eisley then confirmed, “It's locked in the secure storeroom just down the corridor, do you want me to fetch it?” he then asked.

“Hmm, yes please” Jack confirmed “and I think some fresh coffee wouldn't go amiss either” he then wisely suggested.

A couple of minutes later as Jack was reading through some reports on his desk, Eisley returned with the crate, carrying it carefully as there were two full mugs of fresh coffee balanced on top of it which he managed to successfully negotiate to the desk and put down without spilling a drop.

“Oh, nicely done” Jack complimented him.

“A skill I learned doing weekend shifts in my uncle’s cafe when I was at school and college” Eislely explained.

“Always helpful to have a second string to your bow” Jack agreed as he, having taken the two coffee mugs off, he looked over the crate carefully, “Now, how do I get in it?” he then asked.

“There is some sort of seal on the catch here” Eislely pointed out whereupon he helped Jack turn the crate around so that the catch faced him.

“Where is...?” Jack then remarked as he fumbled about in his uniform tunic pocket until he located a Swiss Army knife, extracted the main blade, and then used it to cut off the seal.

“I bet after all this, it's empty” Eislely remarked as Jack managed to release the catch before taking a deep breath and then opening the crate.

“Hmm...” Jack mused, “Not empty but not exactly enthralling” he remarked as he reached inside and extracts a number of files and documents that were contained inside along with a sealed letter personally addressed to him.

It was the letter that Jack went directly too, passing the files to Eislely to take a look at for himself.

“Dear Jack, congratulations on your promotion” Jack began to read the letter, “I am presuming that they will give you my office when I am gone.”

“Good assumption” Eislely remarked.

“Inside this box are the backup copies of my personal investigation files” Jack then continued to read, “Mostly surveillance photos, some other material that I have collected over the last seven years as part of a personal investigation into a group I only know as Cato.”

“Cato?” Eislely asked.

“That's what it says here” Jack confirmed before continuing to read, “At some point, you will receive an electronic message concerning my work from someone trusted and close to you, this should happen sometime after you receive this package.”

“Curiouser and curiouser” Eislely commented.

“I am sorry to do this to you” Jack continued to read out, “but I am afraid I must pass on to you the responsibility for taking care of this matter, all will be explained in the additional message that you should receive shortly.”

Eislely listened as he continued to leaf through the files.

“Good luck young man, watch your back, take care” Jack then concluded, “Jim.”



“All sounds rather ominous” Eisley then remarked.

“Yes...” Jack agreed, “What have you got?” he then asked.

“Lots of surveillance photos by the looks of it” Eisley confirmed, “No names or details noted other than a few dates, one or two locations marked on the back... Hang on...”

“Something up?” Jack picked up on Eisley's tone.

“This guy” Eisley turned one of the surveillance photographs towards Jack for him to see, “I have seen him before somewhere.”

“Wait a minute...” Jack realised the connection as he reached into his inside uniform tunic pocket and extract the photograph still that he had been handed earlier before holding it up to the other photo for comparison.

“Same guy?” Eisley asked.

“Same guy” Jack quickly agreed, “The Holborn bomb suspect.”

“There is something very faint written on the back” Eisley then remarked, squinting to get a better look, “Looks like Thistlewood or something?”

“Yeah, I reckon you are right” Jack agreed as he took a look at the markings on the reverse for himself, “not exactly a name that fits in with the subject's racial profile though, is it?”

“Maybe it is some sort of surveillance code name?” Eisley then suggested.

“Possibly” Jack responded, keen to keep an open mind on the subject, “What else have we got in there?” he then asked.

“Looks like a couple more photos of our bomber friend” Eisley confirmed, “Some shots of various people in suits and...” he then produced another photograph for Jack to see.

“Well, well, well...” Jack remarked with a smile, “If it isn't our old friend Lord Chaos himself with the former Mayor and some guy in a suit.”

“The same guy in the suit appears in a couple of other shots here by the looks of it” Eisley then confirmed, “Notes on the back are inconsistent though, some say Taylor, a couple of others say Cooper.”

“Let's keep this box and its contents to ourselves for the moment” Jack then wisely suggested, “Draw up a list of all the names or whatever passes for possible names you find in here and let me have them later so that I can wash them through a computer somewhere without setting off anyone's alarm bells.”

“You got it, boss” Eisley confirmed before they were interrupted by the telephone

ringing.

“Divisional Commander” Jack called.

“Hi love” Megan called “I thought you could use a break” she then suggested, “Fancy meeting me for dinner?”

“Erm, yes why not” Jack then agreed as he checked his watch, “How does four thirty sound?”

“Great” Megan replied “I’ll come and meet you” she then confirmed.

“Oh, okay” Jack agreed, slightly surprised though but choosing not to show it, “I’ll see you in a little while, bye love.”

“Ah, true love” Eisley mockingly remarked as Jack hung up the telephone, “Pass me a bucket...”

“Not the romantic type I take it?” Jack asked.

“Err, no” Eisley confirmed with an amused smile and left it at that.

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“I have got the supplies, Ma'am” Fuller called as he carried a large box through into the main briefing room on the top floor of New Scotland Yard as Tracy held the door open for him.

“Oh lovely, cheers” Tracy responded as she followed him inside where the various participants of her meeting were already waiting, chatting amongst themselves until they all stood up as she arrived.

“Be seated everyone, thank you” Tracy then called, “This meeting is going to be frank and open rather than formal” she confirmed.

At her instruction everyone resumed their seats but most, particularly the younger less experienced officers present continued to maintain a formal quiet and attentive stance.

“Right then” Tracy then declared as she took her seat at the head of the table, “Thank you all for coming, I appreciate this is all very short notice and sudden and that for a few of you, this is your first time here at The Yard, but we have a lot of work to do and quite frankly, I am going to need your help.”

A few quiet murmurs between the attendees were exchanged before Tracy continued.

“Okay, let’s begin with some introductions, shall we?” she then called, “First up let me introduce to you, those that don't know him, the big man here” she indicated Bob on her left, “This is Divisional Commander Bob Thompson, call sign Zulu One.”

“Afternoon everyone” Bob duly called.

“Big Bob here is the Service's foremost expert in tactical and specialist firearms deployment” Tracy explained, “At my request he is reinstating the Specialist Firearms Unit, a much-needed resource in these troubled times that our thankfully departed Ms Burgette disbanded for no readily apparent reason last year.”

“She's a Muppet, that's why” Brent remarked, semi under her breath.

“Good answer” Tracy immediately complimented her, “Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent for those who do not know her, we met earlier this morning whilst being shot at, I like her style and attitude which is why I have asked her to join us here, thank you for coming.”

“My pleasure Ma'am” Brent confirmed.

“Next up we have our resident communications and technology expert, our very own Technomage, Commander Simon Fuller” Tracy continued the introductions.

“Hello” Fuller called in response.

“What he doesn't know about computers, systems, anything with a wire in it basically, isn't worth knowing” Tracy confirmed.

“Well...” Fuller began to reply.

“I mean it” Tracy responded, “Learn to take a compliment, they rarely come our way in this business.”

“I will try to remember that” Fuller agreed with a wry smile.

There was a knock at the door at that moment that interrupted Tracy's chain of thought.

“Come in!” she called out whereupon the door opened, “Ah, Gareth!” she then declared.

“My boss sends his apologies for not coming in person, but he is running around like a madman trying to keep the rapidly sinking ship that is the National Secret Security Service afloat amid a flood of bureaucratic nonsense and interference.”

“Everybody, this is Gareth Pointer, second in command of operations over at MI5” Tracy then announced.

“Hello” Gareth responded as he sat down next to Brent where they exchanged pleasant greetings.

“Now, I was hoping to have someone here from the Transport Division as well” Tracy then continued “but they have been plunged into a bit of a mess with the death of their boss, Jim Appleby” she explained.

“I heard about that” Pointer remarked, “Did I hear correctly, Jack is the new Guvnor' over there?”

“He is indeed” Tracy conformed.

“Wow...” Pointer responded, happy for Jack but deep down, also a little concerned.

“Okay” Tracy then called, “Whilst I have kept myself discreetly in the loop, pretend I have just walked in through the door for the first time, and I have had a big paper bag on my head for the last eighteen months.”

“I am just trying to picture the paper bag thing...” Fuller remarked aside.

“Tell me what the situation is, leave nothing out, be as honest and frank as possible” Tracy then asked, “If you need courage or brain food, dip into the box for sandwiches, cakes and biscuits and help yourself to tea and coffee.”

“Oh, the diet starts tomorrow...” Pointer remarked as he helped himself to a jam doughnut.

“All right, I will start” Brent ventured, “Quite frankly Ma'am we are up shit creek without a paddle.”

“Nicely put” Pointer complimented.

“Thanks” Brent responded.

“I am delighted to say my expectations of you, young lady have not been disappointed” Tracy complimented “Do continue.”

“Since I joined the Service, we have always had some form of overbearing influence from the powers that be in Whitehall” Brent continued, “but in the last eighteen months to two years, it has got noticeably worse.”

“Directives, counter directives, imposed spending reviews, cuts across the board, ridiculous and unworkable rubbish like the Police & Crime Commissioners, numerous oversight quangos, you name it, we have had it thrown at us” Pointer confirmed.

“And on the front line, where we are, we are facing more and more bureaucratic paperwork, stifling our every move in the face of an exponentially increasing onslaught of crime, violence and madness” Brent concluded.

“The nutters are taking over the asylum...” Bob ventured.

“And then to cap it all, just as we thought we may just have a chance of getting a lid on the escalating situation, that dickhead of an Acting Prime Minister put us in emergency measures, puts the troops on the streets with a remit that rendered them about as much use as a cat flap in a submarine so that the politicians looked good in the press and gave the impression that they were actually doing something” Brent passionately continued, “In the meantime we are getting our asses kicked out there

and, dammit! I am angry about it!”

“Very good” Pointer complimented, “Here, have a doughnut.”

“Oh, thanks...” Brent responded, now calmer having got her thoughts out of her system.

“Gareth?” Tracy then turned to the man from MI5.

“Like I hinted at when I came in, the ship is sinking and we are barely managing to keep our heads above water” Pointer confirmed, “The country is effectively being run by a mysterious unelected committee through Trojan Horse legislation that was pushed through unchecked when they thought no one was looking leaving the Prime Minister effectively powerless and the lunatics of the world running around almost unchecked.”

“That bloody pandemic didn't help either” Fuller philosophically added, “Icing on the cake and a gift of manna from heaven to whoever is behind all this.”

“Yes, that was all rather odd” Tracy admitted, “I never thought I would see the day when I had to walk into a bank with a gun wearing a mask. I was half expecting to have a Transit van parked outside with the engine running...”

“The Pandemic was the perfect vehicle for The Committee to come into being and effectively take over the country” Pointer confirmed, “Throw in the armada of idiots, conspiracy theorists, Antivaxxers and other associated nutters that used social media to spread their bullshit messages and you had a perfect storm.”

“And now here we are, not waving but drowning” Brent added mournfully, “I have attended five funerals of colleagues since I joined, three of those in the last eighteen months.”

“I think we have all lost someone we love” Tracy ruefully added which led to a momentary silence in the room.

“Right!” Tracy clapped her hands together to bring everyone back on point “What do we do about it?” she then asked.

“Re-establishing the Specialist Firearms Unit is a good move for a starter” Brent confirmed, nodding towards Bob who returned the respectful gesture, “We need to have the tools and the permission to get out there and kick arse, if you will excuse my language, Ma'am.”

“Absobloodylutely!!” Tracy agreed, “So who are our main problems?”

“Top of the list is the Ixion Brotherhood and their band of nut job followers” Pointer confirmed.

“Oh God, not them again...” Fuller remarked.

“I could just round them all up and shoot them?” Bob wryly suggested.

“A little drastic Bob, but I will bear it in mind” Tracy replied.

“And then there are the politicians” Pointer continued.

“I could just...” Bob began with a cheeky grin.

“...don't tempt me!” Tracy responded.

“On that note” Brent added, “the guy that I helped apprehend whilst he was busy putting a lot of holes into anything and everything in Haymarket, my colleagues did a search of his gaff an hour ago, the place had fully paid-up member of the Ixion Brotherhood Third Circle written all over it.”

“Unfortunately, except for detaining individual members when they actually get caught doing something naughty, we still can't touch them” Tracy ruefully added, “The Public Interest Immunity Certificate keeps getting renewed by The Committee.”

“We have been trying to keep discrete tabs on key members of the Ixion group” Pointer confirmed, “It's difficult, like treading on eggshells most of the time because if we are discovered, we are going to get it in the neck big time from them upstairs, even our Director General doesn't know about it.”

“It seems to me that this Committee are at the heart of everything that is going on” Tracy concluded “or at least, in the background, stoking the fire as it were.”

“I have to agree” Pointer confirmed.

“Could we not just go and see this Committee and get them to see our point of view?” Brent asked, clearly unaware of the overall significance.

“Oh, no one sees the Committee” Fuller mockingly advised, “Nobody knows who they are, who is on it, where they are based or anything.”

“All we see are directives and orders sent from the 'National Interests Committee or National Unity Standards Council amongst other names and descriptions” Pointer added.

“May I make a suggestion Ma'am?” Bob then ventured, “If we as a whole organisation along with our learned colleagues at MI5 all work together and re-enforce the Service, kick ass, bring back the old-fashioned way of doing things and start to get some results, there is the chance that this Committee may well want to see you in person.”

“Stoke the fires ourselves, kick over some rocks, and see what crawls out?” Brent then added.

“It could work” Tracy agreed thoughtfully, “If we as a whole start enforcing our authority properly, then that could kick-start them into action.”

“Remember someone wanted that useless woman Burgette to take over?” Fuller reminded them, “Now that has got to have come from The Committee, your return” he indicated Tracy “that would never have been part of their plan, not in a million years.”

“Yeah, I guess that probably has pissed them off a bit...” Tracy agreed with a smirk of mild satisfaction.

“The fact is, we have started the momentum here” Bob then pointed out, “We need to keep it going.”

“Very well” Tracy concluded, “I shall be issuing instructions to all area Commanders within the hour” she then explained her plan, “We ditch the bureaucratic nonsense, take the gloves off and start to come down hard on any and all criminal actions.”

“Poor old Gary, without his risk assessments, he will be lost...” Brent remarked.

“Who’s Gary?” Tracy asked before realising. “Oh yes, Mr Risk Assessment. Don’t worry; I reckon he will be all right.”

“He will have to be, Ma’am” Brent confirmed, “He is going to get his ass well and truly kicked if he doesn’t step up pretty dam quick.”

“Is he any good with a gun?” Bob casually asked.

“Oh yes, one of the best shooters I have ever seen on the range” Brent confirmed, “In fact with his risk assessment fetish, I reckon he could make a good candidate for your squad Sir.”

“I’ll pull his file and give him a look” Bob responded thoughtfully, “I tend to find that when a young inexperienced officer finds their niche, they mature immensely, it just needs someone with the authority to do so to actually give them the chance.”

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“Welcome to leafy suburbia” Jack wryly remarked as he stopped the patrol car by the side of the road, a quiet lane through a residential area, high up on Hampstead Hill to the north of Greater London.

“Oh, very nice...” Eislely responded as he and Jack got out of the car before looking ahead to the vehicle parked immediately in front, “That’s Appleby’s jam jar all right” he then confirmed.

They both walked over to the car, a fairly old but reasonable condition maroon Jaguar whereupon Jack tried both door handles on the drivers side with Eislely doing the same on the opposite side.

“All locked and secured” Jack duly confirmed, not stolen and dumped.

“Keys?” Eislely then asked.

“Two sets, one was in Appleby’s pocket when he was found, the other was in his bottom desk drawer where he always kept it” Jack confirmed, producing the latter set of keys from his pocket and proceeding to unlock the driver’s door.

They both looked around the interior of the car but found little of interest, seemingly still in the state in which it had been left by its owner at least a couple of weeks earlier.

“Check the glove compartment” Jack prompted whereupon Eislely opened the flap and looked inside whilst Jack went around to the back and opened the boot.

“Ah, here we go” Eislely declared as he found a piece of paper that provided some useful information.

“What have you got?” Jack asked as he closed the boot again before returning to the front.

“Petrol receipt from that garage just down the road that we passed” Eislely handed the receipt over “dated two weeks ago.”

“Tank is pretty much full” Jack confirmed as he checked the dashboard fuel indicator “so that gives us an almost definite date of when he parked the car.”

“Anything in the boot?” Eislely then asked.

“Nothing, just the spare” Jack confirmed.

“So, why here?” Eislely then looked around, bemused by the situation.

“Perhaps he fancied a walk across Hampstead Heath?” Jack suggested “Although I would have thought he would have parked a little closer for that, this is a suburban back road as far as I can tell.”

“Lima Tango One from Control” came a call over Jack's radio.

“Lima Tango One, receiving” Jack responded.

“Message from Lieutenant Commander Russell” the Control Room operator back at Holborn called, “Check of the station CCTV and smart card readers at both Golders Green and Hampstead tube stations has turned up nothing.”

“All right, thanks” Jack replied, “Can you get a recovery truck over here to pick up Appleby's car as soon as and move it to Forensics, I want the full works just in case we missed something.”

“Understood Lima Tango One, Control out”.

“We could try knocking on a few doors?” Eislely suggested.



“I doubt the locals would know much” Jack concluded, “Could be worth a punt though, we should get the local Nick to do the honours.”

“I’ll get it organised” Easley confirmed.

“Meantime, we had better get back, still much to do and the mystery is only getting deeper” Jack then remarked as he locked Appleby’s car up and they headed back to his own.

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“So Gareth, is it?” Brent called as she and Pointer stepped outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard together and he passed her some fresh takeaway coffee which he had just purchased.

“Yes” Pointer confirmed.

“You’re a spy?” Brent asked.

“Well, my official resume says I am a Managerial Level Three Civil Servant in the Department of Inland Waterways but basically, yes” Pointer admitted.

“All suspense and intrigue is it?” Brent then asked.

“Actually, it is more hum drum routine and paperwork to be honest” Pointer then admitted, “I mean, I have a good boss, pay just about covers the rent, bills and lunch, I get five weeks paid leave a year and there is a half decent pension scheme if I am one of those members of this illustrious occupation who is lucky enough to live long enough to actually retire.”

“I always thought you MI5 boys were all Aston Martin’s and Martini’s with glamorous women all the time” Brent suggested.

“That’s MI6 over the river” Pointer laughed in response, “Anyway, even they have had a major budget cut, and the Aston Martin has been traded in for a second-hand Ford Focus I hear.”

“How the mighty have fallen” Brent commented with a wry smile.

“Quite” Pointer agreed.

As they crossed the road to the river side and then headed along the Embankment in the direction of the derelict remains of the Houses of Parliament, Brent noticed something.

“Is it me or are the street CCTV cameras following us?” she wondered causing both of them to pause and then look upwards towards the nearest CCTV camera, mounted on the top of the lamp post above them which had spun around and now had its lens pointed directly at them.

“That means my mobile is about to ring...” Pointer confirmed which was duly proven when a ring tone began to play in his inside jacket pocket.

“How did you know that?” Brent asked, amazed.

“It’s amazing what you learn when you are in the Department of Inland Waterways” Pointer explained with a knowledgeable smirk as he took out his mobile and answered it.

“Gareth!” came the sound of the familiar voice of Christopher Dent who was calling from his office in Thames House and looking at a CCTV image on the screen in front of him.

“Sir” Pointer responded.

“Am I going mad or that a genuine real live young woman you are standing next to and conversing with?” Pointer squinted at his screen which showed Pointer and Brent standing together looking up at the camera whereupon Brent smiled and waved.

“Oh, erm yes” Pointer confirmed, slightly embarrassed, “This is Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent, Metropolitan Division.”

“Hello!” Brent called out.

“Oh, right” Dent responded “Erm, when you two have finished flirting...”

“Are we flirting?” Pointer asked Brent.

“Oh yes, we are” Brent confirmed with a smile.

“...I need you back in the office as soon as” Dent then confirmed, “Sorry...”

“It’s all right” Brent confirmed to Pointer, “I need to get back on patrol myself.”

“Err, I’ll be back in about fifteen minutes Sir” Pointer then confirmed over the phone.

“Thanks” Dent responded before hanging up whereupon he looked at the screen again with a knowing smile, “Lucky sod...”

“I guess I had better go” Pointer then admitted as soon as the call was concluded.

“Here” Brent handed him a piece of paper, “Call me...” she suggested.

“Thank you, I will” Pointer confirmed.

“See you around Mr Department of Inland Waterways guy” Brent then called with a smile before she duly headed off leaving Pointer alone in his thoughts for a few moments until he too turned smartly on his heels and headed away back to work.

-----

Tracy finally had a moment alone to herself after a hectic couple of hours of briefings and catching up, now she was looking out of her office window on the top floor of New Scotland Yard across the River Thames and over towards the south side of London.

The time had come to make a decision, one she had hoped that she would never have to make, and it weighed heavily on her mind.

In her hand was a report, the ominous words 'EYES ONLY' emblazoned in big red block capitals across the top of the page.

"Pandora's Box time again..." Tracy reluctantly remarked as she looked at the report once again and reached the same reluctant conclusion she had come to when she had first received it fifteen minutes earlier.

Turning away from the window, she returned to her desk, put the report down and picked up the telephone.

"Angel One" Tracy called as her call was answered straight away, "Alert Angel One Five and the team, bring him in" she then instructed "and have transport for me downstairs in five minutes" she formally requested before hanging up.

-----

"To Life Immortal!!!" Orbison screamed out, his face beaming with a drug induced happiness whilst his audience both below him in the Citadel Chamber and watching over the Internet responded just as euphorically.

He proceeded to bow reverently as the lights dimmed and a large set of stage curtains came down at the conclusion of another successful show.

Whilst the curtains coming down cut Orbison off visibly from his audience, their whooping and cheering could still be heard on the other side, their enthusiasm unbridled through a combination of hallucinogenic drugs, alcohol and his talent for whipping up a storm.

"Give generously you hear..." Orbison then casually remarked before heading off stage towards his personal chambers where he took off his ceremonial black robes and hung them on the special stand next to his altar.

Waiting for him was a written message that one of his many Facilitators had left on the table and it was with a smile that he read the note before heading back out into the corridor and proceeded to the far end.

"Good evening Brothers" Orbison then called as he entered a large computer centre where a number of hooded and cloaked Facilitators sat at workstations, their facial features completely hidden by their clothing.

“To Life Immortal” the Facilitators responded in unison.

“Brothers, we are in need of some chaos” Orbison then gleefully declared, “Let’s have some fun, shall we?”

“By Your Command...” the Facilitators once again responded in complete unison and began to work at their computers.

“Right, let’s see” Orbison remarked as he looked up at a number of large screens that dominated the front wall of the room, “Let’s play with some trains and flash some lights. That should give those imbeciles a little scare...”

Moments later, consternation and concern and then panic broke out as several trains on the Piccadilly Line across central London between Hyde Park Corner and Warren Street suddenly stopped as the power went out, applying the emergency brakes on those in motion between stations and plunging them all into darkness for a few moments until the battery operated emergency lights came on.

“Whoops...” Orbison sarcastically called as the affected section of line flashed red on the map being shown on one of the large screens.

“Emergency systems should activate in fifteen seconds My Lord” one of the Facilitators confirmed.

“We’ll see Brother” Orbison responded.

Deep underground, fifteen seconds passed, then thirty, then a whole minute but no power was restored to any of the stranded trains.

“There you go Brothers” Orbison then declared with a sense of pride, “A simple demonstration, power, control, our victory is at hand.”

“And the trains My Lord?” another Facilitator then asked.

“Let them be on their way, I think we have tested them enough for now Brother” Orbison agreed.

“By Your Command...”

Moments later the power was restored to all the stranded trains in that section of the Piccadilly Line leaving their drivers, passengers and the London Underground Control Room staff based in Hammersmith, bemused and confused by what had just happened.

“Right, now it is time to play” Orbison then declared “Brothers, initiate Operation Flash” he announced.

“By Your Command...”

-----

Over on the east side of the city, near London Bridge, Tracy was heading over the River Thames in her official car, Kinderley as ever driving.

“It’s quiet tonight Terry” Tracy remarked as she looked out of the window as they passed northbound over the bridge and she noted the empty streets, just a few red London buses, a couple of taxis and a small number of pedestrians about.

“With respect Chief Superintendent, it’s been quiet for a few years now” Terry admitted, “Those who weren’t scared off after the Holborn Bomb and the other incidents were subsequently driven away by the Emergency Powers Act and then the Pandemic did the rest.”

“It’s like the life has been drained from the City” Tracy commented, “It’s sad to see.”

“That it is” Terry agreed.

“Okay, we are here” Tracy then called, “Just pull in here.”

“Right you are Ma’am” Kinderley confirmed as he brought the car to a stop at the kerbside on the corner of King William Street and Arthur Street with The Monument visible nearby.

“Thanks Terry” Tracy then called as she got out of the car and then closed the door, “You head off home, I shan’t be needing you again tonight.”

“Understood Ma’am” Kinderley duly confirmed, “Good night.”

“Good night” Tracy responded before watching as Kinderley drove off into the distance.

She was about to head across the road towards her final destination when she became aware of something odd. Looking up and down the road, Tracy noticed that some of the street lights were randomly switching on and off.

Stepping across the road and looking out across the river then revealed that this peculiar phenomenon was also occurring across the city where random street lights were flashing or had been extinguished altogether.

“What the hell...?” Tracy remarked to herself but then the flashing stopped and all the lights reverted to their original correct steady illuminated state.

“Some kind of glitch I expect” Tracy then commented before heading off up the road and turning right into Monument Street.

A few moments later, Tracy took a look around her surroundings and seeing that nobody appeared to be watching, she slipped discreetly through an anonymous looking door set into the ground floor of a large office building and disappeared from sight.

-----

In the darkened Committee Room, the only light on was one small spot lamp that shone down directly on the chairman's seat at the head of the large wooden meeting table.

Sat in that seat was Taylor who was looking through some papers on his desk when a small bell was sounded outside which caused him to close the files and look up.

A few moments later, the double doors that were the only way in or out of the room opened and a number of people, numbering approximately a dozen entered, filed around the table and took their seats.

The low lighting in the room meant many of them were all but hidden in the dark, their facial features unseen but Taylor knew who each and every one of them were for, over the last eight years, he had personally selected and recruited The Committee's members from a vast range of sources and organisations.

"Good evening my good and dear friends" Taylor then pronounced once the others were settled and he had their full attention, "I think we can all agree it has been an interesting day so far."

Murmurs and nods of agreement which Taylor could just about make out in the darkness of the meeting room confirmed his opinion.

"As you can see from our hastily drawn up agenda ladies and gentlemen, we have a couple of matter that need our immediate attention" Taylor then continued, "Namely the Prime Minister and her sudden abuse of power and the National Security & Police Service which our associate Ms Burgette was supposed to have taken charge of today until her, I admit rather amusing ejection from the premises by Chief Superintendent Caverner earlier this morning."

"Sir" a softly but very politely spoken voice called from somewhere down the meeting table, "With your permission we would like to try for a legal injunction" the individual suggested, "We can facilitate a High Court hearing tomorrow morning."

"I like the sound of that" Taylor agreed.

"The duty High Court Judge for tomorrow's sessions is Sir Stephen Browne who unfortunately is not part of our programme but with some suitable pressure applied, he could be seen to rule at least partially in our favour?" the individual confirmed.

"Interesting..." Taylor responded, "What about the Attorney General?" he then asked.

"The Attorney General, Ian Morris is more than likely to be appointed the legal representation for the National Security & Police Service" the voice confirmed, "However there are other options open to us..."

"The Prime Minister" another voice in the darkness concluded.

“Indeed” Taylor agreed, “We would need to bring her to us of course” he then commented “which actually would help, two birds with one stone as it were.”

“I have a reliable team ready on call for that” the second voice confidently confirmed, “They just need confirmation, location and payment of course.”

“It would help us if any proposed operation could be, ahem, linked to the Ixion Brotherhood” the first individual then suggested.

“Ah yes, our wonderful cover all fall guys” Taylor remarked with a smirk, “Let it be done” he then declared.

“By Your Command...” the first individual respectfully confirmed.

“There is one other fly in the ointment though” Taylor continued “What about young Jack Regent?”

“Well, assuming that we are successful in having Ms Burgette reinstated to her rightful position” a third individual at the table responded, “There is no reason why she cannot then proceed with some directives, suitably worded and even get our military friends to help with that little problem.”

“All right” Taylor agreed “We get the Prime Minister to rescind her orders, we force through Burgette’s case and get her reinstated then we get her to deal with the troublesome young Divisional Commander Jack Regent.”

“How far do we go with this Sir” another individual at the meeting called from the far end.

“I will consider the matter overnight” Taylor confirmed “but we rule no course of action out, is that understood everyone?”

“By Your Command...” they all responded in reverent unison.

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“Right, time to meet Megan for a somewhat late lunch” Jack then declared, looking at his watch with some concern.

“Practically teatime” Eisley commented as Jack hastily grabbed his uniform overcoat.

“Yes, rather” Jack agreed, “If anything comes up, text my mobile and I will call you when I am free.”

“You got it, boss” Eisley confirmed.

“Right...” Jack then double checked he had everything, “Here we go.”

“Have a nice time Sir” Eisley called as Jack duly departed.

No sooner had Jack left than the telephone on his desk began to ring, making Easley double back to answer it.

“Divisional Commander's Office, Easley speaking” he duly answered.

The message was an urgent one as demonstrated by the look of concern that came over Easley as he listened.

“Right, he's just left so I will run after him” Easley then confirmed, “I'll call you back.”

Within moments, Easley was running down the corridor and headed down the stairs as fast as his legs could carry him.

By the time he had reached the ground floor however, Jack was already out in the street and approaching a waiting black cab.

Jack smiled as he saw Megan in her motorised wheelchair, waiting for him in the back of the cab.

“Hello love” Megan called, slightly awkwardly.

“Hello gorgeous” Jack responded, “Are you okay?” he then asked with obvious concern.

“It's erm...” Megan began “...complicated.”

It was then that she reached out and placed a small round disk like object on Jack's lower right arm.

“What...?” Jack began to respond before collapsing to the ground, unconscious where two men in identical dark grey suits appeared and caught him, bundling him inside the cab before following inside themselves.

Easley witnessed the latter part of the incident from a short distance away and began to run towards the cab, only just reaching it as the door slammed shut and it sped away at high speed.

“Oh hell...” Easley responded as he quickly reached for his radio.

“Lima Tango Control from Lima Tango Two” he called, “Urgent...”

At that point he stopped when a tall man standing immediately behind and to his right, politely placed his hand on Easley's shoulder.

“Good afternoon Commander Easley, Sir Richard Crowthorne” the familiar figure introduced himself, proffering his official identification.

“We've met before, haven't we?” Easley responded, understandably somewhat



confused.

“Our paths have almost certainly crossed in the past, yes” Sir Richard duly confirmed.

“What about my Guvnor?” Easley then asked.

“Be assured young man, that what you have just witnessed a few moments ago is of no concern or worry to yourself or your colleagues” Sir Richard calmly and smoothly reassured, “Your commanding officer is in safe hands, this did not happen, and I was never here...”

Easley looked on with a distinctly confused expression.

“Have a pleasant evening” Sir Richard then called, tugging his forelock and smiling before walking away and disappearing from sight like he was never there.

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It was with a somewhat groggy and slurred yawn that Jack regained consciousness, gradually opening his eyes to find himself lying on a sofa in a dark room with only a small lamp on an adjacent table providing any illumination.

“Oh, my head...” Jack remarked as he gingerly sat up and looked around before checking himself.

Where the tranquillisation pad had been slapped on, there was just a slightly itchy patch of skin.

The one thing that Jack found somewhat odd though given he had apparently been kidnapped was that his radio, mobile phone and his sidearm were all still present and correct.

“Hmm...” Jack remarked as he checked his mobile but discovered there was no signal which rendered it effectively useless.

One thing it could still do was its torch function which he used to better illuminate the room he found himself in.

It was a small room, enough space for the sofa, a chair and a table but little else.

One wall looked very old, being curved upwards and tiled; the opposite wall with the door looked more modern with a simplistic block work construction.

It was then that Jack noticed that the curved wall had markings; the predominantly white tiling had a black frieze motif running longitudinally along it of a pattern that seemed distantly familiar to him.

Voices were suddenly heard in the distance outside, causing Jack to extinguish the light and move cautiously over to the door.

As the voices and their accompanying footsteps faded into the distance, Jack relaxed a little and proceeded to try the door, discovering to his surprise that it was unlocked.

Opening the door carefully revealed a brightly lit corridor, other doors and the distant sound of conversations and ringing telephones echoing ethereally through the complex.

“Okay...” Jack quietly remarked to himself as he cautiously slipped out into the corridor and moved forward towards where most of the sounds of activity were coming from.

“Ah, Jack!” called a voice from behind him causing him to swing around, startled.

“Commander Monroe?” Jack responded, still a bit groggy from the tranquilizer and disorientated by the strange location he had woken up in.

“Good to see you again” Monroe confirmed, stepping forward where they proceeded to shake hands, “It's been a long time.”

“That it has” Jack agreed, “Where have you been hiding?” he then asked.

“Down here mostly” Monroe indicated around him.

“Here being...” Jack thought for a moment, “King William Street Station?”

“How did you guess that?” Monroe asked, somewhat surprised.

“Tiling back there” Jack explained, “Unless I was in a staircase at Elephant & Castle or crammed into a London Transport Museum artefacts case in Acton, there was only one other possible place I could be.”

“So much for keeping your location secret” Monroe concluded although deep down he wasn't that surprised really.

“Sorry to ruin the surprise” Jack reassured him, “Anyway, why am I here and what the hell is going on?” he then asked.

“All will be explained” Monroe confirmed, “They are waiting for you in the Conference Room, far end on the left.”

“Thanks” Jack responded before heading off down the corridor.

“Welcome to X-Ray Division young man” Monroe then remarked as he watched Jack disappear out of sight.

Making his way down the corridor, the sounds of activity grew louder until he reached the door that Monroe had indicated, knocked politely and entered.

“Well, well, well...” Jack remarked as he looked around the room where he found Tracy, MI5 Operations Commander Christopher Dent, Sir Richard and Megan around

a large meeting table that dominated the centre of the room, “I have a headache the size of a small nuclear reactor and you all have some *serious* explaining to do.”

“Sorry love” Megan apologetically responded, “We needed to bring you in without you realising where you were, just in case of any possible complications.”

“Too late for that one, I have already worked out where I am” Jack replied, “So, what is going on then?”

“Have a seat and we shall begin” Sir Richard indicated a vacant chair next to Megan which Jack slowly lowered himself into, the after effects of the tranquiliser still causing him some issues.

“Welcome to X-Ray Section, Divisional Commander” Tracy duly declared.

“X-Ray Section?” Jack responded, “I thought that was just a myth?”

“That’s what we like people to think” Sir Richard admitted “Makes things so much simpler, less paperwork, no awkward questions or having to lie to the Prime Minister repeatedly.”

“When has that ever stopped you?” Dent wryly remarked.

“Err, quite...” Sir Richard agreed.

“The Secret Service within the Security Service” Jack recalled, “So how did you get mixed up in all this, love?” he then asked Megan.

“Sir Richard came to see me about eighteen months ago, X-Ray Section needed eyes and ears in the Legal Community and I as your other half and with some understanding of the National Security & Police Service was the perfect choice” Megan explained, “Also there is this...” she then produced a USB type memory stick.

“Given to you for safekeeping by the late Divisional Commander Appleby a few days after the death of The Commander by any chance?” Jack ventured to a look of surprise from those around the table, “I wasn’t as fast asleep on the sofa that evening as you and my old Guvnor believed” he went on to explain.

“Is there anything you don’t know?” Tracy asked, more out of curiosity than anything else.

“Erm, next week’s lottery numbers, Sir Richard’s middle name and, oh...” Jack then recalled and reached into his inside tunic pocket and produced the photograph that Easley had given him earlier that day, “the name of this fellow” he confirmed, holding up the photograph before placing it in the centre of the table for all to see.

“Who is this guy?” Tracy asked as she looked at the photograph before passing it around.

“His name, life story and current whereabouts, I don’t know” Jack admitted, “What I

do know is that this still came from a videotape that Appleby had squirreled away for safekeeping with the Station Manager of Holborn tube station” he went on to explain, “The gentleman you are looking at there is the man responsible for the slaying of my former colleague Connor Shelby and the bombing of the Transport Division offices in Holborn three years ago.”

“What?” Dent responded, clearly surprised, “We trawled through every bit of CCTV we could find in the immediate aftermath of that bomb exploding and found nothing.”

“Probably because someone, somewhere did a very smart job of hacking into the CCTV systems and ensuring that the passage of our mystery guest here went completely unrecorded” Jack explained, “Appleby noted in the logs he had delivered to me that in his unofficial investigations, all computer controlled CCTV systems in the area were clearly tampered with by an outside source.”

“So how did this image come to light?” Tracy asked, clearly puzzled.

“The footage that this image was taken from came from an old tape based system that, luckily for us someone forgot to decommission when the snazzy new computer controlled digital systems were installed” Jack explained, “Appleby seems to have discovered this but for some reason, political pressure most likely, he sat on it, kept it safe until the time was right.”

“That time being now?” Tracy ventured with some concern.

“It would seem so, yes” Jack reluctantly agreed, “I have had my suspicions for some considerable time that Appleby was working on some sort of pet investigation project off the books and the fruits of his labours have now come into my possession.”

“You know it is possible that his death was possibly the result of someone finding out about his investigations and wanting him silenced” Dent suggested.

“The thought had crossed my mind” Jack agreed, “I am willing to bet though that whoever either ordered or carried out his murder did not expect to find me stepping into the hot seat as a result.”

“You are in the crosshairs now though” Sir Richard ominously warned.

“I’m used to it” Jack admitted, all be it with a certain sense of discomfort.

“So, after three years, we finally have a face” Tracy remarked as she looked at the photograph once again.

“What’s on the memory stick?” Dent then asked.

“A very good question, here you are” Megan declared as she formally handed it over to Jack.

“Can I use a computer?” Jack then asked.

“Here you go” Dent called, passing over a laptop that Jack then opened and switched on.

“Right, where’s the hole?” Jack then asked himself before locating the port and inserting the memory stick.

“Can you put it up on the big screen?” Tracy then asked.

“I think so, hang on” Jack responded before clicking a couple of links on his screen whereupon what he was seeing was now displayed to all in the room.

“Looks like a video file” Dent remarked “Quite an old format too.”

“Hello Jack” boomed Appleby’s voice over the speakers as he appeared on screen, “I am lodging this message with Megan for safekeeping, it is twenty-four hours since The Commander’s death and I am concerned that those I suspect of being behind the attacks will come after me and destroy what evidence I have if they find out.”

“Sounds ominous...” Tracy remarked.

“I remember when he gave this to me” Megan commented, “I didn’t mention it at the time and he was doing a pretty good job of hiding it, but he was almost trembling.”

“Two years ago,” Appleby continued “an old friend of mine came to me with a concern, rumours of what he called a ‘Government beneath the Government’ with bold ambitions, well financed, very slick and yet almost completely anonymous. They supposedly make clever use of fronts, fake identities, other more public groups and organisations as well as individuals, manipulating them from behind the scenes, often without them even realising.”

“Interesting...” Sir Richard responded, like the others in the room, paying very close attention and deep in thought.

“I don’t have much to go on, but I have started some discreet snooping around” Appleby resumed “but I am certain they have something to do with what has been going on around here in the last six months or so, the attacks yesterday were just another stepping stone in a long term plan.”

“A Black Project in all but name...” Dent concluded to nods of agreement.

“I am willing to bet that within the next few hours or days, this Group will present a suitably prepped and validated fall guy to take the responsibility for the death of The Commander” Appleby continued.

“That would be the former Mayor of London, Alfred Oscar I presume?” Jack asked.

“If the shoe fits...” Tracy agreed.

“Meanwhile, whilst whoever takes the rap gets well and truly grilled, those who this Group continue to have a use for will be protected and laundered, ready for future

stages of their plans” Appleby confirmed.

“Take your pick for that list” Dent remarked, “The Ixion Brotherhood, what is left of The Hand plus the half dozen groups of wackos, nutters, loons and fully paid up members of the tin foil hat brigade who have proliferated and grown over the last few years.”

“The pandemic must have been a golden opportunity to whoever this group is” Tracy concluded “and they have played their cards very efficiently.”

“I don’t have much to go on” Appleby then continued “My contact mentioned just one word, Cato and two days after our conversation, he was found dead at the end of a rope on Hampstead Heath.”

“Hampstead Heath again...” Jack commented thoughtfully.

“Huh?” Tracy asked.

“I’ll explain in a minute” Jack then confirmed as the recording continued.

“I also have two names that I have been unable to verify” Appleby called “Taylor and Cooper but there the trail runs cold.”

“Drawing a blank here but I can check” Dent admitted.

“Now Jack” Appleby called “Megan will be under strict instructions to only give you this recording if, or I suspect possibly when something happens to me. Also, if that happens, you should receive a delivery of all my material I have amassed up until that point.”

“Got it, boss” Jack confirmed.

“Be careful lad” Appleby then sincerely warned, “These people, whoever they are, are ruthless in the extreme and will kill anyone who they think may be on to them so watch your back, take care and one day I will see you on the other side.”

At that point the recording ended, and the screen went blank leaving just the hum of the laptop and the lights the only sounds audible for a few moments.

“Thoughts?” Tracy then urged.

“It all dovetails in with what we suspect but thus far have been unable to prove” Dent concluded, “A conspiracy of some kind, a Black Project designed to manipulate, coerce and control with the ultimate goal of effectively taking over the country.”

“The Committee by any chance?” Megan suggested “They seem to have been meddling sight unseen in pretty much every area of the Justice & Legal system it would seem, and I gather from what Jack has told me that the Security & Police Service is in much the same position.”

“Stands to reason” Sir Richard agreed, “There has been a concerted effort over the last five years or so to either remove key people from their positions, strip them of any useful powers like the Prime Minister and put their own people in place, many of them potential cannon fodder whilst the puppet masters work silently in the background.”

“I bet they were pissed off when I rolled back into town this morning” Tracy remarked with a rather satisfied grin.

“That most definitely was not in their script” Dent agreed “Look at the reaction of Burgette and you can see how annoyed they must be.”

“I just heard that she is putting in a well financed legal challenge in to the High Court tomorrow by the way” Megan then added “It isn’t over yet.”

“Leave that to me” Sir Richard confirmed “I still have some contacts in the halls of power that can tie her up in legal knots for years if necessary.”

“Just keep that cow out of my personal orbit” Tracy strongly advised “or I won’t be responsible for my actions!”

“Consider it done” Sir Richard responded affirmatively.

“Going back to Appleby’s material” Dent then continued, addressing Jack, “Did you get anything else?”

“A crate was delivered earlier today by a Security Service Archives Internal Secure Messenger” Jack confirmed “personally addressed to me from Appleby with instructions that it was to be sent immediately after the Archive was notified formally of his death.”

“Anything interesting?” Tracy asked.

“I haven’t gone through all the material yet, but I can confirm it seems to contain years worth of observations, notes, files and photographs including further pictures of chummy here” he indicated the photograph of the Holborn Bomber still lying on the table in front of them “plus a few others, most interestingly the former Mayor, Alfred Oscar and a guy possibly called Taylor.”

“I have been thinking” Dent remarked as he picked up the photograph again, “I wonder if this guy is the one we have referred to in the office as The Invisible Man?”

“Come again?” Tracy prompted.

“You remember five years ago when The Hand arrived here in the UK and hooked up with the so-called Soldiers of Ixion and promptly unleashed carnage and chaos on the streets?” Dent then asked.

“Hardly likely to forget...” Tracy quietly confirmed, a feeling shared by all in the room.

“Well, in the aftermath of that mess” Dent continued to explain “I had a team work with John Hewitt over at MI6 and his opposite number in the New People’s Free Republic of Mobuto tracking down all remaining elements of The Hand still in circulation.”

“Took a while if I recall” Sir Richard remarked.

“Over a year” Dent confirmed “Of the seventeen that landed in the UK, we managed to account for fifteen of them straight away including Adebese and Torore who, once we had finished with them were immediately deported back to Mobuto where they were promptly tried and executed, the other two skipped the country but were found in Morocco and they won’t be bothering anyone anymore.”

“The Invisible Man?” Tracy then prompted.

“The group of The Hand that came over to the UK were their elite special crack troops, real hard cases” Dent continued to explain “but there was one that they left at home, rumour being that he was too crazy and violent to be allowed out to play.”

“I think I can see where this is going...” Tracy concluded.

“The Mobuto authorities immediately launched a major operation to clear out the supporters and members of The Hand in the wake of the ‘tragic accidental’ death of their former President” Dent confirmed “but they never found this one guy, no photograph exists on record that we know of, just a name ‘Delfont’ and a record of extreme violence, manic tendencies, a guy who likes to maim and kill for fun as well as cause.”

“No wonder they left him at home” Jack remarked.

“No photograph, hence The Invisible Man” Megan concluded.

“Exactly” Dent confirmed “Now” he tapped the photograph “I am seriously wondering if this is him.”

“It would explain a few things” Jack added, “The carefully coordinated CCTV blackout, the smokescreen that the bombing investigation was enveloped in, effectively closing it down, maybe even why Appleby was killed.”

“How are you getting on with that?” Tracy then asked.

“Bit of a mystery to be honest” Jack explained “There is no evidence to suggest he was killed where I found him, indeed nothing to indicate he ever entered the old Aldwych station at all which suggests he was killed elsewhere then his body smuggled via a subterranean access to its final resting place specifically for me to find.”

“What about those two Underground engineers you mentioned?” Megan asked.



“It seems they do not exist and the CCTV from the University building across the road shows there is no way they could have made it down to the lower level, discovered his body and come back up again in the timeframe that it shows” Jack confirmed.

“Bait...” Sir Richard concluded “You have been led right into a nicely laid out pantomime I reckon.”

“I managed to track down Appleby’s car though but again another mystery presents itself” Jack then continued, “Parked neatly in leafy Hampstead, one set of car keys in his pocket when he was found, the other set still in my desk at Holborn at the time, a full tank of petrol and receipt from a fuel station just five minutes away from where the car was found, dated two weeks ago which ties in with the fine layer of deposited dust on the exterior.”

“What the hell was he doing in Hampstead?” Dent asked.

“I have no idea” Jack admitted “There is no sign on CCTV of him entering either of the two nearest Underground Stations, Hampstead or Golders Green yet somehow he wound up on the Underground system to finish up being dumped in the depths of Aldwych.”

“Where did you say you found his car?” Dent then asked as he started to work on the laptop in front of him.

“Hampstead” Jack confirmed as he checked his notebook “a little side street called Hampstead Way.”

“Right” Dent called, “I was always told by my old Guvnor that you may find things easier when you put a pin in a map, only these days it’s all high tech.”

“My husband would have looked on completely non-plussed right now” Tracy amusingly remarked.

“He never was one for technology, was he?” Sir Richard agreed.

“Here we go, sunny Hampstead” Dent then declared as a map appeared on the main screen, “Where exactly did you find his car?” he then asked.

“Err...” Jack responded, pushing his chair back, getting up and going over to the screen, “Just about here” he then indicated on the map.

“Huh...” Dent then remarked, “Not exactly much there I must say.”

“Dictionary definition of leafy up market suburbia” Jack confirmed.

“I know a good pub just around the corner from there” Sir Richard remarked.

“You know a good pub pretty much everywhere” Tracy pointed out.

“Less now since that pandemic though” Megan added with a tinge of sadness.

“Indeed” Sir Richard sadly confirmed.

“Done a door to door?” Dent then asked Jack as he returned to his seat.

“I got the local Nick to do the honours” he confirmed “One resident said they saw a man that fits Appleby’s description park the car up one afternoon about two weeks ago and then disappear, nobody else saw anything.”

“Bull & Bush” Sir Richard then suddenly called out.

“You can get pills for that I expect” Tracy jokingly mocked.

“The name of the pub around the corner” Sir Richard then explained.

“Oh...” Jack responded with a look of sincere realisation.

“The joke wasn’t that bad, was it?” Tracy asked.

“It’s not that, I just realised something” Jack replied before turning to Dent, “Chris, could you superimpose over the map the actual physical location of all Underground lines in the area please.”

“Err, yes I think so, hang on” Dent confirmed, “Here you go.”

At that moment a pair of curved parallel lines appeared on the map, running right through the location where Appleby’s car was found.

“Bingo!” Jack then called to looks of confusion from the others in the room, “That is how he got into the Underground.”

“What?” Tracy responded, “Did he dig a hole or something?”

“No” Jack explained “The hole is already there; the key was Sir Richard here mentioning the Bull & Bush pub.”

“Nope, sorry, you’ve lost me” Dent remarked.

“I think I know” Megan then added.

“When what is now the Northern Line was being constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century” Jack began to explain “there was going to be a station between Golders Green and Hampstead called North End which over the years got nicknamed Bull & Bush on account of the aforementioned pub around the corner.”

“Going to be?” Tracy prompted.

“They only got as far as building the track level tunnels for what would have been the platforms, associated passageways, etcetera before they decided it was going to be

uneconomic so they pulled the plug” Jack continued, “The station building was going to be sited on that corner where Appleby’s car was found and there is a surface access shaft right there which served the old floodgate control room that was installed there in the 1950’s but has long since been abandoned.”

“So that explains how Appleby got in” Dent concluded “It doesn’t tell us why he was there though.”

“No, unfortunately it doesn’t” Jack agreed “But I think I am going to have to go down there and find out.”

“In the meantime, I will see what this photograph turns up when I run it through the computer” Dent remarked as he picked up the picture, “May I keep this?” he then asked.

“Of course” Jack confirmed “and I will send copies of the others from Appleby’s archive over in the morning if it will help.”

“Oh, yes please” Dent responded, “I for one would dearly like to clear up the mystery of the so called Invisible Man once and for all.”

“Good work” Tracy complimented, “So, what about The Committee then?” she then asked.

“Oh, no one sees The Committee” Sir Richard and Dent responded in sarcastic unison.

“Everyone keeps saying that” Tracy then remarked, “Where are they?” she asked.

“All we know is that The Committee is made up of approximately a dozen or so members” Dent confirmed “We have no idea who they are, where they are, what they are called or what their ultimate aims are, about the only thing we do know apart from their control and influence is that they are based ‘somewhere’ in London.”

“Doesn’t exactly narrow it down, does it?” Megan remarked.

“We know they have support staff, possibly numbering approximately a hundred” Sir Richard added, “All the office accommodation in Greater London was discreetly checked by Chris and myself, made a bit easier when a lot of it became vacant because of the pandemic but nothing obvious was found.”

“Perhaps they are underground?” Tracy then suggested.

“It’s possible I suppose” Dent concluded, “Maybe that is why Appleby was poking around North End?”

“I’ll take a look down there first thing tomorrow morning” Jack agreed.

“Be careful” Tracy warned, “Watch your back.”

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The Prime Minister was trying to relax as she paced around her personal apartment above Number Eleven Downing Street, but it was no good.

She had tried everything she could think of to try and unwind and lose some of the built up tension she had accumulated, a long shower, chocolate, freshly brewed coffee, wandering around in the near darkness in her study barefoot but nothing was working.

“Oh, what are you doing you stupid woman?!?” the Prime Minister then asked herself as she noticed her reflection in the glass oven door in the kitchen.

“Ah, to hell with it” she then declared, “If all else fails, try wine...”

She immediately went over to the wine rack at far end of the kitchen and selected the best bottle on offer before taking a glass out of the overhead rack, looking at it thoughtfully for a few moments and then replacing it and taking out a larger glass instead.

“A drink, a big drink...” the Prime Minister commented to herself as she duly poured herself some wine before holding up the glass to the dim light and looking at it.

“Cheers!” she then called, raising her glass to no one before duly taking a good gulp of wine.

She was about to take another gulp when something made a noise somewhere else in the apartment which caused her to pause and listen intently for a few moments.

“Humphrey?” the Prime Minister then called, referring to the official Downing Street cat that could usually be found prowling the area, “Is that you?”

Instinct told her however it was not the cat, something was wrong and so the Prime Minister carefully placed her glass down and reached over to the side, picking up her small handbag that she duly put over her shoulder.

The noise, a slight squeak or something similar occurred again and this duly put her on edge.

“Definitely not the cat...” she remarked to herself before slowly walking out of the kitchen and on into the dark dining room.

Suddenly there was a loud crash as Humphrey the cat jumped down from the top of the display cabinet, landing on the dining table right in front of her and giving her the fright of her life.

“Oh thanks, you stupid cat!” the Prime Minister jokingly responded, still somewhat in shock as Humphrey scuttled off into the darkness.

“Dear God...” she then remarked before looking around, “Now, where did I put that

wine?" she promptly asked herself as she headed back towards the kitchen.

It was as the Prime Minister entered the kitchen that a figure, dressed all in black emerged silently from the shadows and grabbed her, a hand firmly across the face to muffle her screams as a tranquiliser pad was applied to her arm and moments later she collapsed unconscious to the floor.

"Let's move" the man who had initially grabbed her called whereupon three further individuals, also all dressed completely in black appeared and proceeded to carry the unconscious Prime Minister away.

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"Welcome to X-Ray Division's nerve centre" Tracy called as she and Megan showed Jack into the main Control Room situated on the upper floor at the east end of the former station platform tunnel with its distinctive curved tiled roof overhead showing its former function clearly.

"Nice little set up" Jack remarked as he looked around the room where there were half a dozen officers on duty at computer terminals, gathering information and making telephone calls with Operations Commander Monroe overseeing it all from the front most desk.

"When the Underground engineers were using the old station tunnels as an access point for the Northern Line upgrade works a couple of years ago, we took the opportunity for a little sympathetic remodelling and redecoration when they were finished" Tracy explained, "It also meant we could reopen the old wartime shelter access shaft in Arthur Street and put a proper lift in."

"Hence how you got in here love" Jack remarked to Megan.

"No way was I ever going to get down the old spiral staircase, not with these legs" Megan admitted as she indicated the electric wheelchair, she was sat in.

"We have a number of carefully placed sources all over the City and beyond" Tracy continued to explain "They pass anything of potential interest through secure communications and it all comes here for detailed analysis and actioning where required."

"How long has this been going on?" Jack then asked.

"X-Ray Division was first created about thirty years ago" Tracy confirmed "During that time it has been mothballed on and off from time to time, being reactivated as required. The current operations restarted in full about three years ago at my personal request."

"Was Appleby aware of all this?" Jack then gestured around the room.

"No" Tracy replied, "I deliberately took the decision to keep him out of the loop as it became obvious that he was digging into something and being your superior officer, I

didn't want to drag you into anything either."

"A situation that has now changed..." Jack concluded.

"You became the new Transport Division Chief and started digging around in the supposedly closed down Holborn Bombing investigation" Tracy explained "That meant it was highly likely you would be getting in harms way and eventually you would have probably discovered all this, so we took the decision to bring you in."

"How's your head?" Megan then asked, still clearly concerned.

"Still a bit blurry..." Jack admitted with a wry smile.

"Sorry about that" Tracy responded "It should wear off after a few hours and a decent nights sleep" she then reassured him.

"Decent nights sleep?" Jack replied, "What's that?"

"Yeah..." Tracy reluctantly agreed.

"So anyway" Jack returned to the subject at hand "as X-Ray Section seems to have people everywhere, who is your man or woman in my Department?" he asked.

"Lieutenant Grant" Tracy confirmed, "She is our eyes and ears in Holborn, thanks for appointing her to your investigation team, most helpful."

"Small world, isn't it?" Jack mused.

-----

"Morning boss" Easley called as Jack entered the office, "Interesting evening?" he then asked.

"Enlightening I think would be the word" Jack admitted as he went around and sat behind his desk, "So, what have I missed."

"Forensics reports" Easley confirmed, handing over some documents, "A thorough scan of the car revealed absolutely nothing, effectively Appleby just parked the car and walked away."

"I think I have worked out why he was there though" Jack responded to a look of interest from Easley, "Hang on a second" he then prompted as he reached across to the shelf, sought a particular book then flicked through it until he found the page that he was looking for and then passed it across, "Here you go."

"North End Station" Easley read from the book, "Never heard of it."

"Not many have" Jack confirmed, "It was only ever partially built and never completed or opened but the access point from ground level into the unfinished tunnels down below on the Northern Line is right next to where Appleby's car was

parked.”

“Well, that explains a few things” Eislely remarked as he continued to read the book before handing it back.

“If it wasn’t for Sir Richard recalling the name of the local boozier, I might never have thought of it” Jack then admitted.

“Ah, Sir Richard Crowthorne” Eislely recalled, “I saw him last night, just after you, erm... left shall we say?”

“He told me all about it” Jack confirmed, “Best you don’t know the details for now, I will fill you in at a later date.”

“Fair enough boss” Eislely readily agreed, “the other report is on the Forensics findings on Appleby’s body.”

“Anything interesting?” Jack then asked.

“Clear evidence of dust and dirt in the impact wound on the back of his head indicating he was struck somewhere dark, dirty and probably disused but as you surmised, not where you found him.”

“Killed elsewhere and then moved to Aldwych specifically for me to find?” Jack summarised.

“It looks like it” Eislely agreed.

“What was it?” Jack then wondered, “A message? A warning?”

“I reckon a bit of both” Eislely concluded “The question is though, from whom?”

“Indeed” Jack agreed.

“Oh, one other thing cropped up last night” Eislely then remembered, “There was a major power outage which took out a large section of the centre of the Piccadilly Line last night for about two or three minutes.”

“How big a section?” Jack asked.

“Pretty big” Eislely confirmed as he checked his notes, “Erm, Hyde Park Corner right through to Warren Street inclusive.”

“That is pretty much the entire central London section” Jack confirmed, checking the London Underground Tube Map on the wall nearby.

“London Underground’s tech guys have spent all of last night and well into this morning crawling around in every duct, cable run and connection cabinet they have got trying to locate the cause of the outage but have found absolutely nothing” Eislely confirmed, “The Duty Line Controller said it was as if someone somewhere had

simply flipped a switch and turned it all off as you would a domestic light bulb in your house.”

“You got the report there?” Jack asked.

“Commander Baxter is looking into it” Eislely explained “He used to work on power distribution systems before he joined the Service, so he knows a bit about this stuff.”

“Tell him to get a copy of everything he finds over to New Scotland Yard for the attention of Commander Fuller” Jack then requested, “It’s a just a hunch but I am wondering if there is something a little more sinister than a simple power failure here.”

“Will do boss” Eislely agreed.

“Are Grant, Cornell and Tarbett around by any chance?” Jack then asked.

“I think they are all in the Investigation Room at the moment” Eislely recalled.

“Right...” Jack duly responded as he got up, “We have got work to do.”

-----

“Gareth!” Dent called as he entered the office and motioned for his Deputy to join him.

“Morning Sir” Pointer responded as he duly followed his superior through to the inner office and closed the door where Dent was already sat down behind his desk waiting for him.

“The Invisible Man” Dent then called.

“David McCallum in the 1975 TV series or Claude Rains in the original 1933 H G Wells cinematic version?” Pointer responded.

“Good memory but neither” Dent confirmed, “This guy in fact” he then produced the photograph Jack had given him the previous evening.

“Who is this chap?” Pointer then asked, looking at the photograph.

“That there is the first and possibly only known image we have of the Holborn Bomber” Dent then declared with a rather satisfied smile.

“What? How?” Pointer then responded, “The CCTV was all blank, the eyewitnesses were useless, we had little if anything even before The Committee swept all our investigation away.”

“The late Divisional Commander Appleby must have foreseen the closing down of the investigation and, amongst other interesting little titbits now in the possession of his young successor was a VHS tape from which this little gem of a photo was obtained”



Dent explained.

“And you think this is our missing member of The Hand, our Invisible Man?” Pointer then asked.

“Yes Gareth, that is exactly what I think” Dent agreed, “and we have a potential name, Delfont.”

“Not one that rings any bells with me I will admit, boss” Gareth remarked as he tried to recall the name.

“It could be a phoney I.D. of course” Dent continued “There was also a couple of other names noted” he then checked his notes “Taylor and Cooper.”

“This may be a coincidence, but Cooper was the name that was attributed to that arms dealer in Africa who outfitted The Hand and several other rather unpleasant individuals and groups a few years ago, you remember?” Pointer recalled “Jack Regent stumbled across it when he recovered those weapons from the dead Ixion Soldier that he shot at East Croydon that time.”

“Ah yes, I remember” Dent agreed, “Could be a coincidence I suppose but we had best check.”

“I’ll get on it right away” Pointer responded.

“Whatever this guy is called, he was definitely in the UK three years ago when the Holborn attack happened” Dent then summarised “That means at some point he slipped into the country without us knowing and I don’t like that.”

“No Sir” Pointer agreed.

“Now, he may still be in the country, or he may not but wherever he is, I want this bastard and I also want whoever has been signing his pay cheques and protecting him” Dent insisted.

“Now we have a picture of this guy, wherever he is, I’ll find him” Pointer confirmed.

“Clear your desk, delegate everything you currently are working on to someone else, I don’t care who as long as it is not me of course” Dent then instructed, “Throw money at this, as much as it takes, kick over rocks, shake trees, dial up ever snout, contact and informant we have, for as far as I am concerned, from now on our number one priority is find that man!”

-----

It was a busy scene in the Main Investigation Room when Jack walked in.

“This is what I like to see ladies and gentlemen, hard graft!” he remarked with a wry grin.

“Thank you, Sir,” Cornell responded, looking up from his computer screen briefly.

“So, what have we got so far?” Jack then asked.

“I have talked to the Forensics guys” Grant confirmed, “They are ninety five percent in agreement that Appleby was killed the same day as the date on the petrol receipt you found in his car and the CCTV from the petrol station shows him clear as day” she then passed across a couple of still photographs taken from the tape.

“Apparently if we can find a location of death, they have enough dust and dirt to match it to” Tarbett added.

“They are a clever bunch” Eislely remarked.

“That is why they get paid the big money and get to wear white coats all day” Jack added.

“We’ve looked around his flat too, Sir” Russell called across, “Nothing there of interest, the unopened mail and best before dates on the food and milk in his fridge all point to the same day for his disappearance.”

“So, let’s nail that day in place on our timeline” Jack then declared, “Any luck finding those two bogus London Transport engineers by any chance?” he then asked.

“Nothing doing Sir” Grant confirmed, “Checked everything we can think of, even down to scrolling through former employees and tracing the whereabouts of every single van in London Transport’s road fleet, nothing.”

“Keep working on it” Jack then prompted, “Anything fresh on the Holborn bomb investigation?” he then asked.

“I have had a quiet drink with an old friend over at Bow Road” Cornell responded, “Now whilst it appears that when the investigation was shut down, they cleared all the material out, there are still a couple of officers there who were amongst the first to arrive on the scene and I am going to run that photograph we have got past them later, see if it rings any bells.”

“Keep me informed” Jack urged, “Meanwhile we have some errands to run, Lieutenant Grant” he then called “I want your eyes and ears with me.”

“Yes Sir” Grant confirmed as she got up and grabbed her uniform tunic, “Where are we going?”

“North End” Jack replied.

“Err, never heard of it Sir” Grant responded.

“Not many have” Jack confirmed “But it may well be the reason why Appleby parked his car where he did, so I intend to start following the trail from there, see where it leads.”

“Yes Sir” Grant agreed.

“Commander Tarbett” Jack then called, “I want you to start discretely checking any underground facilities, locations, abandoned or otherwise, anywhere which could be used for some sort of co-ordinated operation but shouldn’t have anyone there.”

“The Underground and the sewer network aside, that is quite a maze to cover” Tarbett advised.

“I agree” Jack replied, “but somewhere in Greater London, someone or more likely a group of someone’s are hiding so start snooping around” he instructed “but if you do stumble across anything likely, don’t tip them off, come directly to me with your findings and we will take it from there.”

“Understood Sir” Tarbett agreed.

“Right then Lieutenant Grant” Jack then called, “Let’s go.”

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“Come on, where the hell are you?” Jennifer Caverner asked as she impatiently tapped her fingertips on the steering wheel of her VIP Protection Division car.

She had been waiting outside Number Ten Downing Street for nearly twenty minutes now for the Prime Minister to appear as she was due to travel to New Parliament House.

Having been parked there for so long, the military presence inside the Westminster Security Zone in which Downing Street is situated was starting to get suspicious. It had reached a point in the already frosty relations between them and the National Security & Police Service that the military did not like and at best only tolerated Security Service officers inside their secure zones.

Jennifer checked her watch once again before deciding enough was enough.

“Jerry” she called across to her colleague sat alongside her, “This is ridiculous, I am going to go find her, you wait here” she then instructed.

“Right you are” Jerry agreed as Jennifer got out of the car, cast a look of disdain towards the military personnel nearby and then headed for the famous black door of Number Ten where the two military sentries on duty outside wisely stood aside and allowed her to proceed inside.

“Ah, Commander Caverner, I am glad you are here” Nigel Davis, the Home Secretary called on seeing Jennifer arrive in the lobby.

“Where is the Prime Minister?” Jennifer asked, “We should have left over twenty minutes ago.”

“Apparently she is not answering her phone and there is no response from knocking on her door either” the Home Secretary explained.

“Right, come on then” Jennifer declared, taking charge of the situation and heading straight up the main staircase with the Home Secretary following closely behind.

Proceeding up to the third floor and across to above Number Eleven Downing Street, Jennifer found the Prime Minister's Personal Private Secretary at the door to her personal quarters.

“Is she in there?” Jennifer asked, already sensing something was seriously wrong by this point.

“I have no idea” the Personal Private Secretary responded, “There is no answer, nobody has seen her since early yesterday evening.”

Jennifer stepped forward to the door and tried the handle which confirmed it was locked from the inside.

“Prime Minister!” Jennifer then loudly called, accompanied by knocking rapidly on the door, “Are you in there?”

“There is definitely something wrong here” the Home Secretary remarked.

“I think you are right” Jennifer agreed as she reached for her radio “Jerry” she then called to her colleague still sat in the car outside “Get tooled up and get up here pronto” she then ordered.

Moments later Jerry appeared and joined them.

“Right” Jennifer then declared “I am going to force entry, does anyone have any objection or want to insist on a ton of pointless red tape being completed first?”

“I'm good” the Home Secretary confirmed, “Are you going to pick the lock?” he then asked.

“No, that's my sister's area of expertise” Jennifer confirmed as she drew her firearm from its holster and checked it, “I do things the old fashioned way.”

“Erm...?” the Personal Private Secretary began to ask but it was too late as Jennifer proceeded to kick the door in, sending it crashing to the floor in splintered pieces.

“Jerry” Jennifer then called to her colleague, clicking her outstretched fingers towards him before then silently indicating over to the right whilst she then took the left.

The Home Secretary and the Personal Private Secretary both waited in the doorway and watched as the two officers disappeared from view, moving through the darkened apartment.

Jerry carefully scanned around as he crossed the lounge, checking behind sofas,

underneath the coffee table and looking in cupboards but found nothing obviously untoward.

Jennifer meanwhile had reached the kitchen and immediately noticed a smashed wine glass on the floor, its contents forming a pool around the shards.

“Guv!” Jerry called through the apartment “Something odd here you should see!”

Jennifer was kneeling down and taking a closer look at the broken glass and the surrounding scene when Jerry had called.

“I’m in the kitchen!” she called back as she noticed something else tucked just underneath the bottom edge of one of the cabinets.

“Guv, you have got to see this” Jerry then explained as he came into the kitchen.

“What have you got?” Jennifer asked, sitting up on her knees.

“A big hole in the bedroom wall that most definitely wasn’t done by mice” Jerry confirmed.

“Oh dear...” Jennifer responded as an increasingly worrying thought occurred to her, “You got a pen knife or something?” she then asked.

“Try this” Jerry produced a Swiss Army knife from his uniform tunic pocket and passed it down.

“Ah, come out whatever you are...” Jennifer called as she used the blade of the Swiss Army knife to dislodge the object she had discovered and bring it out into the open.

“What’s that?” Jerry asked as Jennifer got out a tissue and used it to pick the small circular object up and then very briefly sniff it before swiftly recoiling.

“Oh...” she responded, holding the object at arms length away from her, “Bag please” she then requested.

“Here you go boss” Jerry responded as he found a clear plastic evidence bag in his pocket and held it open whereupon Jennifer carefully dropped the object inside and took the bag.

“Right, show me this hole” she then prompted whereupon Jerry duly led Jennifer through the apartment to the bedroom.

“Whoa...” Jennifer responded as soon as she saw the large roughly cut hole in the bedroom wall, “Definitely not mice.”

“No boss” Jerry agreed.

“Right, touch nothing” she then instructed before they left the room and headed back to where they had come in.

The Home Secretary and the Personal Private Secretary were both still waiting at the entrance when the two officers returned.

“Okay gentlemen, we have a situation here” Jennifer declared before turning to the Personal Private Secretary and addressing him directly.

“Uh oh...” the Home Secretary responded.

“This is important so listen carefully” Jennifer then instructed, “I want you to find Sir Richard Crowthorne and the National Police Service Chief Superintendent and get them here right now.”

“Yes Ma'am” the Personal Private Secretary confirmed.

“You need to go find them in person” Jennifer then continued to carefully explain “Don't use a phone, no radios, not so much as a bloody carrier pigeon, is that understood?”

“Err, yes” the Personal Private Secretary confirmed although he did not look overly certain.

“Right, now go” she then prompted whereupon the Personal Private Secretary looking somewhat flustered, hurried away.

“Okay, what's going on?” the Home Secretary asked.

“I hope to God I am wrong” Jennifer responded, “but it looks like the Prime Minister has been snatched.”

“Are you sure she hasn't just popped out and not told anyone she was going somewhere?” the Home Secretary suggested.

“Door locked from the inside, large hole in the bedroom wall, broken wine glass on the floor indicating the possibility of a brief struggle and this” Jennifer held up the evidence bag.

“What is that?” Jerry asked, a question also on the Home Secretary's mind too.

“It seems our kidnappers were a little careless and left this behind in their haste to leave” Jennifer explained “This is a wrapper from a tranquilisation pad.”

“A what?” the Home Secretary responded.

“It's a bit of military tech” Jennifer continued to explain “Quite simple really, you have a small disc, no bigger than a jam jar lid which you slap on the arm or back of your target, it almost immediately knocks them out and off you go.”

“Not the sort of thing you get in Waitrose...” Jerry remarked.

“Common field issue to secret security agencies” Jennifer confirmed, “Plenty lying around on the black market if you have the cash and know who to ask.”

“So, what do we do now?” the Home Secretary then asked.

“We keep this strictly need to know for the moment, we don't want to start a panic or give anyone the chance to try and seize the position” Jennifer confirmed.

“Of course, there is the small issue that she was due to appear at New Parliament House in about thirty minutes” the Home Secretary pointed out with clear concern.

“You will have to take her place” Jennifer responded, “Say she has been taken ill, make something up but make it convincing.”

“I am a politician; dazzling bullshit is a required skill set” the Home Secretary confirmed.

“Jerry” Jennifer then turned to her colleague “Stay on guard here until the cavalry arrives, don't let anyone in here except Sir Richard or the Chief Superintendent and explain to them what has occurred.”

“Yes boss” Jerry confirmed.

“I am going to run the Home Secretary over to New Parliament House and then come straight back, okay?” she then explained.

“Understood” Jerry duly confirmed.

“Right, Home Secretary” Jennifer declared, “Let's get rolling.”

Jerry watched as Jennifer hurried away with the Home Secretary leaving him all alone in the corridor.

“And it was looking to be such a nice quiet morning” he wryly remarked.

The military officers on watch observed as Jennifer and the Home Secretary emerged from the front door of Number Ten Downing Street and proceeded directly to her car.

“No time to stand on ceremony, just get in” Jennifer ordered as she ushered the Home Secretary into the back of the car.

“Now I know how it feels to get a minicab...” the Home Secretary sarcastically commented.

“Oi!” Jennifer then called to the crew of the marked Security Service escort patrol car, “Look lively lads, we are rolling.”

As the officers in the patrol car scrambled back in, Jennifer was already in her driving seat and starting the engine.

Moments later Jennifer's car with the escorting patrol car sped away back towards the military checkpoint and into Whitehall.

As they disappeared out of sight, one of the military officers in Downing Street, a Colonel as denoted by his uniform rank insignia, took out a portable radio, entered a decryption code to activate it and prepared to send a message.

“Tango Charlie from Colonel Ings” the military officer called, “Cat out of the bag, I repeat, cat out of the bag.”

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As Jack drove through the northern part of London, something occurred to him which made him suddenly turn off at a crossroads and head off in a different direction, much to Lieutenant Grant's surprise.

“Err, Sir?” she asked.

“An idea just occurred to me” Jack explained “We are going to just pop in and see an old friend as we are in the neighbourhood.”

“Okay Sir” Grant responded but then noticed what it said on a road sign they passed which made her confused curiosity even stronger, “Erm, are we going where I think we are going?” she then asked.

“Yes, indeed we are” Jack confirmed as he turned off the main road and approached the ornate Victorian stone gateways that marked the main entrance into Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

The military guard on the gate checkpoint merely nodded in acknowledgement when Jack produced his identification before the huge double gates were opened, and he was waved through into the grounds.

As Jack parked the car, Grant looked on with some confusion.

“Wait here” Jack then instructed as he got out of the car, “I won't be long.”

“Yes Sir” Grant responded as Jack duly set off, heading for the main entrance into the central prison administration building.

The main ‘A Wing’ was where most of the prison's inmates were housed, the Victorian era design was obvious no matter how many modern features and facilities had been installed amid its aged structure over the decades.

One inmate was reading a book, out on the first floor landing outside his cell when he looked up on hearing his name being called.

“Visitor for Reaper!” came the call from the Prison Warden.



“What?” Reaper responded, confused. In the five years since he had arrived at the prison where he was now serving several consecutive life sentences, he had never received a visitor.

“Are you deaf or something?” the Prison Warden remarked, “You have got a visitor!” he then confirmed.

“Oh, err...” Reaper was completely caught off guard by this development and had to stop and think for a few moments about what he was doing.

“Well, come on then!” the Prison Warden then called, gesturing Reaper towards him, “We don’t want to keep the Officer waiting, do we?”

“Officer?” Reaper asked himself but then he proceeded to put his book down inside his cell before duly following the Prison Warden through the cell block.

Normally visitors meet inmates in the dedicated visiting suite, but Reaper noted that instead, the Prison Warden was leading him outside to the garden area, further adding to the confusion he was experiencing.

Unlike the hard ex-military Colonel who had walked into that prison over five years earlier, Reaper was now older, weaker, and ravished by poor health brought about by severe withdrawal side effects after having been a user of the designer narcotic K200 and variations thereof for many years prior to his incarceration.

As they approached the garden area, the Prison Warden motioned for Reaper to go on ahead whilst he stepped back.

It was as he approached the vegetable patch area of the garden that Reaper saw who his visitor was, and things began to make a little more sense.

“Well, this is a surprise” Reaper remarked as Jack turned towards him and they met up.

“Believe me, I am just as surprised at being here as you” Jack readily admitted, “What happened to you though?” he then asked with genuine concern at the frailty that Reaper was showing.

“Lord Chaos’s wonder drug has some rather devastating after affects when you no longer receive it regularly” Reaper explained, “Especially when it has been used for many years.”

“Christ...” Jack exclaimed.

“Ah, it’s not so bad” Reaper confirmed “I have maybe a couple of years before the cancerous growths finally see me off, of course the smoking probably doesn’t help” he then admitted.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t know” Jack responded.

“No reason why you should know” Reaper reassured him, “I alone must pay the price for what I did, what I became, I have accepted that now.”

“Is there anything I can do?” Jack then asked.

“Ensure that bastard Lord Chaos discovers that maybe life isn’t immortal after all?” Reaper jokingly suggested.

“That would a challenge” Jack explained, “We are still not allowed to go anywhere near him no matter what he or any of his barmpot supporters get up to.”

“I erm heard about what happened at Holborn, the bomb explosion and your good lady getting injured” Reaper then honestly admitted, “I am sorry.”

“Well, Megan is a tough lass” Jack replied with a sense of pride in her “She will be okay.”

“And you? Are you okay?” Reaper then asked as he could see behind Jack’s eyes that there was a part of him that was still reliving that dreadful event over and over again.

“Well...” Jack reluctantly admitted.

“Yeah, that is what I thought” Reaper responded, “I have seen that look before in far too many friends and colleagues over the years.”

“Actually, the Holborn bombing was why I came to see you” Jack then moved on to his primary reason for this unusual visit and he proceeded to take out a copy of the photograph of the suspected bomber, “By any chance do you know who this guy is?” he then asked.

Reaper took the photograph and looked at it which resulted in a noticeably worried frown in response.

“Who let that evil bastard into the country?” Reaper asked.

“You know him?” Jack responded.

“Oh yeah...” Reaper reluctantly confirmed as he handed the photograph back “One of The Hand’s most vicious and evil specialists, Alain Delfont.”

“The whisper I heard was that when The Hand popped over to the UK for their little tour of chaos five years ago, they left this guy at home as he was considered too dangerous even for them” Jack remarked.

“That is an understatement!” Reaper replied, “This guy Delfont described himself as a Professional Pain Technician, he was a mercenary all right, but he wasn’t in it for the money, he was in it for the enjoyment he got out of inflicting pain, torture and misery to as many people as he could, the more innocent the victim the better.”

“Sounds like a right charmer” Jack remarked.

“Whereas most professional mercenaries shoot to kill, this guy shoots to wound” Reaper continued to explain “extract the most amount of pain for as long as possible and then wait until help arrives for his victim and then massacre them too.”

“This guy is our bomber” Jack confirmed “Apparently when the regime change in Mobutu happened, they systematically ran down every single member of The Hand still breathing and basically executed them all, this one however got away.”

“And someone with a lot of money and influence managed to get him into this country without noticing” Reaper added.

“Yeah...” Jack agreed.

“You have got a very big problem my friend” Reaper confirmed “This guy is basically the most vicious psychopathic individual there has ever been and if he is in this country that means someone has him on their payroll.”

“But who?” Jack generally asked, “The Ixion Brotherhood?” he then suggested.

“That bunch of drugged up clowns?” Reaper responded with a cough interspersed laugh “They are puppets on a string in the grand scheme of things, oh no my friend, you need to look elsewhere.”

“Any pointers you can give me?” Jack then asked.

“If he is still around, there was a man running the show in the background called Taylor” Reaper confirmed “I can tell you this now as I am a dying man with nothing left to lose and maybe some redemption to gain in my final days.”

“Taylor?” Jack responded as he wrote down the name in his official notebook.

“I can’t remember much about him now” Reaper then admitted, “The K200 effects have played havoc with some of my memory functions but I do remember one word, Cato.”

“Cato?” Jack looked on with a concerned expression.

“That’s it” Reaper confirmed “I don’t know what it means or what it is though.”

“Thanks” Jack replied as he made a further note in his notebook.

“You have heard that word before, I can tell” Reaper then remarked, seeing Jack's reaction.

“Just the once” Jack admitted, “Just the once...”

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“I am sorry Ma’am, but this is not a valid identification” the military sentry on duty at the Parliament Square entrance into the Westminster Military Controlled Secure Zone insisted.

Tracy simply glared back at the sentry with a distinct look of controlled anger.

“Erm...” the sentry then responded, the effect of Tracy's stare seemingly accomplishing its intent of making the young soldier uneasy and begin to crumble, “Let me check with the Zone Commander” he then relented and stepped back to the small gate hut to make a call.

“This is getting ridiculous” Tracy remarked to Sir Richard stood just behind her, “Has it always been this bad?” she then asked.

“It's been awkward for a while, indeed ever since the Acting Prime Minister sealed off this area into his own private fortress but lately it seems to have got progressively worse” Sir Richard admitted.

“Surely the Prime Minister can annul this nonsense and get all this lifted?” Tracy asked.

“Alas not” Sir Richard regretfully explained “Under the Acting Prime Minister's reign and with the overseeing powers of The Committee, the Emergency Special Powers Act that brought all this about, along with the relocation of Parliament and the reduction of the Houses of Parliament to little more than a derelict building site are set in stone, she and indeed Parliament as it currently stands simply do not have the powers to overrule it.”

“Well, something has got to be done” Tracy determinedly remarked, “This lunacy cannot go on.”

“Oh, I agree” Sir Richard responded, and he was going to continue when the Sentry returned.

“Sorry for the misunderstanding Ma'am” the Sentry called, handing Tracy back her official identification “You may enter.”

“Thank you” Tracy responded although her gratitude came through gritted teeth as the Sentry indicated to his colleague in the guard hut and the large metal gates were duly swung open.

“Anyone would think they didn't trust us...” Sir Richard remarked as he and Tracy were escorted up Whitehall to the entrance of Downing Street by four armed military officers in full army battle fatigues.

“I sense a certain amount of worry and paranoia” Tracy commented “I like that; it's something we can work with...”

The Personal Private Secretary was waiting for them at the main entrance to Number Ten with a noticeably worried look.

“All right guys, I think we are here, you can go and play with you little tanks now” Tracy curtly dismissed their military escort who duly turned smartly on their heels and left.

“Come with me please” the Personal Private Secretary then urgently ushered Tracy and Sir Richard inside before firmly closing the famous black door behind them.

“Okay, what's going on?” Tracy then asked as she and Sir Richard followed the Personal Private Secretary up the main staircase and through the building.

“I am afraid we have a situation” the Personal Private Secretary replied, “Your man on the scene will brief you on the details” he then confirmed.

“Oh, I love surprises...” Sir Richard sarcastically responded.

A few moments later they reached the accommodation area where Jerry was still on guard by the badly damaged entrance into the Prime Minister's personal apartment.

“Hello Jerry, what's going on?” Tracy asked as they approached.

“Ma'am” Jerry responded, standing to attention, “It would appear that the Prime Minister has been kidnapped.”

“Oh, dear God...” Sir Richard responded.

“Is this part of the scene?” Tracy indicated the smashed door and frame.

“Err no Ma'am, that was your sister's efforts” Jerry confirmed.

“I thought I recognised the style...” Tracy commented, “Who knows about this?” she then asked as Jerry led her and Sir Richard inside the apartment.

“Just myself, the Prime Minister's Personal Private Secretary here, my boss and the Home Secretary plus now you two” Jerry confirmed.

“Good” Tracy responded, “Let's keep it that way” she then recommended.

“Where is your Divisional Commander now?” Sir Richard asked.

“She has taken the Home Secretary to New Parliament House to stand in for the Prime Minister” Jerry explained, “He is going to run with a story that she has been taken ill to explain her absence.”

“Right, if you will excuse me, I think I had better get things rolling and make sure that cover story is suitably supported” Sir Richard responded.

“Thank you” Tracy replied, “If you could also notify X-Ray Alpha as well, I would appreciate it.”

“As you wish my dear” Sir Richard formally confirmed before retiring from the scene.

“All right Jerry, what have you got?” Tracy then asked.

“Possible signs of a brief struggle in the kitchen, there is a smashed wine glass on the floor in there and we found this” Jerry produced the evidence bag.

“Oh...” Tracy responded, instantly recognising the wrapper from a tranquilisation pad.

“Point of entry is in the bedroom” Jerry then led Tracy through to show her, “There is a bloody great hole in the wall.”

“Well, not much doubt is there?” Tracy concluded as she looked around the bedroom and then at the hole.

“All arranged, wheels in motion, and bloody hell, that is a big hole” Sir Richard declared as he re-joined them.

“Do we know the last confirmed sighting of her?” Tracy then asked.

“She took a call from the Foreign Secretary at about half seven last night” Sir Richard confirmed.

“She was probably taken some time in the mid to late evening then” Tracy deduced, “The bed hasn’t been slept in and nobody, not even the Prime Minister has fine wine for breakfast.”

“Wherever she is, we will find her” Sir Richard confirmed “There is a message for you though” he then reluctantly added.

“Here we go...” Tracy responded.

“Your presence is required at the High Court in thirty minutes” Sir Richard explained, “It would appear your old friend Ms. Burgette is serious about her legal action.”

“Oh, for crying out loud...” Tracy responded with a slightly despondent look.

“Don’t worry” Sir Richard reassured her, “I’ll take care of this little problem, we have a good team and I think I have a couple of good ideas where to start searching.”

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The Prime Minister was as safe as she could be under the circumstances in that she was still alive and, apart from still suffering some groggy after-effects of the tranquiliser had not thus far come to any harm.

She had regained consciousness about an hour earlier and found herself in a small sparsely furnished windowless room.

At that point the Prime Minister had no idea whatsoever where she was, what time or even day it was or how long she had been unconscious for.

It was only as she heard footsteps approaching outside the door that she became more aware and sat up.

Looking on with obvious trepidation, the Prime Minister listened and watched as the footsteps stopped immediately outside the door and the door handle started to move.

“Prime Minister” Orbison declared as he theatrically entered the room and bowed, “Welcome, it is an honour to have you as our guest.”

“Lord Chaos!” the Prime Minister responded, “I never thought we would actually ever meet face to face.”

“The honour is all mine” Orbison confirmed as he held out his hand and helped the Prime Minister to her feet.

“Why am I here and what the hell is going on?” the Prime Minister then demanded to know.

“All in good time my dear” Orbison calmly replied, “All in good time.”

“I don’t even know what time it is” the Prime Minister then admitted.

“Time for the Revolution” Orbison responded, “Come, some friends of mine would like to meet you.”

“You have friends?” the Prime Minister responded in semi disbelief.

“Well,” Orbison admitted “Associates really, not actually bosom buddy friends.”

“Oh...” the Prime Minister responded, still a bit fuzzy headed.

“You will probably know them better by another name” Orbison then exclaimed, “The Committee...”

“I was always told no one sees The Committee” the Prime Minister remarked.

“People only see The Committee when they want to see them, not before” Orbison explained, “But we must not keep them waiting, they are a busy group of people with much work to do so, shall we?” he indicated the open door.

“Well, I don’t seem to have anything else to do right now so, by all means...” the Prime Minister confirmed.

Orbison smirked before leading the Prime Minister out of the room into a corridor that to her seemed to be underground which would explain the lack of natural light anywhere.

She had no idea what this place she had found herself in was, but it had the look of some kind of 1960's technical installation with a very utilitarian feel compounded by the cable runs and elderly looking decommissioned equipment that was to be seen throughout.

Despite its slightly dated appearance, this was still a place that was very much active with numerous personnel around, telephones ringing and much activity going on which the Prime Minister observed as Orbison led her towards a large set of double doors set in an end wall that ran right across the end of what was now clearly a large underground tunnel of some kind.

“And here we are...” Orbison then declared whereupon the double doors duly opened, and he gestured to the Prime Minister to step inside.

With some trepidation, the Prime Minister duly stepped through the doors whereupon they closed silently behind her, cutting off the busy background noise and leaving her in a dark room with little light and amid almost total silence.

“Hello?” the Prime Minister called.

“Good morning” a voice called out whereupon a spotlight came on and illuminated an individual sat at the far end of a long meeting table.

The Prime Minister looked on and squinted a little before realising something.

“Sir Malcolm Taylor” she then called, somewhat surprised “I should have known it was you with your sticky fingers all over this!”

“On behalf of The Committee, welcome” Taylor responded with a confident smile, “Have a seat” he then indicated whereupon an aide appeared from the shadows and produced a chair allowing the Prime Minister to sit down at the opposite end of the table to him.

“What is going on? Why am I here?” the Prime Minister then demanded to know.

“You have been very naughty” Taylor casually responded, “and we need to have a little chat about it. After all, if I recall you have always wanted to meet The Committee and well, here we are.”

“I do remind you Sir that I am the Prime Minister and that as such I am in charge of running the country” she dutifully pointed out.

Taylor sniggered in response to this statement, “Prime Minister in charge, that’s a good one...”

The Prime Minister merely looked on, distinctly unimpressed.

“We are in charge, indeed thanks to a lot of hard work by myself, my associates here and a dedicated group of supporters, sympathisers and friends throughout the nation, we have been pretty much running things for the last six years” Taylor explained.



“Don’t tell me you came up with that virus pandemic thing?” the Prime Minister then asked incredulously.

“Oh goodness no” Taylor dismissed the merest suggestion, “That was all down to Mother Nature although we did take full advantage of it to further our influence, our power and our cause.”

“All right, seeing as you are holding all the cards” the Prime Minister then asked, “What do you want for you and your associates to pack your bags and just go away?”

“Oh, we are not going anywhere” Taylor confidently responded “In fact we are just getting started which is where you come in.”

“Go on...” the Prime Minister replied, knowing full well she was not going to like what Taylor had to say one bit.

“Like I alluded to earlier, you have been very naughty” Taylor explained “You abused your admittedly limited powers and appointed a new, or rather perhaps I should say, reappointed an old National Security Service Administrator General.”

“Oh, what a shame...” the Prime Minister unsympathetically replied.

“We have dedicated not inconsiderable resources over the last few years to a concerted campaign to gradually dissolve the National Security & Police Service” Taylor explained “The Service has been gradually shackled and overburdened and then we carefully implemented our plan to remove the existing Acting Administrator General to replace him with someone more sympathetic to our cause.”

“That would be that cow Burgette I presume?” the Prime Minister asked.

“Quite” Taylor confirmed, “Now whilst I have to admit I did chuckle a bit when I saw the troublesome Chief Superintendent Caverner unceremoniously throw the aforementioned Ms Burgette from the building live on national television, the fact remains that the Chief Superintendent should not have been there in the first place and that was because you interfered in our carefully made plans.”

“Oh, sorry...” the Prime Minister mockingly responded.

“We are giving you an opportunity to set things straight, put everything back where it should be” Taylor explained, “In a little over an hour, a judicial review will commence at the Central High Court, and you are going to issue a Prime Ministerial Directive to the presiding judge to rule in favour of Burgette.”

“Sod off!” the Prime Minister tersely replied.

“Ah...” Taylor responded before staring back at her with an evil glare, “Wrong answer...”

At that point, there was a click and suddenly the Prime Minister started convulsing

and screaming in her seat as an electric current was introduced through her. It was not enough to kill her but plenty enough to inflict pain and disorientation.

A few moments later, Taylor raised his hand, a click was heard once again, and the electrical current was turned off, but it took a good minute or so for the Prime Minister to recover from the shock sufficiently to be able to speak.

“Like I said” Taylor calmly confirmed, “We are in charge, you are merely our puppet, and it is time you realised that.”

“You can’t do this!” the Prime Minister defiantly responded.

“Really?” Taylor responded which was the cue for the electrical current to be switched on again for a few moments to reemphasise his point.

“You know, you really are an evil sack of shit...” the Prime Minister managed to reply, the pain still convulsing through her leaving her breathless despite the current being off.

“I’ll make it simple for you” Taylor then proposed, “You make the call, get Ms Burgette reinstated with a full apology from the National Security & Police Service and you can leave here largely undamaged.”

So many thoughts were going through the Prime Minister’s mind at that point, some relevant, others completely unconnected with what was going on, random flashbacks to bits of conversations, an image of her mother, moments with friends long gone.

One thing that she did manage to focus on after a few moments was a possible solution, what would happen if she agreed to the demands of Taylor and The Committee and how it could play out.

“Would you like some more, ahem, current thinking?” Taylor menacingly asked.

“All right you bastard!” the Prime Minister responded, “I order the High Court to reinstate Burgette but no more” she relented, “and then you will let me go?”

“Agreed” Taylor sat back in his seat, smirking in triumph as he silently indicated to an aide in the shadows who brought forward a telephone and placed it on the desk in front of the Prime Minister, “Just pick up the receiver, it is already set up to dial automatically” he then confirmed.

With obvious reluctance, the Prime Minister picked up the telephone and she was connected straight away.

“Priority call” the Prime Minister called as soon as she was answered, “Sir Stephen Browne please.”

There were a few moments of silence in the room as the Prime Minister waited to be connected during which Taylor took the opportunity to light up a large cigar and inhale on it deeply.

“Sir Stephen?” the Prime Minister then called, “Yes, I am sorry to call you at such short notice, but we have an issue of national importance regarding the case you are about to hear, National Police & Security Service versus Burgette?”

There was a confirmation just audible over the line before the Prime Minister resumed.

“Like I said just now Sir Stephen” she continued “An issue of national importance has just arisen which means we need to have Ms Burgette reinstated to her post with immediate effect.”

“Yes, immediate effect” the Prime Minister reiterated again a few moments later, “I will have the official documentation prepared in time for the hearing.”

Taylor looked on, exhaled a huge cloud of cigar smoke that hung in the air above him and smiled as the Prime Minister concluded the call and hung up whereupon the telephone was quickly whisked away again.

“Thank you” Taylor called.

“Up yours...” the Prime Minister muttered under breath in response.

At Taylor’s indication, the doors opened and Orbison with a couple of his Facilitators stepped into the room and stood behind the Prime Minister.

“Lord Chaos, she is all yours” Taylor then declared.

Orbison smiled a big broad beaming grin in response.

“Wait!” the Prime Minister called back as she snatched her arm away from one of the Facilitators who had just grabbed hold of it “You said you would let me go!!”

“I lied...” Taylor coolly responded before breaking into a deep belly laugh that echoed devilishly around the room as the two Facilitators wrestled the Prime Minister back on to her feet and then with a laughing Orbison leading, she was dragged away.

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It was a troubled yet business like look that was on Commander Monroe's face as he walked briskly down the corridor and then entered the Situation Room.

“Right, listen carefully!” he then announced, getting everyone’s complete attention, “This is a Code One alert, the Chief Superintendent has confirmed that the Prime Minister is missing, almost probably taken against her will.”

There were looks of shock from the X-Ray Division officers in the room at this news.

“Until the Chief Superintendent says otherwise” Monroe then continued “this information remains strictly on a need to know basis and for the moment nobody

outside this room except the Chief Superintendent, the Home Secretary and a couple of others actually needs to know.”

“Who is running the Government Sir?” one officer then asked.

“The Home Secretary is standing in for the Prime Minister at the moment” Monroe confirmed “and the cover story is that she has been taken seriously ill, requiring recuperation.”

Monroe took a moment or two to then look around the room to ensure everyone fully understood.

“Right then” he then declared “Start tapping up all of your sources, be discrete, see what whispers are going around but ensure that the media find out nothing about this, usage of D Notices has been authorised where required, I want her found!”

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Grant looked at her watch and pondered where her superior officer had got to.

It had been a good half an hour now since he had disappeared into the interior of Wormwood Scrubs Prison, and she was starting to think maybe he had been locked up.

She was about to reach for her radio and attempt to call Jack when he emerged from the entrance and sprinted over towards the car.

“I was beginning to worry Sir” Grant remarked as Jack got back in the car and started the engine.

“Sorry about that Lieutenant” Jack apologised as he prepared to drive off, “It all took a bit longer than I had anticipated” he admitted.

A few minutes as Jack drove north west towards Hampstead, Grant could see that he was deep in thought about something.

“Penny for them Guv?” she then asked as Jack was forced to slow for a military checkpoint but was waved through without undue delay.

“I just talked to a contact that I haven't seen in over five years” Jack explained “It has left me with a lot of thinking to do” he then admitted.

“Can I help Sir?” Grant then inquired.

Jack thought for a moment before replying.

“Does the word 'Cato' mean anything to you Lieutenant?” he then asked before proceeding to spell it.

“Cato?” Grant responded as she tried to recall, “There used to be an Inspector Cato up

at the Training Academy a few years back but other than that, err no.”

“I have only heard it once or maybe twice before” Jack confirmed “from a document that Divisional Commander Appleby left for me and somewhere else I cannot immediately recall now, but I am still no closer to finding out what it means than I was before.”

“Perhaps you should run it by The Team, they are a broad range of experience and youth, maybe something will click?” Grant suggested.

“It could be worth a try” Jack agreed.

It was not much longer before Jack turned off into the leafy suburban side road which constituted their final destination.

“Here we are” Jack then declared as he pulled the car up around the corner and stopped the engine before they both go out.

“Where is here Sir?” Grant asked, looking around but not immediately identifying where they were supposed to be.

“Over there” Jack then indicated towards a locked gate and some trees through which was just visible a very dull utilitarian grey painted building, the classic London Transport typeface on the warning signs being the only indication to those who knew what that location really was.

“I can see they pulled out the stops when they designed this place” Grant sarcastically commented as Jack unlocked the gate and they proceeded into the small compound and around to the door set into the plain wall of the building.

“It was designed to be functional and discreet” Jack explained as he found the right key and proceeded to unlock the door, “Purely an access point for a disused control room stuck in a never finished Underground station.”

“Christ!” Grant exclaimed as they proceeded inside and she looked down the long flights of stairs that led down seemingly into the bowels of the Earth, “How deep is this?”

“It is actually the deepest point below ground level on the entire Underground network” Jack confirmed as they made their way down the steps.

Every minute or so the two officers were forced to cover their faces for a few moments as a tremendous updraft of warm air came up towards them whenever a Northern Line train passed through the incomplete station tunnels far below them.

“What did you say this place was called Sir?” Grant asked as they continued their descent.

“The station was going to be called North End” Jack explained, “but they never finished building it as it was realised it was never going to be economical but later

they installed the Underground Flood Barrier Control Room down there in the mid 1950's I think, it was abandoned again a couple of years later and now it is just an emergency evacuation point if anything were to go wrong on this section of the Northern Line.”

“Are you sure Appleby came down here Sir?” Grant then asked as they approached the bottom of the descent.

“At the moment it is a theory that has no evidence other than it fits the facts” Jack admitted as they reached the incomplete station tunnels, bare metal reinforcing rings and crumbling cement that would have had a tiled finish applied had the works ever been completed making up the surface of the walls around and above them, all illuminated by a succession of dusty bulkhead lights.

As they turned left into what would have been the lower level lift landing corridor, Jack paused at a box mounted on the wall, opened it to reveal a telephone inside and picked up the handset which immediately connected him.

“Northern Line Control?” Jack called “This is Divisional Commander Jack Regent, authorisation code One Five One Two Seven Eight calling from North End, over.”

“This is Northern Line Control receiving” came the response “Pass your message please, over.”

“Be aware that I and a colleague will be conducting a search of the running tunnel level of North End” Jack informed them “and request that you warn drivers of both north and south bound trains to be aware they may see lights and activity down here, over.”

“Understood, will advise drivers of possible authorised activity at North End” the Line Controller confirmed

“Thank you, out” Jack responded before hanging up

They waited until the turbulence of a passing Northern Line train calmed down and the sound echoed off into the distance before heading down the short flight of steps down to track level tunnels.

“What a mess!” Grant remarked as she was forced to push a few cobwebs that were dangling down out of her way.

“Don't tell me you have a problem with spiders?” Jack then asked.

“No Sir, do you?” she confirmed.

“A bit...” Jack then reluctantly admitted.

Another Northern Line tube train passed through what would have been the southbound station platform tunnel causing them both to pause whilst the turbulence passed by.

It was as they approached an open part with the running line alongside separated only by some cable racks and fencing that Grant noticed something glinting on the ground ahead.

“What's that?” Grant remarked, training her torch on the object ahead, standing out as it was clean and shiny in contrast with the decades of dust and grime that was covering everything else down there which indicated that it had been dropped there very recently.

“Hopefully an answer...” Jack responded as he too saw the object ahead and they stepped down to the lowest floor level and approached the object.

“Ah that looks promising Sir” Grant then commented as they reached the object and knelt down to take a closer look, revealing it to be a large adjustable spanner.

“Get a picture if you can but wait for this train to pass before you take it” Jack prompted whereupon Grant got out her mobile phone, paused as another Northern Line train passed through and then carefully took several pictures of the spanner in situ.

“Got it Sir” Grant then confirmed whereupon Jack got a clear plastic evidence bag out of one pocket and a handkerchief out of the other.

Grant held the bag carefully as Jack proceeded to pick up the adjustable spanner which as he turned it over was when he noticed what appeared to be dried blood across the end on the underside.

“Bingo...” Jack responded, “Now we are getting somewhere.”

“The murder weapon Sir?” Grant asked.

“Odds on I reckon” Jack agreed as he placed the spanner carefully into the bag and Grant then sealed it.

“We should take a sample of the dust and dirt around here, see if it matches the dirt in Appleby's wounds” Grant then suggested.

“Very good Lieutenant” Jack complimented her as he handed her another bag, “Be my guest.”

“Thanks Guv” Grant wryly responded before putting on a glove and then gathering up a sample of the dirt and dust that was all around and putting it in the bag.

“Right” Jack declared as he and Grant got back up, “let's see if there is anything else around, shall we?”

It took another ten or fifteen minutes to carefully look around the rest of the abandoned tunnels down there but nothing else was found.

“I think we are done here Lieutenant” Jack then declared as another train passed through.

“Right you are Sir” Grant confirmed “Can we take the train?” she then jokingly asked, “I don't fancy the stairs somehow.”

“Very funny...” Jack responded before something occurred to him “Actually, now you come to mention it, if Appleby never left here by the surface entrance, then he and whoever killed him must have left by the running tunnel.”

“Could they have stopped a train and got on it?” Grant suggested.

“The problem with that is that if a Northern Line train stopped here and picked up a person or persons unknown carrying a dead body, someone would have noticed” Jack pointed out “and I reckon carrying the body down or up the running tunnels to either Hampstead or Golders Green would have been nigh on impossible.”

“There must have been at least two just to pick the body up” Grant pointed out.

“I agree” Jack responded.

“Our two fake Underground Engineers perhaps?” Grant then suggested.

“A distinct possibility” Jack agreed “but we need to get this to the forensics boys as soon as possible” he indicated the evidence bags in Grant's hands, “Come on, let's get out of here” he then suggested.

“By all means Sir” Grant agreed as they duly head off back to the staircase that would take them back to the surface.

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“Sir! I have got something” one of the X-Ray Division officers called across the Situation Room as he put the phone down.

Monroe quickly came over in response.

“Good news or bad news?” he asked.

“Both really Sir” the officer responded, “Reliable sources, the Prime Minister is alive and well but currently in the hands of representatives of the Ixion Brotherhood.”

“Ah...” Monroe responded.

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“Ah here he is, Mr Risk Assessment!” Bob declared with a hearty laugh as Lieutenant Gary Long came in through the door looking understandably nervous.

“Sir” Long responded “I was asked to report to you” he confirmed.



“Welcome” Bob responded, stepping forward and shaking Long's hand firmly, “You were recommended to me by a friend.”

“I do have a reputation for being over careful Sir; I thought that would go against me?” Long then asked.

“On the contrary young man” Bob reassured him as he escorted Long down the corridor “When you are a member of my Specialist Armed Response team, you are carrying a highly powerful semi-automatic firearm, a tool yes, but one that kills people and so every member of my team has to have that risk assessment mindset, you have a split second to assess a situation and decide whether it is safe and right to shoot or not because if you do make a mistake and the wrong person is shot or dies, it will haunt you for the rest of your life.”

“Yes Sir” Long confirmed.

“Also, according to your records and your Guvnor whom I tapped up earlier today, you have one of the best marksman records in The Service and I was interested to see if you were right for the team” Bob then confirmed.

“I won't let you down Sir” Long confirmed “I am just amazed I have the opportunity to join you.”

“It's not for everyone” Bob then admitted “but I think you have a talent; you have what it takes which is why you are cordially invited to join us.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Long responded.

“Right” Bob then called as he turned off into a storeroom, “Let's get you properly kitted out, shall we?”

Long followed Bob as he went along the various shelves and hunted inside boxes looking for specific items.

“What size are you?” Bob then asked.

“Erm, my uniform tunic is thirty eight long and waist, thirty six Sir” Long confirmed.

“Hmm” Bob mused “That will change after six months of the standard diet of doughnuts and chip buttys at three o'clock in the morning, sitting in the back of a leaky old Ford Transit” he remarked, looking down briefly at his own rather rotund belly.

“Oddly enough when the Security Service Recruitment Team are looking to sign you up, they don't mention that bit” Long mused.

Checking labels, Bob found the right elements of uniform before handing them over.

“Here you go young man” Bob then declared, “and you also need a utility belt with

integrated holster, your best friend out in the field.”

“Thank you, Sir,” Long responded, the pile of items in his arms getting ever larger.

“Do you have a Swiss Army knife?” Bob then asked.

“Err, no Sir” Long confirmed whereupon Bob found a box on the shelf and found a brand new one which he handed across.

“There you go” he declared “Not official issue but a very useful tool to have on you, many uses, some of them even legal!”

“Thank you, Sir,” Long responded as Bob then showed him through to another room.

“Get changed” Bob then instructed before closing the door to give him a little privacy.

Bob waited patiently outside for a few minutes, whistling, thinking and casually looking through random boxes on the shelves until the door opened and there stood Long, fully dressed in the hard wearing specialist uniform of the Armed Response Division.

“Now, that's better” Bob responded, “You are starting to look the part now.”

“Might need to adjust the sleeves a bit Sir” Long admitted.

“Get your mother to do with it” Bob advised.

“How do you know I live with my mother Sir?” Long asked, somewhat amazed.

“I am your boss” Bob responded with a knowing smile “It's my job to know everything about everybody.”

“Oh...” Long responded.

“Come on” Bob then encouraged, leading the way “Time to introduce you to the tools of the trade.”

A few moments later they were in the basement of New Scotland Yard and entered through a thick steel door into the Armoury where, behind a metal grid protected counter was the Duty Armourer.

“Hello Jim” Bob called, “Meet my newest recruit, Lieutenant Gary Long.”

“Welcome” Jim the Armourer called, “What can I do for you today?” he then asked.

“So young man” Bob addressed Long, “You need two weapons, a standard sidearm and something with a little more persuasion about it.”

“I still have my service issue Beretta Sir” Long confirmed, producing his firearm, checking its safety and then handing it across to Bob to take a look at.

“Yeah, that's a decent bit of kit” Bob agreed “If you are happy with that, I reckon stick with it” he then handed it back.

“Okay then” Jim called from behind his caged screen “Let's see what I have in stock” he then headed off down one line of shelves and duly pulled out a big plastic case which he then brought to the counter, pushing it through the hole in the grill.

“Here you go Lieutenant” Bob then declared as he broke the seal on the case and opened it to reveal the brand new semi automatic firearm nestling inside its own specially made foam packaging which he then took out and handed across.

Long took the weapon and looked at it with a mixture of awe and trepidation.

“Say hello to the Heckler & Koch MP5” Bob then proudly announced “Probably one of the best weapons of its type ever made.”

“Hello...” Long jokily responded.

“That there is your best friend” Bob assured the young officer, “It will get you out of trouble faster than you got into it and can be a very nice persuader to the more obtuse and obstructive members of society that we encounter from time to time.”

“Absolutely Sir” Long readily agreed.

“Right, come on Lieutenant” Bob then encouraged, “Let's see if you are as good a shot as your colleague Brent says you are.”

-----

It was only an off the cuff remark that he had heard but it was sufficient enough to see Fuller make his way up to his office with a growing sense of foreboding.

On its own, what Tracy had casually mentioned would seem like nothing really of any great concern but put together with other incidents that had come to his attention over the last couple of days and he was becoming increasingly concerned.

Fuller's office was not the best organised workspace you could find with its seemingly random piles of files and parts of equipment dotted about, but he did know where everything was.

It took a few moments for Fuller to find what he was looking for and bring them together, but they were all there.

The details of the traffic light incident in Marble Arch, the Transport Division's report on the mysterious total power failure that had affected the central London stretch of the Piccadilly Line, another report concerning a failure in the main computer servers at the London Stock Exchange and a note about intermittent problems with the radio systems of both the Ambulance and Fire & Rescue services over the last couple of evenings and to this he could now add Tracy's report of the flashing street lights that

she had witnessed the previous evening.

All seemingly random events, to the casual eye, technical faults, or the result of common human error but Fuller could see a potential connection, one which only he and a couple of others could possibly be aware of.

With concerns increasing in his mind, Fuller decided to do a search to see if could locate any other possible occurrences that could either further fuel or hopefully allay his concerns.

Using his own design of sophisticated search software, Fuller began to rapidly scan through files, reports, newspaper stories and notes.

Then the case began to build as more suspicious events began to emerge, some comprehensive reports, others merely hearsay, word of mouth and bordering on the vaguely speculative.

Among the events listed was a report concerning the failure of the backup power supply at St. Thomas's Hospital, several incidents where public telephone boxes randomly rang without any connecting call and interruption to the radio communications networks used by London Buses and also some black cab drivers.

“Come on, prove me wrong” Fuller remarked to himself as he continued to analyse the information and look for a link which, to his dismay a few moments later he found, and which confirmed his worst fears.

“Oh hell...” he remarked, a look of almost horrific realisation on his face.

Fuller sat still for probably only a few moments but to him it seemed like hours of stunned silence as he contemplated the implications of his discovery, a discovery that he could tell almost no one about.

Reaching down, he proceeded to unlock the bottom drawer of his desk and open it whereupon he was able to extract an old-style secure satellite phone which, due to it having not been used in such a long time, he was forced to plug its charger into the wall socket in order to get it to work.

After a few moments, the satellite phone came alive and Fuller quickly called a simple four-digit number.

“Call Sign” came the robotic sounding computer generated voice over the line.

“Echo Echo Five Zero Seven” Fuller clearly called.

“Pass phrase” the voice then requested.

“Closed Circle” Fuller then declared.

“Message” the voice simply asked.

“Urgent that we meet off grid” Fuller announced, “Suspect that Damocles is falling, I repeat, suspect that Damocles is falling.”

-----

“Oh dear, who let that sack of crap out to play?” Tracy remarked as she headed down the main corridor of the Central Law Courts towards Courtroom Number Four where she could see the legal team of the complainant waiting to go in, led by the distinctive figure of Henry Bermann, a notorious defence barrister with whom Tracy had had dealings with, in the past.

“Ah, here she comes...” Bermann declared as Tracy arrived.

“Mr Bermann, it isn't a pleasure to see you again” Tracy sarcastically responded, “I thought you were dismissed from the Bar?”

“Fortunately, there are those in a position of influence who were able to see through the fog of lies you and your associates shrouded my reputation in” Bermann explained “and happily saw to it that my rightful place and well earned reputation was restored.”

“Still have a way with words I see?” Tracy responded although her intended phrasing she wanted to use was rather different and far less complimentary.

“What can I say?” Bermann casually responded.

“Plenty by the sounds of it...” Tracy muttered quietly under her breath.

“I am a master of legal persuasion and dedicated to ensuring that first and foremost, justice prevails” he then concluded.

“Ah, if it isn't Chief Superintendent Bitch!” called a familiar voice which caused everyone to look up and see the deposed Police & Crime Commissioner, Harriett Burgette approach with a confident stride.

“Congratulations, you remembered” Tracy sarcastically replied.

“You know, if I was you, I would pack your bags now and go back to where you came from, you have got no chance” Burgette confidently declared.

“At least I don't have a rock to crawl out from under unlike someone I could mention...” Tracy tersely remarked.

“Ladies! Ladies!” Bermann called, “Let's save the name calling and hand bagging for the courtroom, shall we?” he suggested.

“For once Mr Bermann you and I are in complete agreement” Tracy confirmed.

“Well, there is a first time for everything...” Bermann remarked with a raised eyebrow.

“Burgette versus National Police & Security Service?” came a call down the corridor.

“Over here” Tracy confirmed.

“Court is ready to sit” the Court Usher confirmed, standing by the courtroom door, and indicating inside.

Burgette practically snarled at Tracy before confidently strutting off ahead down the corridor and into the courtroom.

At the head of the courtroom sat the presiding judge, Sir Stephen Browne in his formal cloak and almost medieval like traditional wig.

He watched from his elevated position overlooking the courtroom as the two opposing sides in the case and their accompanying legal teams took their seats.

What was instantly noticeable to Sir Stephen was the inequality between the two sides.

Burgette had Bermann and his sizeable support team of over half a dozen aides, Tracy on the other hand had just the Attorney General and a legal advisor from the Home Office.

Once he had seen that everyone was settled, Sir Stephen banged his gavel on the desk in front of him and opened the proceedings.

“Order please!” Sir Stephen declared, “This Court is now in session.”

Both the people in the courtroom plus those members of the media and the public watching from the public gallery above fell silent.

“Right then” Sir Stephen consulted the official documentation in front of him, “Burgette versus the National Police & Security Service, would the representatives of the two parties declare their identities please.”

“Ian Morris, Attorney General representing the National Police & Security Service, and this is Mr Samuel Green of the Home Office.”

“Henry Bermann, Bermann & Associates representing the complainant Ms Burgette.”

“So noted” Sir Stephen confirmed as he wrote down the details, “Mr Bermann, if you possibly begin by stating the case of complaint that your client has?”

“Thank you, your honour” Bermann responded before pausing, taking a deep breath, and then beginning to set out his case.

“We stand here today in this court to set straight a travesty of democracy” Bermann began, playing to the audience like the ringmaster of a circus, “A duly elected member of the community of this great city, forced out of her position and her rightful destiny to serve, by a decision made by a Prime Minister who is emotionally out of control and went well beyond her legal powers as defined by the highly respected

‘Emergency Security Powers Act’ as amended, and associated legislation.”

Tracy rolled her eyes upwards whilst the rest of the court including those in the public gallery above listened intently.

“All we seek is justice” Bermann continued passionately, “The rightful restoration of a dedicated servant of the people” he indicated Burgette sitting next to him looking confidently smug “to her proper place and able to carry out her duty to the nation and its people.”

Bermann carried on the platitudes and smooth patter for another twenty minutes to the point where Tracy was seriously worried that he was never going to stop talking, but then he finally reached his concluding remark.

“This, ladies and gentlemen is a critical time for justice, truth and honour” Bermann concluded “and I ask this court to ensure that the good work continues unobstructed. Thank you.”

“Thank you, Mr Bermann,” Sir Stephen responded, “Finally...” he then muttered under his breath which Tracy picked up on and smiled but which Bermann, still looking around in his own self-congratulatory adulation, failed to notice.

“Your Honour” the Attorney General then called as, when indicated to do so by Sir Stephen, he duly rose from his seat to address the court “Mr Bermann has spoken eloquently and at some length about justice, truth, duty and honour, but what is most crucial and noticeably absent from his words are due process and the chain of command.”

Bermann and his associates looked on, clearly interested in what the Attorney General had to say but still looking smugly confident.

“Under the terms of the various articles of legislation and agreements entered into by the United Kingdom with the United Nations Security Council when the National Police & Security Service was established, taking over from the traditional Police Constabularies, it was clearly defined that the chain of command ran from the UN Security Council directly to the National Administrator General of the time or Chief Superintendent as the position is now recognised as, and that only the Prime Minister can influence that position or the Service’s operations, within certain guidelines.”

“By these terms, we see that the appointment of Ms Burgette as the Police & Crime Commissioner was a breach of the defined chain of command and that as such, she has no operational or influential power over any aspect of the service, its personnel, operations or its senior command staff” the Attorney General clearly stated, “As such I move that the court saves time and taxpayers money by dismissing this case with immediate effect.”

“Thank you, Attorney General,” Sir Stephen responded before pausing and reluctantly checking his notes on the desk in front of him.

“Uh-oh, here we go” Tracy quietly remarked aside to Green and the Attorney

General.

“You think he has been got at?” Green asked, his concern growing.

“I reckon so” the Attorney General reluctantly agreed.

“Just prior to the commencement of these proceedings...” Sir Stephen began.

“Here we go...” Tracy remarked.

“...further critical information was received which has a significant bearing on this case” he continued “and following specific instructions from the Prime Minister herself, I must with regret declare that the injunction will be partially granted.”

“Hang on a dam minute!” Tracy called out, “The Prime Minister has been...”

“Has been what? Chief Superintendent?” Sir Stephen called, clearly not happy about her outburst but deciding to let it slide this one time.

“Erm...” Tracy quickly composed herself again, realising she nearly gave something critical away then “She is indisposed, through serious illness” she then confirmed.

“Chief Superintendent” Sir Stephen responded, “Being unwell does not preclude the ability to pick up the telephone I think you will find.”

“Of course, Your Honour” Tracy agreed, “I apologise for my outburst.”

“As I was saying” Sir Stephen then continued “Following the intervention by the Prime Minister I must find in favour of the plaintiff and order Ms Burgette’s immediate reinstatement as the London & South East Regional Police & Crime Commissioner.”

Burgette, Bermann and the rest of the legal team were ecstatic at the pronouncement, so much so that Sir Stephen was forced to bang his gavel loudly and repeatedly in order to restore order.

“I haven’t finished yet” Sir Stephen then sternly warned, “Whilst this court agrees to the reinstatement of Ms Burgette to her position, this comes with terms and conditions, the primary one being that she and anyone succeeding her in the position has no more than an advisory role to the National Police & Security Service.”

“So, I am still stuck with her?” Tracy asked.

“Chain of Command Chief Superintendent” Sir Stephen reminded her, “Ms Burgette’s office and staff can advise you, but you are under no obligation to take that advice.”

“Understood your honour” Tracy nodded in agreement.

“The court will issue all the necessary terms and conditions of this judgement in due



course” Sir Stephen then concluded, “These proceedings are closed.”

Bermann was beaming like a Cheshire cat as he and his legal team celebrated whilst Burgette looked across at Tracy and grinned.

“Up yours bitch!” Burgette then called.

“How many more times do I have to remind you” Tracy tersely responded, “It’s up yours *Chief Superintendent* Bitch to you.”

A few minutes later amid much press interest, Bermann escorted Burgette out of the main entrance of the Central Law Courts and towards a waiting car, opening the door for her to get in the back before following himself.

“Ah yes!” Burgette called out as the car moved off, “Right, let’s get back to work” she then declared.

“Well unfortunately we cannot directly control the National Police & Security Service, but we are now in a position to be a major pain in their collective backsides” Bermann pointed out.

“There is still much we can do” Burgette confirmed “But first we have a couple of little problems to deal with.”

“I await your orders” Bermann responded.

“One loose end currently languishing in jail needs to be culled” Burgette explained “and I want that interfering little bastard Jack Regent dealt with.”

“By your command...” Bermann coolly confirmed.

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It was difficult for Fuller to slip away from New Scotland Yard unnoticed thanks to the numerous CCTV cameras watching almost every angle both inside and out plus the prowling military patrols that randomly ran through the streets, seemingly constantly on the look out to cause trouble at the drop of a hat.

Fortunately for him, Fuller knew where all the dead ground areas, sections not covered by any CCTV cameras were and it was this knowledge he used to slip out of a rear fire exit from the building and then use some back alleys to gain access to a staff entrance of Westminster Underground Station a short distance away.

Using some keys, Fuller was able to make his way through the non-public passageways of the station and down to the Jubilee Line Northbound Platform, emerging from a hidden doorway just as a train arrived and came to a halt in the platform.

Fuller wasted no time boarding the train as soon as the platform edge doors and the

doors of the train itself slid open before taking a seat in the rear most carriage where he picked up a discarded newspaper and turned to the puzzle page.

The crossword had been started by someone and it was this that Fuller was interested in as he could see two clues had been filled in, one of them read BAKER, the other STREET.

Eight minutes and three stops later, the train arrived at Baker Street Station which was where Fuller remained on the train but was joined by someone who boarded there and then deliberately sat down in the seat adjacent to him.

“Commander Fuller” Sir Richard formally called as the train doors closed and it set off, continuing its journey northbound.

“Sir Richard” Fuller responded in kind.

Neither of them said anything else until the only other passenger in the carriage left the train at the next stop, St. John’s Wood, and nobody else got on which left them alone to talk freely.

“So...” Sir Richard reluctantly began “Damocles. What’s the damage?” he then asked.

“At the moment it is still unclear” Fuller confirmed “but there is clear evidence that the first level periphery and non-critical systems may well have been hacked.”

“Hence the various odd disruptive incidents?” Sir Richard suggested to which Fuller merely nodded, “And the core systems?”

“No obvious signs of any unauthorised access yet but it could be whoever may be behind this is keeping that ace card if they hold it, close to their chest, only intending to play it when it is most crucial” Fuller replied.

“Hmm...” Sir Richard mused as the train slowed for its next stop at Swiss Cottage where, upon coming to a halt, nobody boarded their carriage before the doors closed again and they moved on.

“Should we alert the others?” Fuller then tentatively suggested.

“Hell, no” Sir Richard quickly responded, “Under no circumstances must the existence of Damocles ever be revealed, not even to the Chief Superintendent, is that understood?”

“Yes” Fuller agreed, nodding but clearly troubled still.

“If we have to go down in flames to protect the system then that is what we must do” Sir Richard then continued.

“And the Aldwych problem?” Fuller reminded him.

“I think Jack and his tenacious bunch of officers are sufficiently diverted off the path of truth to stay out of our hair” Sir Richard reassured him, “After all, we didn’t actually do anything, did we?”

“Only potentially perverted the course of justice” Fuller responded.

“I have done worse in my time, believe me” Sir Richard replied.

“I can believe that...” Fuller agreed.

“For now, keep calm” Sir Richard then instructed, “Keep monitoring Damocles and see if there are any signs of a core systems breach, if there are, we will have to act fast.”

“There is something I want to check if I get the chance” Fuller then confirmed, “Where exactly are the three pieces of the puzzle...”

“Where indeed...” Sir Richard agreed, “Be discrete...” he then strongly advised.

“Oh, I intend to” Fuller replied with sincerity.

“Anything comes up, you call me” Sir Richard then instructed as the train reached Finchley Road and slowed to a stop at the platform which was when he got up and started to move towards the door.

“Be seeing you...” Fuller confirmed which made Sir Richard smile before with a reassuring wink, he duly alighted from the train and disappeared from sight.

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Reaper was sat, alone in his cell reading when he became aware of how quiet the cell block had become, unusually so for a building that contained hundreds of prisoners plus the warders and other staff.

Despite his rapidly advancing age and deterioration of health, Reaper’s instincts were still pretty sharp, and they told him something was wrong.

Gently, he put the book down and got up, going out of the cell door onto the landing which gave him a good overall view of the main part of the cell block which was completely empty with no one in sight, it was as if they had all been silently whisked away.

“Hmm...” Reaper remarked to himself for he already sensed what this meant and choose to return to his cell.

Choosing to go over to the small wash basin, he proceeded to wash his face and then padded it dry with a towel, the turning off of the tap rendering the silence once more but then revealing to him that someone was approaching, their footsteps clear as day and getting louder as they walked on the metal walkway outside.

A few moments later, the metallic sound of the footsteps gave way to a softer sound as the person approaching entered the cell and then stopped.

Reaper with his back to the door still, merely smiled knowingly.

“I was wondering when you would appear” he then called, turning slowly around to face his visitor, the tall dark skinned figure of Delfont, dressed in full Prison Service Warden uniform and with a steely look of cold bloodied determination on his face.

“Brother, your time has come” Delfont confirmed in his very rich Central African accent.

“The years have not been kind; I welcome the end” Reaper responded.

Delfont nodded in understanding before drawing out two swords from their scabbards hidden beneath the Prison Service uniform tunic and brandishing them menacingly.

There was nobody to hear the blood curdling screams that echoed all throughout the deserted cell block or witness the final act as Reaper’s blood soaked and savaged body came flying over the second floor balcony and smashed into the pool table on the ground floor.

From the balcony, Delfont looked on, elated at his violent act before calmly returning the two swords back beneath the tunic and simply walking away as if nothing had happened.

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“Oh great...” Grant despondently remarked as they rounded and corner and Jack slowed down, “Another Military Check Point to hassle through.”

“We are supposed to have uninhibited passage except for secure zones” Jack reassured her as ahead, one of the military guards at the temporary check point ahead indicated for him to stop.

“Urrgh...” Grant responded.

“Mind you” Jack then thoughtfully added, “These don't look like regular grunts.”

“Perhaps something has happened?” Grant suggested.

“Maybe...” Jack replied, bringing the car to a stand before lowering the side window.

“Good morning, Sir” the officer called, “Please show your identification” he then formally requested.

“Here you go” Jack responded, handing over his warrant card whilst Grant handed hers over to another guard who had stepped up to her side window too.

“One moment please” the first officer then called as he withdrew, taking Jack and

Grant's warrant cards with him over to a mobile command vehicle parked nearby.

It was then that they both became acutely aware that the patrol car was now surrounded by a significant number of armed military personnel.

“You know what, I don't think this is your ordinary check point shakedown” Jack ventured, clearly looking concerned.

“What do we do Sir?” Grant then asked.

“Remain calm and cooperative” Jack confirmed.

It was then that the officer in charge, a Colonel as denoted by his rank insignia, approached the car with two guards in escort.

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent?” the Colonel then formally asked.

“Yes, that's me” Jack confirmed which was when Grant noticed that her commanding officer had discreetly put the car's gear selector into reverse.

“If you could get out of the car please Sir, you too Miss” the Colonel confirmed which was when the guard's weapons were duly pointed forwards menacingly, “There is a warrant for your arrest.”

“Are you having a laugh?” Jack dismissively replied.

“We are authorised to use deadly force, if necessary, Sir” the Colonel duly informed him which was when the aim of the guns being directed towards the car was none to subtly reinforced.

“Right...” Jack responded, “Hang on...”

Grant was sure Jack was up to something and instinct told her to discreetly unlatch her firearm holster and hold onto something.

Suddenly Jack smiled knowingly at the Colonel before hitting the accelerator which saw the car speed off in reverse, sending the four army guards who had been standing right behind the car scattering out of the way.

The military officers responded by immediately opening fire on the rapidly departing car which forced Jack and Grant to duck down as best they could.

“Hold on!” Jack then called as he executed a high speed handbrake turn and then headed off forwards, away from the pursuing military who were continuing to shoot.

“Oh hell...” Jack then exclaimed as he was forced to swerve as a military Land Rover appeared on the left and its occupants began to open fire on them.

“Permission to shoot these assholes Sir?” Grant called as she checked her firearm.

“Be my guest!” Jack agreed as he continued to drive fast in an attempt to evade the pursuing Land Rover, a task becoming increasingly difficult as the car was now badly damaged.

Grant released her seatbelt and swung round to shoot out of the back window but was suddenly thrown back when a sniper shot, fired from the pursuing Land Rover struck her in the left arm and was followed moments later by two more that pierced the back of the seat and impacted into her chest.

“All right you bastards, try this!” Jack angrily called out as he judged his moment perfectly before slamming on his brakes hard which caused the Land Rover to smash into the back of the car and then career off the road, overturning into a ditch.

The patrol car was ailing badly, and once Jack had looked behind him to ensure he had successfully shaken off their pursuers, he pulled off the road into an old derelict factory site and stopped.

“Guv...” Grant weakly called, looking down at her uniform tunic where blood was soaking through in significant quantities.

“Do you think you can you walk?” Jack asked with obvious concern, “Only the bad guys are on the way, and I don't want to risk leaving you here.”

“I'll make it Guv” Grant responded with grim determination.

Jack quickly got out, looked around and then went around to the passenger side of the virtually destroyed patrol car and wrenched the door open.

Gently, he helped Grant out of the car and leant her up against it before reaching into the glove compartment where he grabbed a first aid kit and spare ammunition clips.

“Come on, let's go” he then prompted, putting her arm around his shoulders, and then taking her weight before moving off.

A couple of minutes later, the Colonel arrived on the scene with some of his men, took one look at the abandoned patrol car and immediately indicated to his men who proceeded to open fire on it indiscriminately, effectively destroying it.

“Cease-fire!” the Colonel then shouted, and the guns fell silent before he stepped over to the smouldering wreckage and looked inside, noting the blood prevalent on the floor and front passenger seat.

“Well, it looks like we got at least one of them” the Colonel then proudly declared, “Search the area, they won't have gone far...”

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“What the hell is that dreadful noise?” Tracy had to raise her voice above the siren sound that had just started emitting from the speakers in the Main Control Room.

“I am not entirely sure Ma'am” the Duty Control Room Supervisor responded, “It seems to be some sort of alert from the Police & Crime Commissioners Office.”

“For God's sake switch that bloody thing off!” Tracy then shouted.

“Got it!” one of the other officers in the room called, yanking out a cable underneath one of the desks that immediately disabled the speakers and stopped the siren.

“Oh, thank God for that!” Tracy sat back in a seat, very relieved, “What was all that nonsense about?” she then asked.

“It seems the PCC's Office has issued a system wide fugitive alert” the Duty Control Room Supervisor explained.

“On screen...” Tracy indicated the main screen at the front of the room, “What the hell...?” she then exclaimed when the details and photograph of the fugitive appeared ahead.

“The fugitive alert is for Divisional Commander Jack Regent, Ma'am” the Duty Control Room Supervisor confirmed.

“Cancel it” Tracy immediately ordered “and get me that stupid cow on the phone right now!”

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The Colonel and his men made a thorough search of the surrounding area but found nothing, no trace of either Jack or Grant, no blood trail, nothing.

“What do you reckon Sir?” one of the soldiers asked the Colonel.

“Either they have vanished off the face of the planet or they managed to escape in a fresh vehicle” the Colonel concluded “Don't worry, the state at least one of them is in, they will turn up sooner or later and we will finish the job.”

“Yes Sir” the soldier agreed.

“All right Corporal, pack up your gear, we are done here” the Colonel then declared, “We have to get back anyway.”

As the Colonel and his men left, their departure was observed by Jack who had managed just in time to find an old cellar in the derelict building and was now watching through a tiny dust encrusted cracked window.

“It's okay, looks like they are going” Jack then called as he clambered down off a couple of old wooden crates and returned to Grant who was sat against the wall on the floor, her condition obviously worsening.

“Let's hope they don't come back” Grant weakly replied.

“Look, I have got to get you to a hospital” Jack called as he could see that Grant was still losing blood and deteriorating rapidly.

“No, I'll be all right Sir” Grant insisted, “If we come out of hiding, they will just finish what they started, and you need to stay alive.”

Very reluctantly, Jack nodded in agreement and sat back down before offering some more absorbent pads from the first aid box to try and further stem Grant's blood loss.

“Megan will be worried...” Jack remarked.

“Who is Megan, Sir?” Grant asked.

“She is my good lady, my better half” Jack admitted.

“Oh, is she the lady in the wheelchair I have seen you with?” Grant asked.

“That's her” Jack confirmed, “She got caught in the Holborn bomb which badly damaged her legs, hence the chair” he then explained.

“Were you there when it happened?” Grant asked.

“Yes, I was” Jack replied before tailing off.

“And you have never talked about it, have you Sir?” Grant then commented, “I can tell, I have done the extreme incidents counselling course, so I know the signs.”

“Hmm...” Jack responded, “It's funny, someone else said to me earlier that I shouldn't keep it all locked up inside.”

“Well Sir, I am not going anywhere, and I don't have anything else to do right now” Grant suggested, “Tell me what happened.”

Jack took a deep breath in, held it for a few moments then exhaled.

“All right, if you are sitting comfortably, then I shall begin” Jack then declared.

“Well, the first incident occurred just before the explosion” he began to explain, “My friend and colleague Connor Shelby had gone out of the front entrance to get Appleby's car started, it was when he stepped outside that, according to an eyewitness who subsequently disappeared, he saw a tall slim IC3 male with a suitcase, looking rather lost like a tourist.”

“A tourist? You don't see many of them in the city anymore” Grant weakly remarked.

“The next thing, apparently this guy swung around, produced some sort of sword from nowhere and struck Connor down” Jack continued, sadness at the loss of his friend readily apparent, “We still don't know if it was the stabbing or the explosion and being buried under the wreckage a few moments later that finally killed him.”



“The bomb...” Grant then asked, “In the suitcase I presume?”

“Yes...” Jack confirmed, “Our mystery Invisible Man shouted something and then tossed his suitcase in through the front doors of main reception and just calmly walked away, never to be seen or heard of again.”

“Where were you Sir?” Grant asked.

“I was upstairs with Appleby in the corridor outside my, was his then of course office and Megan was waiting for me down in Reception” Jack confirmed.

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As soon as Megan heard the screams outside from passers by who had witnessed Shelby's slaying and then saw the suitcase come flying in through the door and crash land onto the carpeted floor in the centre of main reception, she instantly knew something was very wrong.

“Run!!!” she called out, grabbing a couple of people nearby and forcefully pushing them ahead of her away from the suitcase.

As others also heeded the warning and began to run away, the suitcase detonated.

The huge explosion mostly went upwards and outwards, a huge ball of flame, debris and the shockwave blowing out the front of the buildings ground, first and part of the second floor into the street.

Burning debris struck passing vehicles and pedestrians, making it as far as the entrance of Holborn Underground Station directly opposite.

Alarms sounded, screams and the sounds of panic filled the air as the initial sound of the explosion died down.

On the fourth floor, the shock from the explosion rocked the building and sent Appleby and Jack crashing to the floor as furniture, ceiling lights and other fixtures were thrown about the place.

“What the hell was that?” Appleby asked as the lights exploded, small electrical fires broke out all around and the sound of multiple panicky alarm calls came over Jack's radio.

“Come on boss, we have got to get the hell out of here” Jack prompted as he scrambled to his feet, hauled bits of collapsed ceiling panels off Appleby and then helped him up.

Out in the street it was a scene of carnage, chaos and confusion as the first emergency services began to arrive on the scene where volunteer passers-by were already doing whatever they could to help the injured.

“That doesn't sound good...” Jack remarked as the building creaked and groaned,

exposed electrics randomly sparked, and more bits of ceiling panels collapsed around them.

It had become clear straight away that Appleby's ankle was broken and so Jack had to support him on his shoulders.

“I think we can safely say the Acting Prime Minister has got his required terrorist act to bring in his emergency powers” Appleby remarked whilst still grimacing with pain.

“Yeah...” Jack agreed, “Kind of awfully convenient though...”

They reached the Main Control Room, which was badly damaged, a main supporting beam from the structure had collapsed and smashed through the main screen before landing on some of the console desks and crushing them.

“Is there anyone in here?” Jack called.

“Over here!” the Duty Control Room Supervisor called from the far side of the room, clambering around the wreckage to reach them whilst dousing a couple of small pockets of fire with a handheld extinguisher as he passed them.

“Give me a hand, will you?” Jack then responded, “The boss is hurt.”

“Arggh!!” Appleby exclaimed as the Supervisor took hold of the opposite arm.

“You best head back that way, the south stairwell is blocked Sir” the Control Room Supervisor remarked.

“Drat!!!” Jack exclaimed as they turned back and headed for the alternative stairs on the opposite side of the building as the building seemingly continued to disintegrate around them.

“Is everyone out?” Appleby then asked.

“Anyone who can still walk Sir” the Control Room Supervisor confirmed, “It seems Reception copped the worst of it, several trapped in wreckage I heard before the communications finally packed up.”

“Oh hell, Megan is down there!” Jack suddenly realised as they reached the north side stairwell.

“You go, I'll be alright” Appleby declared.

“Are you sure Sir?” Jack responded.

“Go!” Appleby then insisted whereupon Jack handed his superior officer over to the Control Room Supervisor before heading off down the stairs as fast as he could.

On the ground floor in among the smouldering wreckage of the reception area, Security Service officers of various divisions, emergency service personnel and

volunteers were bravely trying to rescue people trapped in the rubble.

“All right, everyone got a piece?” one Metropolitan Division Lieutenant Commander called to the half dozen people helping him, “On three!” he then declared, “One! Two! Three!!!”

At his command, everyone put in a superhuman effort to lift up a large section of masonry which they had excavated down to using just bare hands, before letting it fall to one side revealing the crushed reception desk underneath.

“Here she is!” one of the rescuers called as he proceeded to help extract the Receptionist who had only been saved by her quick thinking in diving under the desk just in time.

“Look out!” someone then cried out which saw everyone scramble away as another section of heavy masonry came crashing down, fortunately due to the hastily given warning, without further injury.

Jack appeared on the scene moments later from the north stairwell amid a cloud of dust and smoke that filled the air.

Although injured, it appeared that the Receptionist had a lucky escape with only cuts and bruises, the desk she had dived under had protected her to a great extent.

As Jack approached, he was desperate for news about Megan.

“Have you seen her?” Jack asked, anxiously.

“Erm, well...” the understandably dazed Receptionist responded, “Oh, she shouted the warning just before it went off and headed off that way I think” she vaguely indicated off to her right.

“Right, thanks” Jack responded and let the paramedic crew take her away for treatment as all around, the Fire & Rescue Service were moving in on the scene which allowed the volunteers to step back and be evacuated from the building.

“What have we got?” the Holborn Fire Station Chief asked as he arrived on the scene.

“There are some still trapped on the upper floors” Jack confirmed, “The south staircase is blocked and the north one I just came down isn’t much better.”

“Time to get out Sir” the Fire Chief then suggested.

“My girl is in this wreckage somewhere” Jack responded, steadfastly refusing to leave.

“Sir, I must insist” the Fire Chief reiterated, “The building is unsafe, let us handle it, we’ll find your girl.”

“Sir!” came a shout from outside the remains of the front entrance, “There is someone

in a Security Service uniform under the rubble here.”

Jack and the Fire Chief both immediately responded to this call by heading back outside where the air was filled with the sounds of sirens, commotion, and hovering helicopters.

“Oh no...” Jack responded as the rubble was partially lifted away revealing the shoulder and back of a body, the dust and blood covered metal numerals sewn onto the epaulettes reading LT717 confirming it to be Shelby.

“No...” an attendant paramedic simply called whereupon he drew a sheet over the body to at least give Shelby some dignity in death.

Looking across the street, Jack could see that people were now being safely escorted from the upper floors now via the north stairwell emergency exit including Appleby who was now being attended to by paramedics in the back of one of a fleet of ambulances that were now on the scene.

“Hey! We got a live one here!” came a call from inside the building.

“Helmet!” the Fire Chief called to one of his men who reached inside an equipment cabinet on their specialist incident vehicle and threw across a safety helmet which the Chief then gave to Jack.

“Seeing as you won’t leave, you had better wear this” the Fire Chief confirmed.

“Let’s get all this loose stuff clear” came the call from one of the Fire & Rescue personnel who, along with three others were on top of a large pile of masonry and support beams that had collapsed over on the south side of the reception area.

There was a rapid scramble which Jack and the Fire Chief joined in order to clear as much loose debris as possible which revealed someone was indeed trapped.

“Someone get this bloody building off me!” screamed a familiar voice which made Jack both smile in relief and fear the worst in a single breath.

“What’s your name love?” the Fire Chief called as he looked down between various substantial bits of beams and masonry and saw a young woman’s face looking back up at him.

“Megan...” she confirmed.

“Hello Megan, relax now, we are going to get you out of here” the Fire Chief reassured her.

“Where is Jack?” Megan then called out, trying her best to mentally control the extreme pain she was experiencing.

“I’m here love” Jack responded as, with a little help from the rescue team, Jack gingerly lowered himself down so that he could see her.

“You might need to consider a little redecorating...” Megan joked, trying to lighten the mood but she knew deep down she was in very severe trouble.

“Torch please” the Fire Chief called whereupon a powerful searchlight was passed to him which he shone in through the rubble and wreckage.

Jack managed to get his hand down to reach Megan’s and was relieved when she gripped his hand tightly in return.

“Okay lads, we have got our work cut out on this job” the Fire Chief remarked.

“I...” Megan began but then started to almost silently scream as a strong surge of pain convulsed through her body before subsiding again.

“Dave, find me two situation trained paramedics, get them kitted in full safety gear and get them here right away” the Fire Chief then instructed.

“What are we looking at?” Jack asked.

“Megan, you have got a steel joist, one of the structural beams from the main structure lying right across your legs and there is a pile of rubble and other crap on top of that” the Fire Chief explained, “We will get you out but it is going to take time I am afraid” he reassured her.

“How long?” Jack asked, his concerns growing exponentially.

“Can’t say” the Fire Chief honestly admitted “It’s like a gigantic and very heavy Jenga game really plus we have to worry about anything else above our heads coming down as well.”

As if to prove his point, some loose dust and small bits of masonry trickled down from above them at that moment which the Fire Chief batted away before it fell in Megan’s face.

Moments later two specialist paramedics arrived on the scene and were carefully escorted to where they had access to Megan.

“Hello there” the First Paramedic called, “We are going to look after you and stay with you until these guys get you out” he explained.

Megan managed a slightly shaky thumbs up in response whilst Jack adjusted his position so as to be out of the way whilst the rescue personnel went about their work but still maintain contact with her.

“Good, you can hear and understand me so that is most definitely good news” the First Paramedic confirmed.

As they proceeded to stabilise Megan’s condition and give her something to numb the pain a bit, the Fire & Rescue Service personnel were having a meeting nearby to

discuss the best plan for getting her out.

Outside, the area for over a mile in each direction had now been sealed off and evacuation of all but emergency service personnel was well underway.

Tracy arrived on her Security Service motorbike having ridden directly over from New Scotland Yard moments after hearing about the explosion and was immediately allowed in through the outer cordon without any question or delay.

“Oh God...” she remarked in a sense of shock as she came around the corner and saw for the first time the damage to the front of the Transport Division building, the wreckage distributed over a wide area and the emergency services working frantically, trying to rescue the trapped and the dead as well as tend to the injured.

It was as Tracy began to fear the worst, that Jack may be dead which, coming on top of the loss of her husband to a terrorist act two years earlier was the last thing she needed, that she noticed Appleby on a stretcher inside the temporary field hospital tent that was being used as an onsite treatment centre for the hundreds of injured prior to onward transport to hospital.

“Jim!” Tracy called as she approached.

“Administrator General” Appleby responded; the painkiller that had just been administered now starting to have an effect.

“Is Jack okay?” Tracy asked, clearly worried, not as Administrator General but as a mother.

“He’s all right” Appleby confirmed to a sigh of relief from Tracy “He’s in there, his girl is trapped under the wreckage, and they are trying to get her out” he explained.

“Right, we are ready to move you to hospital now Sir” the Paramedic tending to Appleby’s injuries informed him.

“We’ll catch up later” Tracy confirmed to which Appleby nodded in understanding before he was taken away to a waiting ambulance for transfer to hospital.

Tracy hurried across the scene towards the centre of much of the activity on site, the badly damaged front of the building and the debris field scattered all around it.

“Hey!” Tracy called over whereupon one of the rescue team members threw her a hard hat which she quickly put on and proceeded directly to where the main efforts were occurring and she could see, to her relief Jack was alive and well.

“Right, listen carefully” the Fire Chief called “We need to clear all these large sections by hand” he indicated the various big pieces of masonry that were on the top of the pile of wreckage, “and that needs to be done carefully by pulling away from the centre of the scene.”

Tracy stood back to allow the Fire Chief to finish his briefing uninterrupted.

“As soon as we get this lot cleared, we need to get the heavy lifting gear and airbags in here to raise the main metal structural beams off the young lady so I want them ready to go” he continued to instruct, “In the meantime you two” he indicated two members of his team “You are on watch duty, so much as a hint that we may have an imminent collapse or potential falling masonry, you shout STOP and everyone moves away. Is that understood?”

“Are you okay Jack?” Tracy then called as she was allowed through for a few moments before operations commenced in earnest.

“I have had better days to honest...” Jack admitted.

“Oh, that's better...” Megan remarked as the strong painkillers the paramedics had administered began to take effect.

“You hang on in there” Tracy encouraged to which Megan responded with another thumbs up.

“We will be okay I reckon” Jack confirmed although deep down he still had severe doubts.

“Right, I will get out of your way and let you guys get on” Tracy then declared as she extracted herself from the area with a little help before withdrawing from the scene.

“Right everyone, let's do this” the Fire Chief then called.

It took three hours of digging, tense moments when everyone stopped and looked when parts of the structure appeared to shift or threaten to fall plus sheer brute strength to shift the heavy sections of debris before they reached the final part of the problem, a large solid steel RSJ type girder that was resting right across Megan's legs.

By this point it was so dark that powerful generators and portable lights had been brought in, illuminating the scene.

The Fire Chief looked on concerned.

“Problem?” Jack asked, sensing a potential problem.

“It's this girder” the Fire Chief confirmed, “Option one would normally be cut it but the only point where we can get the torch in is so close to her legs it could set her on fire.

“Just as I thought today could not possibly get any worse...” Megan weakly joked.

“Right, Plan B it is then” the Fire Chief declared.

“What's Plan B?” Jack asked.

“We get everyone we can find to physically lift this thing up just long enough to drag

Megan clear” the Fire Chief explained.

“I’ll go with that” Jack agreed as he got up and prepared his hands, ready to lift.

Within moments, a large number of Fire & Rescue Service personnel had gathered around whilst the two attending paramedics braced themselves to slide Megan back and clear as soon as the word was given.

“All right” the Fire Chief then called, “Everyone got a bit?” he asked to which confirmations were received from all around.

With a number of personnel ready with levers to add some extra lift if possible, the Fire Chief looked around before taking a deep breath and grabbing hold of part of the girder himself.

“On three!” he then called “One, Two and THREE!!”

A monumental effort was duly made by all present which saw the heavy girder lift ever so slightly but not enough to get Megan clear.

“Hold it up, HOLD IT UP!” the Fire Chief called through gritted teeth, knowing full well that if they let it crash back down, the damage to Megan would be increased, possibly fatally.

“LIFT!!!” he then called, and a further Herculean effort was duly undertaken whereupon the paramedic team saw their chance and in a swift move, pulled Megan clear.

“CLEAR!” they then called which was the cue for the rescuers to drop the girder once again and collectively let out a huge sigh of relief.

The Paramedic Team quickly got to work, stabilising the damaged legs, and they soon had Megan ready to move.

“All right, let’s go” the lead Paramedic confirmed whereupon they carefully moved Megan on a spinal board up onto a stretcher before, with help from rescue personnel and with Jack in close escort, she was carried off to a waiting ambulance nearby.

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“She was in hospital for three months” Jack confirmed “and has spent the last three years in a wheelchair having numerous operations on her legs.”

“Will she walk again?” Grant asked.

“I would say it is fifty fifty at the moment, still a long way to go yet” Jack replied, “A long way to go...”

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Tarbett had been sitting alone in a darkened room for what seemed to him to be forever.

All that time had been spent scrolling through hours and hours of mundane CCTV footage from various locations but thus far he had found next to nothing.

He was on the verge of giving up as he was half watching one CCTV view from a camera overlooking the Surrey Street entrance of the former Aldwych Underground Station being played at double speed when something caught his eye.

“Hang about...” Tarbett responded as he did a double take and quickly rewound the footage back and played it again, this time at normal speed.

“Who the hell is that?” he then asked himself as he proceeded to run a short section of the footage repeatedly back and forth which showed someone discreetly entering the building, carrying a toolbox very much like the one that had been found near Appleby's body.

Using the computer console, Tarbett managed to select a couple of clear frames from the footage and zoom in on the individual before printing them out.

“Let's see who you are shall we?” Tarbett then remarked as he took the printed photos and hurried from the room.

Whilst Tarbett had been so engrossed in his task, he had been completely unaware of the situation occurring until he came into the main Investigation Room to see lots of frenzied activity and worried faces.

“What did I miss?” Tarbett asked, clearly concerned.

“The Guvnor and Grant are missing” Russell explained “They were on their way back from North End when it appears they were ambushed by a military check point after that bitch Burgette issued an arrest warrant for the boss.”

“Fortunately, the Chief Superintendent quickly quashed it” Eisley confirmed “but we have no idea where they are...”

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“Crowthorne...” Sir Richard responded as he answered the hands-free telephone in his car whilst driving along Euston Road.

“It's Barrett Sir” came the call from his office, “Our contact at GCHQ just picked up a radio message on secure military frequencies concerning an incident near Hampstead.”

“Go on...” Sir Richard prompted; his interest piqued.

“It's not very clear” Barrett admitted “but it seems to indicate that a specialist team had a shoot out with two Security Service officers, two or three of their men have

been injured, the Security Service patrol car has been destroyed and at least one of the officers they were pursuing may be critically injured but they have been unable to locate them.”

“See if you can work out an exact position for the origin of that message” Sir Richard urgently ordered “and get our specialist team up that way ASAP.”

“Already in hand Sir” Barrett confirmed, “Do you want me to notify the Chief Superintendent?” she then asked.

“Err, no not yet” Sir Richard responded after giving the question some thought for a few moments, “Let's not give her false hope and besides, she has her hands full at the moment.”

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“You should go Sir” Grant weakly called, “Leave me here.”

“Now then Lieutenant, that is not the way I work” Jack responded, “We do not leave a fallen officer behind, no matter what.”

“It's your call Sir” Grant agreed but they both knew her condition, the severe blood loss and other injuries meant she was becoming progressively weaker with each passing moment.

Jack tried to redress the bleeding wounds with what little he still had available, but it was a losing battle.

“So, this girl of yours, Megan” Grant then remarked, “I don't know about you Sir but to me she sounds like a keeper.”

“Yeah, she is” Jack agreed with a smile.

“Then maybe when all the dust has settled you should do something about it” Grant suggested.

“Yes Lieutenant” Jack responded, “I think I should.”

“Just my little good deed for today” Grant weakly explained “I try and do a good deed every day for someone...” she tailed off.

“Lieutenant?” Jack responded.

“I think that was my last one Sir...” Grant then responded before she exhaled and slumped.

Jack did not need to check what had happened, he already knew she had succumbed to her wounds and died.

“Dammit...” Jack responded in a mixture of grief and anger as he reached up and

closed Grant's eyes for the last time.

He was unsure how long he sat there in the semi-darkness for, it could have been minutes or hours, but Jack found himself suddenly woken from his almost trance like state by the sound of a helicopter approaching.

Quickly responding, Jack hauled himself back to his feet and drew his old six shot revolver from its holster before scrabbling back up to look out of the window.

His worst fears seem to be realised when he saw a military style helicopter coming into land and a number of army type vehicles arriving in the yard where men in full battle dress deployed and immediately proceeded to examine the wreckage of the patrol car.

“Well, that's that then” Jack remarked to himself as he clambered back down “They have come back to finish off the job it would seem...”

With just his and Grant's guns available to him against probably a couple of dozen fully armed army personnel, Jack knew his chances were effectively nil, a thought that was increasingly enforced as the sounds of hard soled boots, shouted orders and further vehicles arriving grew ever louder.

That low point of thought was suddenly changed when he suddenly heard a familiar voice calling out his name.

“Jack? Are you there?” came the call.

“Sir Richard?” Jack responded to himself initially, not entirely sure if he was imagining it but by then he reckoned it was a done deal anyway and he duly decided to respond.

“Down here!” Jack called back, not knowing what was going to come through the door.

Moments later Sir Richard appeared along with a number of armed forces personnel which left Jack confused.

“There you are young man...” Sir Richard called, clearly happy to have found Jack but then he noticed Grant's body lying nearby.

“Too late...” Jack sadly confirmed.

“Who did it? What happened?” Sir Richard then asked.

“We got stopped at a military checkpoint by some hard bastards led by some tin pot dictator Colonel” Jack confirmed “Apparently there is a warrant out for my arrest.”

“Oh yes, that” Sir Richard recalled “Don't worry, your mother cancelled it.”

“It seems it was dead or alive with the emphasis on dead” Jack admitted, “We barely

escaped with our lives, well..." he tailed off, looking across at Grant's body that was now in the process of being recovered and taken away respectfully by a couple of army field paramedics.

"Yes..." Sir Richard mournfully remarked "Come on, let's get out of here."

"I don't suppose there is anything left of my car is there?" Jack then asked as Sir Richard helped him out of the building, "Only there is some evidence in the boot which may be vital."

"I think your Colonel friend and his men reduced it to what I would describe as a barn find spares or repair" Sir Richard confirmed as they emerged into the dim late afternoon light which was when they saw the car.

"So, who are these guys?" Jack indicated around at the military personnel Sir Richard had arrived with.

"A little detachment that is most definitely on our side and not part of the programme of The Committee" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Right..." Jack responded, still not entirely convinced as he managed to wrench open the boot of the wrecked patrol car to reveal the two evidence bags inside, thankfully undamaged.

"A spanner and a bag of err... crap?" Sir Richard asked.

"A murder weapon and corroborating location evidence" Jack responded, "Look for yourself" he then showed off the adjustable spanner.

"Oh yes, I see what you mean" Sir Richard agreed, "Come on then, I have instructions to get you back to town and we can drop this lot off at the forensics lab on the way.

It was then that they both looked across and saw the stretcher bearing Grant's body being respectfully loaded into the back of an ambulance.

"She is the first officer you have lost under your command" Sir Richard reassured him "It's hard, believe me I know, and it is never something you get used to, but the mark of a good Commander in Chief is how he or she deals with it, moves on and gets on with the job in hand."

"Yes, of course" Jack slightly reluctantly agreed, "and yes, there is a lot more work still to do."

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"Thank you" Eisley responded before hanging up the phone and looking around his at the worried faces of his officers.

"Any news Sir?" Tarbett asked.

“The Guvnor’s has been found safe and well” Eisley confirmed to elated responses from the others present that very quickly became subdued when they realised that there was more news of a far less positive nature “but erm, Lieutenant Grant is dead.”

The looks of disbelief, sorrow and distress that greeted this news was not unexpected.

“The Guvnor should be back here inside an hour” Eisley then continued, “We still have a job to do” he then reminded them, “There will be time to grieve later, I assure you.”

“In which case” Tarbett called as he stepped forward and placed a number of still photographs taken from the Aldwych CCTV he had been looking at earlier on the table in front of everyone for them to see, “Who is this guy?” he then asked.

“Let me see” Eisley prompted as he took one of the photos and looked at it with a quizzical expression, “Do you know that face does look familiar, but I can’t place it.”

“This came from a CCTV camera overlooking the Surrey Street entrance of Aldwych Tube Station” Tarbett went on to explain, “Recorded over a week ago.”

“It looks like he is carrying something” Baxter remarked as he took a closer look for himself, “Isn’t that a toolbox?” he then ventured.

“Just like this one?” Eisley responded as he lifted the heavy yellow toolbox that had been recovered from near where Appleby’s body had been found, now wrapped in a large clear plastic evidence bag, and placed it on the table with a loud bang.

“Yeah, I reckon that could a match Sir” Tarbett agreed.

“I think we may have found its owner then” Eisley agreed, “The trouble is, we still don’t know who the actual owner is.”

“Did Forensics come back with anything on it Sir?” Baxter asked.

“Fingerprints on it all matched Security Service personnel” Eisley confirmed, “Looks like whoever actually owns this wore gloves or wiped it clean.”

“All the more odd...” Tarbett remarked, “Of course it could be that this toolbox and its apparent owner actually have nothing to do with this.”

“A good point” Eisley agreed “but until we actually find this individual and ask them, we will probably never know.”

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“Ma’am” Fuller called across the main New Scotland Yard Control Room, “Sir Richard Crowthorne reports Jack is safe and well but the officer he was with has died as a result of gunshot wounds received when they were ambushed at a Military Checkpoint.”

“Oh God...” Tracy responded mournfully, “Where are they now?”

“Sir Richard is bringing Jack back to Holborn now” Fuller confirmed, “He has apparently found some evidence relating to the Appleby murder so is going to drop it off at the Forensic Service offices on the way back.”

“Right” Tracy got up from her seat and headed towards the door, “Any further progress on that other matter?” she then evasively asked as Fuller joined her in walking down the corridor.

“Nothing so far other than a reliable source indicating that our missing person is being held by the Ixion Brotherhood although it seems they may not have actually had anything to do with her kidnap” Fuller explained.

“What the hell are those clowns playing at?” Tracy asked as she reached her office and headed inside, “Why no ransom demand?”

“At the very least by now you would have thought Lord Chaos and his idiotic minions would have spread the word” Fuller agreed.

Tracy nodded in agreement as she sat down behind her desk whereupon she opened and switched on the laptop in front of her.

“Good evening!!” came the loud call from the laptop whereupon the beaming face of Orbison appeared on the laptop screen.

“Lord Chaos!” Tracy responded in surprise.

“Speak of the devil...” Fuller quietly whispered to himself.

“What the hell are you doing lurking in my computer?” Tracy then asked.

“Oh, just catching up with old friends” Orbison confirmed, “I thought you might be interested in meeting my esteemed house guest...”

At that moment the camera swivelled around from Orbison to reveal the Prime Minister sat in an almost throne like ornate chair nearby before swivelling back again.

“What do you want?” Tracy then tersely asked, eager to get to the point.

“Until further notice, the Prime Minister is under my care” Orbison declared “She is my guest here and is now an honorary Sister of the Brotherhood.”

Tracy had to smile just a little bit when in the background; the Prime Minister rudely blew a raspberry in response.

“Even though I am reasonably certain you have no idea where I or indeed the good lady actually are, you will make no attempt to retrieve her or in any way interfere with the Brotherhood as per the specific instructions of the Public Interest Immunity Certificate that I continue to possess and covers all of my fellow brothers, which now

includes the Prime Minister thanks to her honorary membership status” Orbison then politely informed.

“And if I refuse and set out to come and kick your scraggy arse into the next century?” Tracy tersely inquired.

“Then I shall have to send her to The Wheel...” Orbison confirmed but then discreetly looked back at the Prime Minister and shook his head as if in some sort of vain reassurance that he would not actually do that.

“She is supposed to be running the country” Tracy then pointed out, “politics like nature abhors a vacuum.”

“Does it look like I give a toss Chief Superintendent?” Orbison mockingly replied, practically laughing “Anyway, the revolution is here, and you are not invited...”

“I reiterate, what do you want?” Tracy then asked.

“Obedience...” Orbison simply responded, “Stay tuned... To Life Immortal...” he then declared before the screen went blank, and the communication was terminated.

“Wassock...” Tracy tersely responded, “How the hell did he get into my computer?” she then asked a worried looking Fuller.

“I don't know” Fuller had to honestly admit.

“Well bloody well find out!” Tracy angrily responded, “And while you are at it, find out where the hell that fruit loop actually is!”

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“Whoa, whoa, whoa, stop the car!” Jack called out as Sir Richard was approaching Piccadilly Circus and in response, promptly hit the brakes hard as he too had seen the same thing.

“What the...?” Sir Richard remarked as they both got out of the car and looked up at the huge billboard screen that dominates one corner of Piccadilly Circus.

On it was a live transmission being broadcast with full sound and was also being simultaneously shown on the Internet, some television channels and even the interactive advertising screens at bus stops, in Underground and Main Line railway stations and also on some buses too.

“People of London, my friends” Orbison's voice boomed out “Lord Chaos wishes each and every one of you a blessed day and greetings from the Ixion Brotherhood.”

“What is that drugged up hippy wannabe wacko up to now?” Jack then asked with a sense of resignation.

“I wanted to talk to you all this evening and reach out as a kindred spirit” Orbison

continued “and introduce you to our special guest, come and say hello...”

At that point, Orbison escorted the camera around to see the Prime Minister standing nearby whereupon he went up to her and put his arm around her, hugging her over enthusiastically.

“Hello...” the Prime Minister begrudgingly remarked.

“Well, what do you think of that?” Orbison then called with a beaming smile, “The big cheese herself right here, live!”

“Now, I think we have got a problem...” Sir Richard commented.

“Oh, really Sherlock, you think?!?” Jack responded with an incredulous look.

“So...” Orbison continued “Stay tuned to our social media feeds and our very own channel as we bring you the Ixion Revolution, it's going to be a blast and everyone, well almost everyone is invited!”

At that point there was much cheering and jubilation on the screen as the camera panned back to a wider view to show a large number of partying Ixion Brotherhood members, streamers and party poppers being let off and upbeat music before suddenly it all stopped with a swift swipe of Orbison's hand whereupon he walked up to the camera to the point that his face filled the screen.

“To Life Immortal...” he then whispered before the screen went blank.

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“Sir, I think you should see this” one of the X-Ray Division officers called down the corridor of the King William Street complex, causing Commander Monroe to stop in his tracks and look back in response.

“What have you got Lieutenant?” Monroe asked.

“I don't know if this is relevant Sir, but this report just came in from the Prison Service” the officer handed across the piece of paper he was carrying which Monroe took and read carefully.

“Oh yes, this is very relevant, well for one of our number anyway” Monroe confirmed “Has this been confirmed?” he then asked.

“The word the Prison Governor used was ‘butchered’ Sir” the officer called, “Cut to ribbons in a vicious attack and then his bloodied mortal remains thrown over the balcony two floors to the ground below just as an afterthought.”

“Ouch...” Monroe responded.

“The thing is Sir, Reaper was one of Divisional Commander Jack Regent's collars” the Officer explained “There is history there and it appears that the aforementioned



Divisional Commander paid Reaper an unscheduled visit a few hours before he was executed.”

“Probably got killed for talking to Regent I fear” Monroe concluded “The question is, how do we tell him what has happened and for that matter, should we?”

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It was a battle-weary looking Jack who came in through the main entrance of the Transport Division Headquarters with Sir Richard accompanying him where they were greeted by almost the entire Division’s officers and support staff.

Many of them had already heard about what had happened to him and the death of Lieutenant Grant and some of them had already altered their uniforms with a memorial black ribbon around the Divisional Crest.

“Sir” Eisley formally called, standing to attention and saluting, “We have all heard what happened, sorry.”

“Thanks mate” Jack responded with a weak smile.

“There are a few developments you need to be made aware of, but I think they can wait for a little while Sir” Eisley then confirmed.

“Will you be all right?” Sir Richard asked.

“Yeah, I’ll be okay” Jack responded, “Thanks.”

“No problem” Sir Richard confirmed “I am on the end of the telephone if you need anything, even if it is just a chat, okay?”

“Thank you” Jack confirmed with a nod.

“In which case, I had better get back to work myself” Sir Richard then declared “You are among friends here, they will take care of you now.”

“Thank you for your assistance, Sir” Eisley called.

“All part of the service” Sir Richard responded, “Good evening” he then called before discretely leaving.

“Come on boss” Eisley then gently encouraged, “I’ll get the kettle on and there is someone waiting to see you in your office.”

“Thanks” Jack responded, and they duly headed towards the lifts.

As the lift doors closed and the car began its ascent, Jack took a deep breath in, held it for a moment and then let it out.

“I have been the Divisional Commander for less than a week and already I have lost

one of my officers” Jack remarked, mournfully.

“As I said to the team earlier, there will be time to grieve Sir” Eislely advised, “But with so much going on, it will have to wait.”

“We will raise a glass to her in the pub later” Jack then positively decided, “Have I missed anything whilst I was out?”

“Well...” Eislely began to summarise as the lift doors opened and they exited out onto the fourth floor, “PCC Burgette got reinstated and then promptly put out a fugitive alert on you, which obviously you know about, Lieutenant Commander Tarbett has found an individual on CCTV entering the Surrey Street entrance of Aldwych about two weeks ago carrying a tool box that matches the one we found and, oh yes, the Prime Minister has been kidnapped by those Ixion loons.”

“I saw the broadcast” Jack responded, “I was rather hoping it was some sort of practical joke or a hoax.”

“Alas not” Eislely regretfully confirmed, “Strictly off the record but it appears she was snatched from her personal quarters inside Downing Street sometime last night and the Chief Superintendent managed to keep it from becoming public knowledge until that lunatic, Lord Chaos announced his claim that he has her as his ‘guest’ about thirty minutes ago.”

“So, who is running the country?” Jack then asked as they reached his office

“The Home Secretary has stood in for her at New Parliament House but there are already rumours that various people are trying to take the position” Eislely explained.

“Fortunately, Lord Chaos and the Prime Minister are the Metropolitan Division’s problem” Jack responded, “Well, unless Orbison decides to set up shop on the Northern Line I suppose.”

“I’ll be in the Special Ops Room, Sir” Eislely then confirmed.

“Thanks mate” Jack replied before opening his office door and going inside.

Waiting for him in his office was Megan who had managed to haul herself out of her wheelchair and into Jack’s chair behind his desk.

“Oh, are you a sight for sore eyes my love” Jack declared as he rushed to embrace her, and they then hugged each other tightly.

“I heard what happened” Megan confirmed.

“Oh God...” Jack responded, almost in tears “She was right there next to me and there was nothing I could do, it just brought it all back to that day when you...”

“I know” Megan reassured him, “I know.”

“Someone is responsible for this, and I am going to find them” Jack then determinedly declared.

“Do you think there is a connection to Appleby’s death?” Megan asked.

“Probably” Jack admitted “It seems too much of a coincidence not to be really.”

“There is something you need to know about whilst you were out” Megan then tentatively changed the subject, “Your old friend Reaper” she began.

“I saw him earlier” Jack confirmed, “What about him?”

“A report came into the X-Ray Division Control Room earlier” Megan explained “Reliable sources but we are keeping a lid on it for the moment, Reaper is dead.”

“What?” Jack responded incredulously.

“Someone set up an emergency evacuation drill exercise in his cell block leaving him alone which was when somebody killed him in his cell” Megan confirmed “Basically he was executed and apparently it wasn’t pretty.”

“Oh hell...” Jack responded, “He was probably killed because he talked to me.”

“And then an hour or so later someone tried to finish you off as well” Megan added “Under the cover of a Fugitive Alert issued from the Police & Crime Commissioner’s office.”

“She is definitely off my Christmas card list” Jack admitted before going over to the office window and looking out across the rooftops of the adjacent buildings.

“Ah heck...” Jack then remarked as he closed his eyes, took a deep breath and thrust his shoulders back “I know I need to get back to work but I think there is something I need to do first.”

Ten minutes later, all of the Transport Division officers in the building plus a number of others were gathered in the large briefing room on the top floor where the hushed conversations between them fell silent as Jack entered the room, still in his battered dusty and blood-stained uniform.

“We are only a small part of the Security Service” Jack began to address the room, “Practically an extended family really and today we lost one of our own, a friend, a colleague, a brave dedicated officer who will be missed by all who knew her.”

“In recognition of her bravery, I am granting Lieutenant Grant a posthumous field promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Commander” Jack then continued, “I think in light of her sacrifice and her dedication to the Service, that is the least we can do.”

There were many nods and murmurs of approval from the room which Jack let pass before continuing.

“Right now, we have a job still to do but I assure you all there will be time to grieve and remember her” Jack then declared “When all this madness is over, we will raise a glass to her memory and the first round is on me.”

“In the meantime, let’s get back to work” Jack then suggested, “I want sources tapped, rocks kicked over, trees shaken until we find the people responsible for Lieutenant Commander Grant and Divisional Commander Appleby’s deaths. I promise you all we will have our revenge, but it will be done the right way.”

“Yes Sir” the entire room responded in unison.

“Let’s be careful out there” Jack declared, “Thank you.”

A few moments later, Jack was out in the corridor with Megan when he caught up with Easley.

“Are you all right boss?” Easley asked, obviously concerned.

“I’ll be okay, thanks” Jack confirmed “Did I miss anything whilst I was erm, busy? You said something about Tarbett, some CCTV and the toolbox?”

“Oh yes” Easley confirmed, “he turned up some CCTV footage from a university building camera that happens to look across towards the Surrey Street entrance of Aldwych Station” Easley explained, “I think we may have found the owner of that toolbox.”

“You go on ahead love” Megan insisted, “I’ll head home.”

“Thanks love” Jack responded as they then kissed before Megan duly wheeled herself off towards the lifts.

“You are a lucky man Sir” Easley commented.

“Yes, I guess I am” Jack admitted, “Come on then, let’s see what we have got.”

“Bill!” Easley called across to Tarbett, as they entered the Investigation Room “Show the boss what you have got.”

“So far, six occasions captured on CCTV over the last three months that I found thus far Sir” Tarbett explained as he went to fetch the photographic stills he had printed from the footage, “The last was seven days ago and each time, the footage shows an IC1 male carrying a yellow metal cantilever toolbox entering the premises and leaving approximately an hour later on each occasion.”

“Let’s see him then” Jack prompted which saw Tarbett start to lay out the photographs on the table in front of them.

“Now, I have no idea who this guy is Sir” Tarbett then confirmed “But we have a

couple of clear shots of him here so we should be able to identify him with some help.”

“What the hell?” Jack exclaimed as he looked at the photographs with a sense of shock.

“Sir?” Eisley asked.

“You know the guy Sir?” Tarbett then asked, sensing Jack’s bewilderment and realisation.

“Oh yes, I know him all right” Jack confirmed “and I know exactly where to find him too.”

“Should I start the paperwork for an arrest warrant Sir?” Eisley suggested.

“Absolutely” Jack readily agreed as he studied the photographs still closer, hoping that he was mistaken but he was not “and then get the car, we are going to the Yard.”

“The Yard Sir?” Eisley asked, “As in New Scotland Yard?”

“The very same” Jack confirmed with a tinge of sadness mixed with underlying anger, “It is time we got some answers.”

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A calm peace had settled across the city that evening, an unusually cold evening for that time of year combined with miserable drizzly rain and the constant risk of issues with the roving military checkpoints across central London had put many people off going out leaving just a few office workers and support staff heading home and just a few hardy souls braving the poor weather voluntarily.

The rain was pattering against the large plate glass windows that dominated one side of Tracy’s office on the top floor of New Scotland Yard where she had decided to give up reading the stack of files on her desk and simply listen to the rain, finding it soothing and therapeutic.

Amongst the files on Tracy’s desk was the report of what had happened to Jack and Grant earlier that day and Grant’s personnel file which she had been studying prior to the always unwelcome task of writing a formal letter of condolence to the deceased officer’s parents.

Tracy was about to commit her pen to paper when there was an urgent knock at the door.

“Come in...” Tracy reluctantly called, putting her pen down carefully.

“Sorry to disturb you Ma’am” Marion, Tracy’s Personal Assistant called “But we just got a call from Christopher Dent over at Thames House, apparently the BBC are going to be running an exclusive broadcast from the Prime Minister in the next couple

of minutes.”

“That should be interesting...” Tracy responded with some understandable confusion as she reached for the television remote control and switched it on.

“...and we now go live to the Prime Minister, Jayne Grey who is about to make a statement” the BBC News Channel presenter announced.

“Marion, get me the Home Secretary on the phone, urgent” Tracy then called.

“Yes Ma’am” Marion confirmed before leaving the office as the BBC News Channel broadcast changed from the studio over to a blank screen which then faded to white before the Prime Minister appeared.

“Good evening” the Prime Minister formally began, “The last few years have been some of the toughest this country has seen in many generations” she announced, “A pandemic that took the lives of so many of our loved ones, a constant threat of terrorism that has struck fear and terror into the very fabric of society, political infighting that has torn the Government apart from within and now a state of emergency that has effectively killed the spirit of the City of London and left it empty and mentally derelict.”

“Where the hell is she going with this?” Tracy asked herself which was when the telephone rang and she quickly reached across to answer it, “Ah, Home Secretary” she then called “Are you watching this tripe?”

“Yes...” the Home Secretary confirmed from his home in the leafy suburbs of East Surrey, “I have got a bad feeling about this.”

“As with many caught up in these extraordinary circumstances” the Prime Minister then continued “the physical and mental toll on myself has been immense and I have now reached a point where I can no longer do my best to serve this great country, therefore I am officially announcing my immediate resignation in the hope that my successor, whoever he or she is can grab the bull by the horns and bring this country back to its best.”

“Oh hell...” Tracy and the Home Secretary responded in unison, both realising the very serious implications of what was being announced.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported and helped me over the last six years and wish you all the best for the future” the Prime Minister then concluded, “Thank you and goodnight.”

“Well, that has well and truly set the cat among the pigeons” the Home Secretary remarked with obvious concern.

“She has been got at!” Tracy exclaimed “The trouble is, genuine or not, as far as everyone is concerned, she has officially quit and now we have a vacuum at the top of the Government.”

“I can be fairly certain that there will be people and their supporters already barking orders into telephones to get their preferred candidate into Number Ten before the morning breaks” the Home Secretary pointed out.

“Right, as far as I am concerned” Tracy then declared “Until I am overruled otherwise, you are acting Prime Minister.”

“Me?” the Home Secretary responded, understandably taken aback by Tracy’s declaration.

“Well, I can’t think of anyone better right now” Tracy explained “We have friends in Downing Street assuming they haven’t already been dragged out of the place so get down there as fast as you can and assume command” she ordered.

“There should be some sort of press release sent out as soon as possible” the Home Secretary then suggested.

“There you see” Tracy responded, “You have only been in the job thirty seconds and already you have made your first policy decision.”

“It will have to be rubber stamped by the Attorney General and the Leader of the Opposition will have to be briefed as well regarding the situation.”

“The Attorney General owes me a bus load of favours so that should not be a problem” Tracy confirmed “and as for the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure I have enough dirt on him lying in a dusty filing cabinet around here somewhere to make sure he sticks with the plan.”

“In which case Chief Superintendent, I had better start making some telephone calls” the Home Secretary confirmed.

“Yes, Prime Minister...” Tracy agreed.

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“How do you feel?” Orbison asked Grey as she stood up and rubbed her tired eyes.

“To be honest, actually quite glad to be shot of the job” Grey admitted.

“A change is as good as a rest” Orbison agreed.

“I wonder who will take over?” Grey then wondered.

“Don’t you worry about that my dear” Orbison reassured her, “The Committee have everything in hand, you will see.”

“Do you actually trust Taylor and his mighty Committee?” Grey asked out of curiosity.

“About as far as I can throw them if I am honest” Orbison honestly admitted “but for

now they serve my purposes most admirably.”

“I thought it was you and your Brotherhood that served them?” Grey remarked.

“Yes, that is exactly what I want them to think...” Orbison confirmed with a wicked grin.

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The media were already gathering outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard when the Home Secretary arrived in an official ministerial car with accompanying Security Service escort.

As soon as the car stopped and Jennifer got out to open the rear door and let the Home Secretary get out, the barrage of questions and the flash of cameras began in earnest.

“Just smile at them then ignore them Sir” Jennifer wisely suggested as she escorted him in through the doors and into the relative sanctuary of the Reception Area where Tracy and the Attorney General were waiting.

“Good evening” the Home Secretary called as he joined them.

“Good evening Prime Minister” Tracy responded but was picked up by the Attorney General.

“He isn’t the Prime Minister just yet, Chief Superintendent” he warned.

“What do I have to do?” the Home Secretary asked.

“As we are currently in a state of emergency, special procedures apply” the Attorney General explained as he produced a document, “Sign here” he then indicated the bottom of the paper and passed him a pen.

“Thank you” the Home Secretary responded as he took the pen and duly signed the document.

“Right, now you are the Prime Minister” the Attorney General confirmed as he took the document and filed it away in his briefcase for safe keeping.

“Simple as that?” Tracy asked, slightly astonished.

“Indeed” the Attorney General confirmed.

“All right, I need advice here” the Prime Minister then declared “What is our official line on this fiasco?”

“Run with the story that your predecessor stood down due to ill health and personal issues” Tracy suggested, “That should be sufficiently believable given recent history.”

“Okay” the Prime Minister agreed.



“And if they ask why we are holding the press conference here rather than Downing Street then waffle on about how it is your intention to remove the military presence from the streets of the city at the earliest opportunity or some such waffle” Tracy continued.

“Something along the lines of refusing to recognise the legitimacy of the military presence’s authority?” the Prime Minister asked.

“Sounds like pretty convincing bullshit to me” Tracy readily agreed, “What do you think?” she then asked the Attorney General.

“It is certainly worth a try” he then agreed.

“They are ready for you” came a call across the Reception area whereupon Tracy looked at the two men.

“All right, you both ready for the spotlight?” she then asked to which she got mutually confirming nods from both of them, “Okay then, let's go.”

All three of them walked out together and proceeded to stand behind a podium each, the Prime Minister in the centre with the Attorney General to his right and Tracy to his left.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please!” the Prime Minister called, holding his hands up for silence but he was only partially successful as the noise from the barrage of questions remained pretty much the same and soon Tracy lost her patience.

“Oi!” Tracy called out, clearly annoyed which duly had the desired effect and finally the noise died down, “Thank you!” she then tersely remarked before looking across at the Prime Minister which was his cue to begin.

“Ladies and gentlemen” the Prime Minister then formally began, “Following the announcement of the resignation of Jayne Grey earlier today, I have duly been appointed as Acting Prime Minister in her place.”

The members of the press were going to start asking questions again, but Tracy glowered at them and they quickly stood down again.

“In conversation with my predecessor earlier today, I can confirm that she has decided to step down following ill health and stressful factors in her personal life” the Prime Minister continued “She has asked me to pass on the message that she wishes to withdraw from public life for the foreseeable future and asks that her privacy is respected.”

“Bugger all chance of that happening...” Tracy quietly murmured to herself.

“It is the intention of my administration to see a return to a sense of normality that we have not seen for almost five years” the Prime Minister then proudly declared, “I intend within the next forty eight hours to introduce measures that will lift the so

called State of Emergency regulations, remove the military presence from the streets of this great city and reopen Westminster once more.”

As he was making his speech, the press conference was being broadcast live across television news channels and streaming via the Internet where it was attracting significant audience numbers.

“The time has come for trust” the Prime Minister then continued, “Time to trust the National Police and Security Service under the leadership of Chief Superintendent Caverner-Regent to get on with the job they are best at, protecting the public, stopping the criminals and defending the nation.”

He then turned to his left and indicated to Tracy to say something at that point.

“Thank you, Prime Minister”, she then called “For too long, the National Police and Security Service has been saddled with an ever-increasing burden of red tape, bureaucracy and repression from an overpowering military based force that has continuously stood in our way.”

Tracy looked directly ahead with determination writ large across her face.

“That now changes” she then declared “Henceforth, we are going on the front foot, you will immediately see a return to proactive policing, a determination to get the job done and get the criminals in all walks of life off the streets.”

What Tracy really wanted to say was, get out there, kick arse and throw the scumbags in prison before throwing away the key, but she managed to resist the temptation.

“The National Police & Security Service is back in business” she then triumphantly declared with a steely determined look.

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“Oh, how annoying...” Taylor remarked to himself, pacing up and down his study as he contemplated what to do following the press conference from New Scotland Yard that he had just watched through gritted teeth.

Up on the wall of his study just behind the ornate antique desk was a painting dating from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, showing a number of people in a room somewhere clearly in some form of meeting, this image seemingly being some sort of inspiration to Taylor.

“I swear to you, I will finish what you began” Taylor then called to the figures in the painting, “We shall have our revolution even if it takes another two hundred years!”

With that declaration, he put down his glass of finest Scotch and reached for the telephone.

“Alert the Colonel, we move...” he then declared before hanging up.

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“Evening Janice” Jack called as he entered the main entrance of New Scotland Yard with a determined look on his face and accompanied by Eisley who was struggling to keep up with Jack's rapid pace.

“Oh, hello Divisional Com...” she tailed off as Jack rapidly disappeared from sight, “...and have a nice evening Sir” she then remarked to herself.

Up on the top floor, Tracy was in her office working through a pile of paperwork when Marion, her Personal Assistant knocked and came rushing in.

“I thought you had gone home?” Tracy responded.

“I was just on my way home when I ran into Divisional Commander Regent in the corridor, and I may be over reading it but to me, he looks like he is gunning for someone” Marion explained.

“Right...” Tracy responded, quickly getting up and heading for the door.

Down the corridor, Fuller was suddenly startled when Jack came into his office without any prior warning.

“Whoa, Jack” Fuller responded, understandably startled “Where is the fire?”

“Are you missing something by any chance?” Jack asked directly.

“What on Earth are you talking about?” Fuller replied to which Jack merely clicked his fingers behind him which was the cue for Eisley to produce the toolbox, wrapped inside its clear plastic evidence bag and bang it down loudly on the desk in front of them.

“Is this yours, Commander Fuller?” Jack directly asked, indicating the toolbox.

“Ah, that...” Fuller responded with a slightly resigned sigh.

“Yes, that!” Jack tersely replied.

“Yes, it is mine...” Fuller then reluctantly confirmed.

“Commander Simon Fitzwilliam Fuller” Jack then formally declared, producing some official documentation and handing it to him, “Under Article Seventy Two of the National Security Service Act, I am placing you under arrest.”

“Is this some sort of joke?” Fuller asked as he looked at the arrest warrant that he had just been handed.

“I am deadly serious” Jack confirmed before turning to Eisley, “Mos?”

“Sir” Easley responded whereupon he duly indicated to Fuller to stand up and proceeded to apply handcuffs behind his back.

“You have the right to remain silent, anything you do say will be taken down and may be used in evidence” Jack read Fuller his rights, “You have the right to legal representation, an officer of same or greater rank present at interviews and to consult a copy of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act.”

“This is ludicrous!” Fuller attempted to defend himself.

“Erm, what is going on here gentlemen?” Tracy asked as she arrived on the scene.

“Following the discovery of certain damning evidence, I am placing Commander Fuller under arrest, Chief Superintendent” Jack formally explained.

“On what charge?” Tracy then asked.

“Perverting the course of justice, trespass and conspiracy to cause death by unnatural causes” Jack confirmed.

“In connection with...?” Tracy sought further clarification.

“The death of Divisional Commander James Appleby” Jack grimly responded, “and I also want to interview him with regards to the murder of Lieutenant Commander Grant as well.”

“I want a senior officer present” Fuller then requested.

“That is your right of course” Jack agreed before turning to Tracy, “Can I use the Interview Suite here?” he then asked, “Our ones at Holborn are a bit tatty.”

“Absolutely” Tracy agreed, “You will need a quizmaster plus I want to be watching and I shall notify the Ombudsman as well.”

“Let's go” Jack then motioned ahead whereupon Easley duly led the handcuffed Fuller out of the room.

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“Yes Sir” Burgette called over the telephone in her sumptuously appointed office in Piccadilly, “I wholeheartedly agree.”

As was normal, she was receiving her orders from Taylor and his Committee, instructions that were detailed yet brief and to the point.

“It will be done Sir” Burgette then confirmed, “By Your Command...” she then signed off before hanging up the telephone.

For a few moments in the silence of her office, Burgette contemplated what she had

just been told and then smiled before turning to her computer.

On the screen she called up an official looking template which was headed with the words 'From the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner' in ornate gold lettering.

"Declaration of Security State of Emergency" Burgette duly called to herself as she began typing the words and they appeared on the screen.

"With immediate effect, the responsibility for state and civil security is now devolved to this Office with direct operations becoming the sole responsibility of the Central London Battalion of the First Unit, Light Infantry and Specialist Operations Unit under the command of Westminster Secure Zone Commander in Chief, Colonel James Ings" she dictated, the words being replicated via her typing on the screen in front of her.

"Stop & Search Powers are now authorised for indiscriminate and universal use across the Greater London area at the discretion of Colonel Ings and his officers as he sees fit" she continued, "The Westminster Secure Zone is to be reinforced and extended over the next couple of days to accommodate the necessary resources."

"The National Police & Security Service will henceforth only have responsibility within Central London and other secure areas as designated by The Colonel for domestic criminal issues and are hereby stripped of all rights and responsibilities that fall within Westminster Secure Zone and associated areas."

At that moment there was a knock on the door which prompted Burgette to complete her typing before calling upon the person outside to come in.

"Ah, Colonel Ings" Burgette called as the military man entered, took off his officer's cap and placed it under his arm before stepping forward and saluting.

"Commissioner Burgette" Ings responded, "It is an honour to finally meet you at last" he then declared whereupon they exchanged a warm handshake.

"Likewise, Colonel" Burgette agreed as she pressed the print icon on her computer and the printer nearby whirred into life.

"Our mutual friend Mr Taylor requested I come here tonight" Ings then explained, "I believe you have some orders for me?" he then asked.

"Indeed, I have Colonel" Burgette proudly confirmed as she reached across and got the printed document off the printer and the handed it across, "Your err, marching orders as it were."

"Excellent Commissioner" Ings responded, "At last I can take the gloves off the rest of my team and get to work."

"Under the terms of that document, I am effectively giving you the run of Central London" Burgette summarised "Try not to make too much of a mess, will you?"

“I will ask my lads to be careful” Ings confirmed “but now we have carte blanche to crackdown on dissidents, traitors and just anyone we don’t like, it could get a bit hairy here and there. Do you have a problem with that Commissioner?”

“Not at all Colonel” Burgette confirmed, “In fact, the more fear and suppression you can squeeze into the populace and the more trouble you can cause our *dear* friends in New Scotland Yard, the better as far as I am concerned.”

“By Your Command” Ings then called, indicating the document with a smile.

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“Are you okay Jack?” Tracy asked as they stood together outside one of the interview room doors.

“I lost a good officer today and to be honest, it makes feel like crap” Jack honestly admitted “and now I have someone in custody who I have known for many years on suspicion of murder, which all in all makes for one hell of a day...”

“It comes with the badge” Tracy remarked “You get the good days, the bad days and the really bloody awful days.”

“Yeah...” Jack reluctantly agreed.

“Who is doing the quizzing?” Tracy then asked.

“Divisional Commander Matthews” Jack confirmed.

“Good choice” Tracy agreed “One of the best quizmasters we have got.”

“Ah, here he is now” Jack nodded up the corridor as two men approached, Matthews and Ombudsman General Darren Glock.

“Good evening gentlemen” Tracy called as they arrived “Are you both up to speed?” she then asked.

“I had a good look through the evidence file Divisional Commander Regent here sent over before I came down” Matthews confirmed “An interesting case” he then remarked.

“Quite...” Jack agreed.

“I would have thought you would want to be leading this?” Matthews then asked Jack.

“Too close, too emotional” Jack honestly admitted “Losing an officer under my command before my very eyes makes my kind of cranky and my interview technique is apparently a bit Frank Burnside if you know what I mean.”

“Understood” Matthews nodded in agreement “Don't worry; I will soon get to the

bottom of this.”

“I am here strictly as an observer” Glock then added, “As this is a senior serving officer under investigation, the involvement of my Office is automatically triggered.”

“You are welcome to join me in the observation booth” Tracy agreed.

“Thank you” Glock confirmed.

“Right...” Jack then declared as he checked his watch, “Let's get this over with, shall we?”

Fuller had been sat in the interview room with just a plastic cup of water and an officer on guard for almost half an hour now.

During that time, he said nothing, just went through so many thoughts in his head over and over again.

He knew he was being watched via cameras in the room; he had after all designed and installed them, whilst the uniformed patrol officer on guard remained still and impassive throughout.

Then the door opened which made Fuller look up to see Jack and Matthews come in.

“Thank you, Lieutenant” Jack called to the guarding officer who nodded in respect and then left the room.

Jack and Matthews duly took their seats and placed a number of files on the table in front of them directly opposite Fuller.

“Before we begin Mr Fuller” Matthews then opened proceedings “Is there anything you would like to say?”

“Let's just get this charade over with, shall we?” Fuller suggested.

“As you wish...” Matthews agreed whereupon he looked across to Jack who nodded in response and then pressed a big red button on a recording device which sounded an ominous buzzer for a moment before falling silent.

“This interview is being recorded” Jack declared, “It is twenty two minutes past eight in the evening of Friday the 8th of October, this interview is taking place in Interview Room Two at New Scotland Yard.”

Fuller looked on as the opening formalities continued.

“Present in the room is the suspect, please identify yourself, name, occupation and date of birth please” Jack then prompted.

“Simon Fitzwilliam Fuller, Operations Specialist with rank of Commander attached to

the Metropolitan Division of the National Police & Security Service based at New Scotland Yard” he duly confirmed.

“Also present in the room are Acting Divisional Commander Jack Regent of the Transport Division and Metropolitan Divisional Commander Stephen Matthews” Jack declared for the benefit of the recording “Also observing this interview outside the room are Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent and Ombudsman General Darren Glock.”

“Thank you” Matthews responded before taking a brief look at the files in front of him, clearing his throat and then looking at Fuller directly.

“It is my understanding that you have declined the right to have a solicitor or other independent legal advisor present” Matthews then stated, “Is this correct and do you wish to change your mind?” he then asked.

“No” Fuller simply confirmed, “I think the less people that know about this, the better.”

“Very well” Matthews responded as he made a note of the response, “You have been arrested in connection with the unlawful death of Divisional Commander James Appleby on or around the twenty fifth of last month” he declared “The body being discovered three days ago in a disused passage at the deep level of the former Aldwych Underground Station.”

“I have never been there, I had nothing to do with it” Fuller quietly stated for the record.

“I am showing the suspect a number of photographs, evidence exhibit JR1” Matthews then called as he produced a couple of photographs and passed them across the table, “These show a large yellow metal cantilever type toolbox that was found in the immediate vicinity of the body of Divisional Commander Appleby.”

Fuller looked down at the photographs before slowly pushing them away.

“Immediately prior to your arrest, you were asked by the arresting officer, Divisional Commander Regent here whether the toolbox shown in the photos was yours” Matthews explained, “I quote here from the notes made at the time where you confirm that it was indeed your property. Is that correct?”

“Err yes, it is” Fuller admitted.

“The ownership of the toolbox is further backed up by the Forensics Service Unit report that confirms that the fingerprints of the suspect are present on the handle and parts of the exterior and interior” Matthews then confirmed for the benefit of the recording.

Fuller remained still and silent.

“I am now showing the suspect a photograph of evidence exhibit number JR3”



Matthews produced a further photograph, placed it on the table face up and pushed it across, "It shows the tools found inside the toolbox at the time of the forensic examination. It shows a set of four adjustable spanners in incrementally increasing size but also shows that one from the set is missing."

Fuller looked down at the photograph and then nodded before Matthews took it and the others back again.

"There is one missing Mr Fuller" Matthews then clearly stated, "Do you have any idea where it might be?" he then asked.

"No..." Fuller quietly responded, shaking his head.

"Jack..." Matthews indicated whereupon Jack reached down and produced a clear plastic evidence bag with an adjustable spanner inside which he placed down in the centre of the table.

"This is evidence exhibit JR4" Matthews then announced, "The missing adjustable spanner which is confirmed to be from the same set as found in the toolbox by the markings located on it."

"Where did you find that?" Fuller asked.

"This was recovered from the lower levels of the uncompleted North End Underground Station in Hampstead" Matthews went on to explain, "The location where Divisional Commander Appleby was murdered by being struck hard over the back of the head with this very item."

"This whole thing is preposterous!" Fuller attempted to defend himself.

"Mr Fuller" Matthews looked him directly in the eyes "What were you doing in the former Aldwych Underground Station premises seven days ago?"

"I told you already, I have never been there!" Fuller protested.

"I am now showing the suspect evidence exhibit WT7, a series of photographic stills taken from a CCTV camera overlooking Surrey Street which clearly shows the suspect carrying a yellow metal toolbox identical to that currently being held as an evidence exhibit, and entering the former station premises and further photos showing him leaving an hour later" Matthews then announced.

Fuller looked despondently at the photographs where there was no denying it was him and he had been caught out.

"Would you care to revise your statement, Mr Fuller?" Matthews asked directly.

"What?" Fuller responded.

"Do you want to stop messing us around and tell us the truth?" Jack reiterated, distinctly unimpressed.

“Mr Fuller” Matthews calmed the tension in the room down just a little as Jack sat back “We have a murder weapon that came from your toolbox, a toolbox with your fingerprints all over it that was discovered in the immediate vicinity of the body in the disused underground passages of a place that you vehemently deny ever entering despite evidence that we have that shows you visited the site on at least three occasions, the latest that we know about being just seven days ago.”

Fuller sat impassively and said nothing.

“As it stands, we have enough evidence to hold you on suspicion, at the very least as a person of interest in this inquiry Mr Fuller” Matthews summarised, “I think now would be a good time to take a break which will give you the opportunity to consider your situation, don’t you think?”

“I would like to seek legal advice” Fuller then declared.

“As is you right” Matthews readily agreed, “Did you have someone specific in mind?” he then asked.

“Sir Richard Crowthorne” Fuller confirmed to a somewhat surprised look from both men facing him “You don’t need to give him any lengthy message, just one word, Damocles...”

“Very well” Matthews agreed with an agreeing nod from Jack as well, “Interview suspended at twenty nine minutes past eight” he declared before suspending the recording whereupon both officers duly left, being replaced in the room by the guarding officer who was there earlier.

Outside in the corridor with the door to the Interview Room now closed behind them, Jack and Matthews were joined by Tracy and Glock from the Observation Suite.

“What do you think?” Tracy asked.

“He is lying his arse off” Jack concluded, “He’s frightened of something or us finding out about something.”

“Do you think he did it?” Glock asked.

“No” Matthews confirmed “I think he knows who did or at least has a suspicion but no, I don’t think he did it.”

“I agree” Jack added, “And what do you suppose Damocles is?” he then asked.

“There is a Greek Restaurant on the King’s Road called that” Glock remarked, “Perhaps it is one of Sir Richard’s hangouts?”

“We will soon find out I hope” Tracy responded as she reached for her radio “Angel One to Control” she then called “Find Sir Richard Crowthorne and if necessary, drag him here kicking and screaming at gunpoint if you must, I want him here in twenty

minutes!”

-----

Colonel Ings looked on, impressed as he arrived at the Westminster Barracks inside the secure zone where he could see further men had arrived and were preparing to go out into the streets.

“All right everyone, listen up!” Ings then called which saw all the men present immediately stand to attention and salute.

“At ease...” Ings then declared, “With effect from six a.m. tomorrow morning, we are effectively being moved onto a war footing” he announced, “I want eight man patrol teams all across the centre of the city, stopping and searching everyone, checking their loyalties and using whatever force is necessary to maintain the State of Emergency for the greater good.”

“Any resistance...” he then continued, looking all around to ensure he was being completely understood, “*any* resistance from anyone is to be stamped down hard on immediately.”

The men listened intently as Ings continued.

“We are in charge of this City; we are the power and the force that runs its and we will prevail!” Ings declared.

“By Your Command!” the men then called out in unison.

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“Sir Richard Crowthorne!” Jack called directly as Sir Richard came in through the main entrance doors.

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent” Sir Richard formally responded in kind.

“I do hope you are here to tell me just what the hell is going on?” Jack then demanded to know as he proceeded to escort Sir Richard through the building and on towards the interview suite.

Sir Richard said nothing in response, merely looked on with a distinctively awkward expression.

“This way please” Jack then tersely instructed.

“Yes Sir” Sir Richard replied.

Tracy, Matthews and Glock were all waiting in the interview suite corridor when Sir Richard arrived with Jack escorting him closely behind.

“Good evening...” Sir Richard declared.

“Evening...” Tracy responded, “We will be listening by the way” she then informed him “so please ensure you speak up, loud and clear.”

“Yes...” Sir Richard quietly agreed before Jack opened the interview room door and showed him inside.

“Get in there” Jack tersely instructed.

Once the door was closed and everyone had taken their seats, Matthews restarted the recording device and recommenced the interview.

“Interview with Simon Fitzwilliam Fuller recommences at eight fifty seven” Matthews then declared “Those present as before with the addition of Sir Richard Crowthorne who is here as Mr Fuller’s legal advisor and will also be answering some questions concerning this matter.”

“To bring you up to date Mr Crowthorne” Jack then commenced “Commander Fuller here has been arrested on suspicion of perverting the course of justice and in connection with the murder of Divisional Commander James Appleby.”

“That can’t be right” Sir Richard responded in disbelief.

“Let me set out the situation for you Sir” Jack then continued “We have CCTV footage showing Mr Fuller entering and leaving the former Aldwych Underground Station on a number of occasions over the last few months, a place he denies ever visiting.”

“Then there is the physical evidence” Matthews added, “The murder weapon came from a toolbox that Mr Fuller has identified as his property and was found in the immediate vicinity of the body.”

“Not looking too clever, is it?” Jack added.

Sir Richard took a moment to exchange a few whispered words with Fuller before turning back to Jack and Matthews.

“Mr Fuller will say no more on this matter” Sir Richard confirmed “other than to reiterate that he refutes all charges, any implications of accusations, he had nothing to do with this terrible incident and continues to assert that he has never at any time set foot in the said location.”

“What kind of babbling bullshit is this?!?” Jack demanded to know causing Matthews to glance across at him and wonder if was going to have to physically intervene.

“All the time that this interview is being recorded and monitored, it is all you are going to get” Sir Richard explained, “Sorry...”

“Sir Richard, I must warn you that...” Matthews began but was cut off.

“All I can say is that what lies at the heart of this matter is strictly need to know and you do not need to know” Sir Richard explained.

“I have got two dead officers on my books!” Jack angrily reacted “and all I am getting is a tissue of lies, obstruction and bollocks. God damn it, I DO need to know!”

At that point there was a knock on the door and as Jack sat back in his seat, maintaining a hard stare at Sir Richard, Tracy came in; she had finally lost her patience and decided to act.

“Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent enters the room” Matthews then declared for the benefit of the recording.

“He is right” Tracy addressed Sir Richard directly, indicating Jack “We bloody well do need to know, NOW!”

“No...” Sir Richard simply stated, crossing his arms in response.

“Very well” Tracy then responded “Richard Wilberforce Crowthorne, I am arresting you on charges of obstructing justice, failing to comply with a Security & Police Service investigation and perverting the course of justice” she declared “You do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so but anything you do say will be taken down and may be used in evidence. Do you understand the caution?”

“This is absurd...” Sir Richard began to respond but Tracy abruptly cut him off.

“DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!?” Tracy angrily reiterated.

Sir Richard then reluctantly nodded in understanding.

“Lieutenant!!” Tracy then called out into the corridor to the duty officer who came into the room, “Process these two and throw them into the cells for the night, let them stew and we will try this again in the morning.”

“Yes Ma’am” the Lieutenant confirmed as he proceeded to handcuff Sir Richard and then lead both him and Fuller away to the custody suite down the far end of the corridor.

“Unbelievable...” Jack responded in disbelief.

“What the hell is going on?” Tracy then asked generally around.

“Believe me, if I knew I would tell you” Jack admitted.

“Those two are hiding something pretty serious” Matthews added, “Serious enough to risk going to prison for murder to protect.”

“But we know they didn’t do it” Jack then pointed out “So what the hell are they playing at?”

“I don’t know, but whatever it is, it must be a doozy” Tracy summarised.

“Well, that was fun” Glock remarked as he joined the others in the interview suite corridor.

“Official opinion, what do you think?” Tracy then asked him.

“Officially my office does not have any jurisdictional overview on the agencies and operations that Sir Richard Crowthorne represents” Glock confirmed “but off the record, I think throwing him in a cell for the night might just give the gentleman the attitude adjustment he requires.”

“Does that mean technically we can’t prosecute him?” Jack ventured.

“It would be extremely difficult but not impossible” Glock responded, “however you may have to consider other options, maybe even bring in MI5 to look deeper into the background of this matter.”

“They will all be in the pub by now” Matthews remarked, checking his watch.

“I think we should leave drinking spooks lie for now” Tracy suggested “Let those two muppets rot in the cells overnight then drag them out into the light in the morning and see if they have changed their minds on telling us what the hell is going on!”

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An hour later, Eisley stopped the patrol car outside the apartment block where Jack and Megan lived and looked across at his superior officer sat in the front passenger seat.

“Home sweet home, Sir” Eisley then declared.

“Huh?” Jack awoke as he had semi nodded off on the journey home.

“We are here Guv” Eisley then explained.

“Oh, thanks” Jack responded as he realised where he was and released his seatbelt before looking down at the small velvet bag he was holding in his hand, “Thanks’ for this by the way” he then called, indicating the bag.

“Not a problem Guv” Eisley confirmed, “You are lucky I have an uncle in the Tom Foolery trade” he remarked.

“You have an uncle for pretty much everything, don’t you?” Jack asked.

“Yeah, I reckon so” Eisley readily admitted.

“Right then, show time” Jack then declared, “It has been a hell of a day and it is not over yet.”

“You will be fine Guv” Eislely reassured him as Jack opened the passenger side door and got out.

“She might say no, you know” Jack then pointed out.

“No, she won’t” Eislely replied; “I will see you in the morning Sir” he then called.

“Thanks mate” Jack responded before closing the car door whereupon Eislely duly drove off into the night, leaving him alone with his thoughts for a few moments, the cold air forming vapours of visible breath from his mouth before he headed inside.

“Hi love!” Jack called as he came in through the apartment door a couple of minutes later and took off his uniform tunic, hanging it up on the hook in the hallway.

“I am in the front room!” Megan called which saw Jack duly proceed through, keeping the small velvet bag behind his back as he entered the room to see her sitting in her wheelchair at the dining table, reading through some legal papers.

“You are a sight for sore eyes” Jack then remarked as they kissed.

“It's been a tough day” Megan agreed.

“It got tougher...” Jack then admitted, “I had to intervene when some rather damning evidence came to light.”

“About Appleby?” Megan asked.

Jack nodded in agreement “and as a result I arrested Simon Fuller for basically obstructing an enquiry” he then admitted.

“Oh dear...” Megan responded in slight disbelief.

“And then for an encore, the Chief Superintendent arrested Sir Richard Crowthorne too!” Jack added.

“What?” Megan was not entirely sure how to react to this revelation. “Where are they now?” she then asked.

“Stewing in a cell each down at New Scotland Yard” Jack confirmed, “Hopefully a night in a cell will mean we can get some sense out of them in the morning.”

“This is Sir Richard we are talking about” Megan reminded him “I doubt that somehow.”

“And then there was one final bit of business that required my attention” Jack then hesitantly confirmed “Err...” he awkwardly began.

“What's going on?” Megan then asked, already sensing one possible direction this was heading in but still uncertain.

“Erm, Megan...” Jack then announced as he awkwardly went down on one knee “I have something to ask...”

“Oh...” Megan quickly realised what was happening but could not quite believe it.

“Erm, will you marry me?” Jack then asked, looking her directly in the eyes and producing the velvet bag which he handed across.

Megan's hands were almost trembling as she took the bag and opened it, looked inside and saw the ring nestling within that she then took out.

“Yes...” she then responded, almost in tears.

“Here you go” Jack then called as he took the ring and proceeded to put it on her finger but not before carefully checking to ensure he had the right one of course.

“Oh my...” Megan responded as she looked at the diamond ring, glinting on her finger, “Thank you!”

“A prompt from a friend earlier today made me realise it was time I did the honourable thing” Jack explained, “I should have done this long ago if I am honest.”

“It's wonderful!” Megan confirmed, “There is one condition attached though...”

“Erm, okay...” Jack responded.

“Our wedding” Megan then explained “I want to walk up the aisle, that is my condition.”

“Absolutely” Jack readily agreed.

“In which case, give me a cuddle!” Megan then responded with a huge smile.

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“Good morning gentlemen!” Tracy loudly called as she stormed down the corridor of the detention area “It's seven a.m. and this is your wake up call!”

“Urrgh...” Sir Richard responded as he stirred, feeling terrible as he had been lying on his back still in the clothes that he had arrived in, on the hard bed in the cell that he had been confined to for the night.

At that point he looked up as he heard the lock on the cell door being released whereupon, with an ominous squeak, it opened, and Tracy stepped into view.

“Are you and your partner in crime ready to talk now?” Tracy then pointedly asked.

“All right, all right...” Sir Richard finally conceded, “But it has to be unrecorded and off the record.”



“As long as it is not another foggy web of dazzling bullshit, I agree” Tracy confirmed before calling to the duty custody suite officer “Lieutenant! Make sure these two are suitably freshened up, fed and watered and then brought to my office.”

On her way back upstairs to her office, Tracy encountered a slightly bewildered looking Jack who was talking to Christopher Dent.

“I think I have gone and done something rather rash...” Jack admitted.

“Rash? That’s not like you at all” Dent sarcastically remarked with a wry smile.

“What have you done now?” Tracy asked as she joined them.

“I asked Megan to marry me” Jack then declared, still not entirely sure that it really had happened “and she said yes!”

“Congratulations!” Dent responded, “First round is on you tonight then.”

“About bloody time too!” Tracy added, clearly proud and delighted at the news.

“Thanks...” Jack replied, “So, erm what about the two sleeping beauty’s downstairs?” he then asked.

“It seems a night of reflection in a cell has resulted in Sir Richard having a magical change of heart on the matter” Tracy confirmed as they headed along the corridor towards her office.

“Being deprived of a steady supply of fine quality alcoholic spirits for eight hours plus probably played a part too I would wager” Dent sarcastically suggested.

“He has agreed to speak but off the record” Tracy confirmed “I have agreed to it, and they are being brought up here hopefully very soon.”

“Mind if I sit in?” Jack asked.

“By all means” Tracy readily agreed “And you, Chris?”

“Wouldn’t miss this for the world” he admitted as he followed the others into the office.

“Blimey, haven’t even had breakfast yet” Jack remarked as he looked at his watch.

“Well hopefully Sir Richard will keep this brief, concise and to the point” Tracy remarked.

“I doubt that somehow” Dent responded with obvious scepticism.

“I just want answers” Jack declared with obvious frustration, “The trouble is, lately it

seems I am notching up more and more questions by the minute and nobody seems to be able to fill in the blanks.”

“If it helps” Dent responded, “The death of your old chum Colonel Reaper in Wormwood Scrubs yesterday afternoon, someone not only managed to evacuate the entire cell block in order for what was basically an execution to take place completely unobserved, they also managed to conveniently lose all the CCTV footage for half an hour either side of the time of the killing.”

“Now, where I have heard that before...” Jack remarked.

“Exactly” Dent agreed “and the pathologists report that crossed my desk this morning makes for interesting reading” he continued, “The blades used are of a very distinctive type, most commonly found in central African tribal ceremonies and associated adornments and have only been seen used in this country once before.”

“Connor Shelby?” Jack ventured.

“Very good Divisional Commander” Dent complimented, “You win a cookie.”

“So, the Invisible Man is back in town?” Tracy suggested.

“Same weaponry, same M.O. and the same cloak of blindness surrounding the crime” Dent summarised, “I reckon it’s a decent bet, assuming he even left the country in the first place and came back again and hasn’t simply been kept in metaphorical cold storage.”

“I would very much like to meet this guy” Jack remarked, “With a suitably hefty posse of armed backup of course.”

“Of course...” Tracy agreed.

At that moment the intercom on Tracy’s desk buzzed and she leaned forward to answer it.

“Ma’am, they are here” the message came through.

“Send them in please” Tracy confirmed before looking across at the others, “Showtime” she then declared.

Jack merely eyed Fuller and Sir Richard suspiciously as the two men were shown into the office whereupon Tracy nodded at them to sit down in the assigned chairs facing her across the desk.

“I hope you two slept well?” Tracy sarcastically enquired.

“Now you come to mention it, err no” Sir Richard admitted.

“Good...” Jack remarked to himself.

“So, are we going to get the truth out of you two now or am I going to have to call on Big Dave from the Specialist Interrogation Unit and his box of tricks?” Tracy then asked.

“All right, all right...” Sir Richard conceded before looking across at Fuller, “Go on, tell them” he then prompted.

“I had nothing to do with the death of Divisional Commander Appleby, on that you have my word” Fuller then began although he could see that at the very least Jack was not convinced “and yes I have visited Aldwych on a number of occasions over the last five years for maintenance work.”

“Maintenance work?” Jack responded in disbelief, “Maintenance of what? There is nothing down there except dust and rats!”

“Daedalus” Fuller then declared to looks of complete incomprehension from his three questioners.

“What the hell is Daedalus?” Dent asked, “Aside from the classical literature reference of course.”

“Five years ago,” Fuller began to explain “we had a number of incidents which we believed to be connected to either the Ixion Brotherhood, The Hand or possible another third party where significant hacks were made into the communications and IT infrastructure of various organisations including us, MI5 and various civilian agencies.”

“Yes, I remember” Dent agreed “We are still finding damage caused by that to this day” he confirmed.

“Obviously our communications were compromised and there was a risk also to key computer-controlled infrastructure as well” Fuller continued “So I designed a completely new secure computer installation that integrates pretty much everything into one secure centralised and fully automated control system, this system is called Daedalus.”

“How come we have never heard of this?” Tracy asked.

“In the interests of security, it was felt wise to tell as few people about it as possible” Sir Richard confirmed, “Simon here designed it and supervised its construction, installation, testing and integration, I sorted out the administration and finance for the project, the Director General of MI5 was briefed on its existence under the strict understanding he was to tell no one and what external installers and engineers we used on the project were all fed a believable cover story about them working on a new database system for the National Health Service.”

“For about four years now, a series of large computer servers hidden across the Greater London area have been securing and integrating almost every aspect of life, communication, power, transport and security for the entire nation” Fuller confirmed, almost with a sense of pride.

“A pretty impressive effort really” Sir Richard remarked, “We managed to spend four and a half billion quid of taxpayers money on a project nobody knew anything about and got away with it.”

“So, would I be right in thinking one of these system servers is located in the bowels of the former Aldwych tube station?” Jack then ventured.

“Correct” Fuller confirmed “It is one of the primary control and maintenance nodes, there are two others plus several slave servers spread all across Greater London that just sit there humming to themselves without any requirement for human interaction, it is all automated.”

“Where does Appleby fit into all this?” Dent asked.

“Just over a week ago I went down to Aldwych to do a routine check of the interface systems” Fuller explained, “I went down to the lower level and that was when I heard someone down there.”

“Appleby?” Jack asked.

“No, whoever this guy was, he was some sort of very officious type, like a senior military officer” Fuller explained “I hid out of the way and listened.”

“What did they say?” Tracy then asked.

“I couldn’t hear much” Fuller admitted “The tunnels tend to distort sound somewhat but the lead man in charge had two or three others with him and they were dragging something through the tunnels.”

“Appleby’s body I would wager” Jack remarked to nods of agreement all around the room.

“A few minutes later these guys left which was when I came out of hiding and moved forward” Fuller then continued “and then I found Appleby’s body where they had just dumped him.”

“Which is I presume the moment you panicked and got the hell out of there, leaving your toolbox behind?” Jack suggested.

“Yes, but wait a minute...” Fuller responded, clearly confused and Jack quickly picked up on his train of thought.

“If you left your toolbox there after Appleby’s body was dumped, and he was obviously dead before he was brought there, how did the spanner from your toolbox kill him?” Jack asked.

“Unless the spanner was removed from the toolbox by someone prior to Appleby’s death with the specific purpose of using it as a murder weapon” Tracy suggested.

“You have been set up” Sir Richard concluded.

“Okay, leaving aside the issue of the spanner for a moment” Tracy remarked “When you left the location, what did you do next?” she then asked.

“I called Sir Richard here” Fuller confirmed “The problem was what to do about reporting Appleby’s body without raising suspicion or revealing the existence of Daedalus” he explained.

“Enter stage left into this carefully managed pantomime two fake London Underground engineers...” Jack remarked.

“Two of your minions?” Tracy asked Sir Richard to which he merely nodded in confirmation.

“Top tip” Jack added “Next time you send two of your guys to set up a fake body discovery and call us boys in blue, make sure they actually spend enough time below ground to back up the story that they actually found it?” he sarcastically suggested.

“Yes, that was a bit of a cock up...” Sir Richard reluctantly admitted.

“Jack, I think you need to go back to the pathologist service and double check that the spanner you found really was the one used to kill Appleby and not just part of the dressing for this ornate little show someone has put on for us” Tracy wisely suggested.

“Already on my to do list” Jack readily agreed.

“There is another matter...” Fuller then tentatively suggested.

“Go on, spill...” Tracy responded, rolling her eyes upwards.

“There is a distinct possibility that Daedalus may have fallen” Fuller reluctantly announced.

“What?” Dent responded, the look on Jack and Tracy’s faces at that point clearly indicating the same reaction from them too.

“The Daedalus System has three different layers of systems” Fuller began to explain, “The first layer is domestic stuff, public telecommunications, street lighting, the CB radios used by taxi and bus drivers, mobile phone masts, those interactive advertising screens you see everywhere, even the countdown screens on tube station platforms and at bus stops.”

“Uh huh...” Tracy could sense where this was going already.

“That first layer has a complex security protocol but not as complex as the other two layers” Fuller continued, “the second layer has more safety critical functions such as power supplies, automated backup generators, the Internet, transport, particularly railway signalling and telecommunication systems, that sort of thing.”

“And the third layer?” Dent asked.

“That is the core systems” Fuller confirmed “Security Service and associated agencies databases, command and control functions, communications as well as financial systems, stock markets, Government websites and computer systems, the NHS, national power, water and gas grids, you name it.”

“And you say there is a problem now with Daedalus?” Jack then asked.

“More of a theory than a confirmed problem” Sir Richard admitted.

“There have been a number of incidents over the last couple of weeks that on their own would have passed by relatively unnoticed” Fuller confirmed “but put them all together like I have and there is a pattern emerging.”

“There is evidence to suggest that someone has managed to find a way into the outer layer of the Daedalus system and has used it to carry out a number of test disruptions of short durations to reasonably non-essential systems” Sir Richard explained.

“The flashing street lights the other night?” Tracy suggested.

“Oh, you saw that too?” Dent responded.

“That is one of the unexplained incidents, yes” Fuller agreed.

“How is the Daedalus System secured?” Jack then asked.

“That is what has got me worried” Fuller then admitted, “To access the core systems which are normally sealed off and fully automated, you require a three part cipher, each sixteen alphanumeric digits long, forty eight digits in total entered in a specific sequence and in a certain way.”

“Who knows this code?” Tracy asked.

“It is recorded in three places” Fuller confirmed, “One is inside a sealed armoured nuclear bomb proof box buried under three feet of concrete in the floor of the main vault at the Bank of England.”

“I have checked, it has not been disturbed” Sir Richard added at that point.

“One is inside my head” Fuller continued “I have a photographic memory and have told nobody.”

“The third location?” Dent asked.

“Jack” Fuller then looked to his left “Where is your ceremonial sword?”

“My sword?” Jack responded with a rather surprised look, “Lost in the rubble of the Holborn office when the bomb went off.”

“So, it was never found?” Fuller sought clarity “Not even a part of it?”

“No” Jack confirmed, completely unaware of where this was going or its significance.

“Chief Superintendent” Fuller then addressed Tracy directly, “Where is your sword?”

“I haven’t seen it since Dave Collins’s funeral six or seven years ago” Tracy confirmed.

“And The Commander’s?” Fuller asked.

“It was on his person when he was killed” Dent confirmed.

“What happened to it?” Fuller demanded to know, “What about the St. James’s Park Lake?” he then asked.

“We had it dredged as part of the investigation” Dent confirmed, “All we found was a couple of dead pelicans, half a dozen shopping trolleys, the front headlight and grille assembly from a Ford Anglia, several old bicycles, the blown off remnants of The Commander’s leg and about six hundred quid in loose change of various currencies and denominations that we ended up donating to charity, but definitely no sword.”

“Shit...” Fuller responded.

“Excuse me?” Tracy called in response.

“Oh...” Jack remarked as he sensed what this was all about, “Three swords, three parts of the access code?”

“You got it” Fuller confirmed, “The three parts of the code were engraved in very small writing on the hilts of yours, the Chief Superintendent’s and The Commander’s ceremonial swords.

“And all three are missing...” Tracy concluded.

“Exactly...” Fuller confirmed.

“That asshole Orbison!” Jack responded.

“Huh?” Sir Richard replied.

“When I was investigating that body found at Star Lane” Jack explained “In the Citadel that Orbison was using, he had this collection of memorabilia celebrating as he put it crime and crime fighting over the centuries and one of our swords was there.”

“Are you sure?” Sir Richard asked, urgently seeking clarification.

“Positive” Jack confirmed.

“Oh hell...” Dent responded.

“That means there is a very strong possibility that Orbison and his band of Ixion lunatics has got access to Daedalus” Sir Richard concluded.

“Worse than that” Dent ventured, “The Ixion Brotherhood are just a bunch of nutters, effectively they are a front for someone in the background who has really been pulling the strings all this time.”

“Are we looking at just a breach of the first layer or are they all the way into the core?” Tracy then asked, her concern growing exponentially by the minute.

“It’s early days” Fuller confirmed, “I am still trying to analyse what areas have had unauthorised activity that cannot be otherwise attributed to other sources outside of the Daedalus network but at the moment, I think it is only the first layer of the system currently affected.”

“Let’s hope they don’t get any further in” Dent remarked “It would have been helpful if you had told us about this system rather than getting all secret squirrel on us” he then scolded.

“The core success of the Daedalus Project is absolute secrecy” Sir Richard explained, “Hence the evasive attitudes that we have been exhibiting.”

“Did any of this have any connection to Appleby’s death?” Jack then asked.

“I don’t know” Fuller honestly admitted “I am still trying to unlock his files that you sent over, it is possible he may have got wind of Daedalus or a possible threat to it, which would explain why he was in North End.”

“Checking out subterranean locations on the Transport Division’s patch” Jack concluded “and then someone decided he was getting too nose-y or knew too much and, wallop...”

“Nice set up too” Tracy pointed out, “Whoever is manipulating all this behind the scenes set up the perfect performance for you” she indicated directly towards Jack, “You were effectively led to the body, you found the murder weapon and Fuller here was practically dropped into your lap as the prime suspect.”

“It was probably their intention to keep Jack on a wild goose chase until he could be neutralised like they did with Appleby” Dent remarked “and all this cleverly crafted pantomime that has been laid on would take you two” he indicated Fuller and Sir Richard “out of the equation as well.”

“Neat...” Sir Richard was almost complimentary.

“With that stupid Burgette woman running her own show, we need to put on a show of our own” Tracy then remarked, “Make her and the puppet masters pulling her strings think we are sticking to their script.”



“I agree” Jack responded.

“Regrettably, so do I” Sir Richard added.

“The official records will have to show that the Transport Division inquiry into Appleby’s death is ongoing and that you two” Jack nodded towards Fuller and Sir Richard “remain in indefinite detention, helping us with our inquiries.”

“I shall discreetly slink off to my basement” Sir Richard agreed “Stay out of the limelight for a while.”

“Very wise” Dent agreed.

“I can run the show from King William Street” Fuller confirmed, “Monitor the systems, try and see where they are getting in.”

“All right” Tracy agreed “but from now on, you tell me everything, no more prattling about, is that understood?”

“Absolutely Chief Superintendent” Sir Richard readily agreed like a naughty schoolboy who had only narrowly escaped a very severe punishment from the headmistress.

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“I thought I might find you here” Pointer called as he and Brent met up on the Embankment, near the derelict Houses of Parliament.

“Well, I think it is safe to say your work at the Department of Inland Waterways gives you a certain insight...” Brent responded with a smile.

“That and the Roster Clerk over at West End Central is very helpful” Pointer then admitted.

“So, how is life in the Inland Waterways Department?” Brent asked with a giggle.

“Let me give you an example of my expertise” Pointer remarked before looking around, “Oh look, there is a river...” he jokingly indicated the River Thames flowing in front of them.

“You are good at this, I can tell” Brent complimented.

“Are you busy at the moment?” Pointer then asked.

“Just routine patrol duties this morning” Brent confirmed “The Chief Superintendent has requested that I be seconded to duties in the New Scotland Yard area for a while.”

“Much going on?” Pointer asked as he produced a bag of sweets and offered to share them.

“Oh, thanks” Brent duly took a sweet, “No, nothing much about today.”

“Ever since Parliament moved out and the military effectively annexed half of Westminster, it has ripped the heart out of this place” Pointer admitted as they walked together towards Westminster Bridge.

“I think there is only the Yard, Westminster Abbey, the tube station and your lot still active in the immediate area now” Brent remarked “Everything else is either vacant, occupied by the military boneheads or derelict.”

“Rather sums up the state of the country, doesn't it?” Pointer nodded up towards the scaffolding clad and abandoned edifice of the Houses of Parliament ahead, only the clock faces of the Elizabeth Tower which houses the famous Big Ben bell being visible amidst the neglected structure.

“Word on the street is that some big fat, probably cigar smoking property developer is waiting in the wings to buy the site at a knockdown price” Brent remarked “They are just waiting for the right moment when the Government is desperate for some cash.”

“Nothing surprises me anymore” Pointer agreed, “Well, most of the time anyway...” he then added as he realised that subconsciously, he and Brent were now holding hands.

“I am off duty at four; do you want to go for a drink?” Brent then tentatively suggested.

“I would be honoured” Pointer agreed with a smile as they reached the corner of Embankment and Westminster Bridge whereupon they turned to the left with the intention of crossing the river.

“Oh...” Brent then remarked as they both looked ahead across the bridge “Would you look at that?”

“Ah yes, the State of Emergency Special Search Teams” Pointer remarked with disdain as they both looked ahead to a point approximately halfway across Westminster Bridge where a military mobile stop and search team were hassling several members of the public at random, demanding identification and attempting to conduct body searches.

“Lima Charlie Four Six One to Control” Brent then called into her radio “I think we may have a problem on Westminster Bridge, I am just going to check it out.”

“Do you want me to come with you?” Pointer then asked.

“No, it's all right” Brent confirmed “I got this, you stay here and watch the show” she smiled before heading off across the bridge.

“Will do” Pointer agreed, standing on the corner of the street at the end of the bridge and watching Brent head off towards the scene of the ongoing confrontation.

“Oi!” Brent called over as she duly approached “What’s going on here then?” she asked.

“This is a Military Security matter, officer” the lead officer called, raising his weapon partially as some sort of implied threat, “You have no jurisdiction in this matter.”

What Brent was unaware of was that this leading officer was the Colonel, James Ings, the same senior officer who was responsible for the ambush of Jack and Grant the previous day.

“Oh, don’t think you can blasé that old number on me” Brent dismissively responded.

“Officer!” one of the civilians who was being held by the military personnel called, “These guys just rolled up, picked on us at random and started hassling us.”

“What’s the problem?” Brent asked.

“Suspected sedition” Colonel Ings immediately responded, “Corporal, take them in for questioning.”

“Do you have reasonable suspicion, cause or even just maybe a warrant?” Brent demanded to know.

“If you continue to interfere in our operation, we will have to remove you” Colonel Ings then sternly threatened.

“If there are reasonable grounds to suspect these individuals are in any way up to no good, you hand them over to my custody and I will ensure they receive their rights through due process” Brent instructed “Not random implication and harassment by a bunch of military bullies.”

“This is your last warning Lieutenant Commander” Colonel Ings reaffirmed his supposed authority and two more of his men joined him, all with firearms drawn and by their sides, “Leave immediately or we will be forced to take affirmative action in this matter.”

“You stand your men down and hand over custody of these people to me and I will say no more about it” Brent then suggested.

“Corporal, arrest her” Colonel Ings then ordered which was when the two officers either side of him stepped forward and attempted to grab Brent forcefully.

She reacted quickly and managed to draw her gun but whilst she just evaded the clutches of the two corporals, Colonel Ings quickly lunged at her and punched her in the stomach.

“Christ!” Pointer responded and immediately called over his radio for help.

Less than a quarter of a mile away in New Scotland Yard's Main Control Room, Tracy was discussing some operational details with the Duty Supervisor when the call came over the loudspeakers in the room.

"Officer in distress, immediate urgent assistance required, Westminster Bri..."  
Pointer's voice urgently called before the transmission was abruptly cut off.

"That's Gareth Pointer" Tracy immediately recognised the voice as she pulled her firearm from its holster and checked it, "Scramble everyone we have right now" she then ordered before swiftly leaving the room.

Moments later Tracy led a number of officers from the side entrance and headed at some speed on foot along the Embankment before reaching Westminster Bridge.

The scene on the bridge was one of violent chaos, Pointer was in a physical fist fight with one of the military corporals, Brent was lying on the pavement having been knocked down and there were screams of protest from the civilians who were being roughly handled over to a waiting military prisoner transport truck.

On the south side of the river, Bob, Lieutenant Long and two other officers from the Armed Response Team had just arrived to be met with a number of military officers who immediately responded by opening fire.

"All right, nobody move!" Tracy ordered, her gun and that of the other officers with her now trained on the military presence on the scene.

Pointer finished off his opponent with a very unceremonious knee in the groin which saw the corporal collapse to the ground whereupon he was quickly disarmed and taken into custody.

"Hold your fire!!" Colonel Ings called to his men.

"Very wise" Tracy responded as the sounds of gunfire and fighting finally ceased.

Pointer helped Brent back to her feet, she was battered but undefeated and with his help, she duly headed up to the front and stood with Tracy.

"Ma'am" Brent then declared, somewhat out of breath "Excuse my language but I want these bastards nicked!"

"Language duly excused" Tracy readily agreed.

By this point, further reinforcements had arrived, and Colonel Ings could see his team were now outnumbered in both numbers and firepower, any attempt to fight back or resist now would only have resulted in a bloodbath.

"Stand down gentlemen" Colonel Ings duly called whereupon the military personnel duly lowered their weapons and stepped back.

Tracy and Pointer both helped Brent stagger forwards to come face to face with the

Colonel whereupon she stared him directly in the face.

“You are under arrest for assaulting a Police & Security Service Officer, obstructing an officer in the execution of her duty and causing an affray” Brent then formally called, “You do not have to say anything but anything you do say will be taken down and may be used in evidence.”

“Gareth...” Tracy quietly indicated to Pointer who, now that Brent had said her piece, duly helped her away.

“All units from Angel One” Tracy then called into her radio “I want this band of idiots in secure custody over at Paddington Green, ensure that the civilians they were hassling are all checked over and okay.”

“You can’t hold us, you can’t stop us, you cannot overrule out authority” Colonel Ings defiantly explained.

“This one” Tracy then indicated the Colonel directly, not taking her eyes off him for even a split second, “He goes to The Yard, we have a lot to talk about, and I think we will start with the serious physical assault of one of my officers, shall we?”

“Huh...” Colonel Ings responded with complete and utter disdain “I could have just shot the little bitch; I will still walk free.”

Tracy looked at the man with a controlled rage inside her before suddenly striking out, smashing her fist with a huge left hook, dead centre in his face and sending him crashing to the ground.

“And add resisting arrest to the charge sheet whilst you are at it” Tracy then coolly requested as the Colonel was duly dragged up off the ground by two of Bob’s armed response team, handcuffed and led away.

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“Bloody hell, you two look like you have been in a war” Dent remarked as she saw Pointer and Brent arrive through the main doors of Thames House, the MI5 Headquarters building.

“A little local trouble with some military hard cases, Sir” Pointer admitted.

“Yeah, I just heard all about it” Dent confirmed, “You must be Lieutenant Commander Brent” Dent then remarked to the young officer.

“Esme” Brent confirmed.

“Christopher Dent, man in charge of erm...” he tailed off.

“Inland Waterways and Freshwater Fish?” Brent suggested with a wry smile.

“Something like that” Dent confirmed with a smile, “You are welcome to use our

medical facilities upstairs to get fixed up, both of you.”

“Thanks” Brent responded.

“Gareth” Dent then called “When you and the delightful Ms Brent have finished, check your messages, your contact in the Passport Office has something of interest regarding our Invisible Man apparently.”

“Thanks boss” Pointer responded before he duly escorted Brent off towards the lifts.

“The Invisible Man?” Brent asked.

“Long story...” Pointer confirmed as the lift doors closed and they were now alone.

“You saved my life...” Brent then remarked with a sudden realisation.

“My pleasure” Pointer responded, slightly embarrassed.

“As I have the rest of the day off, once I have had my brain cell sewn back in, do you still fancy that drink?” Brent then tentatively suggested.

“Absolutely” Pointer readily agreed, “I’ll just need to check this passport thing first.”

“No problem, I can wait” Brent confirmed as the lift stopped and the doors opened.

“Medical is just down here” Pointer showed her the way and then opened one of an otherwise identical set of anonymous looking doors that lined both sides of the corridor.

“Thanks” Brent responded.

“I’ll leave you in the capable hands of our resident medical Jedi here” Pointer indicated the duty doctor inside the clinical treatment room.

“You won’t forget about me, will you?” Brent then asked.

“Not a chance” Pointer confirmed with a smile before leaving.

A few moments later Pointer returned to the general office where he could see through the glass wall that Dent was already back at his desk taking a telephone call that was making him look thoroughly grumpy.

“Any messages for me?” he then called across the office.

“On your desk Gareth” came the response.

“Oh, got them” Pointer then found what he was looking for, “Thanks.”

There were three messages on his desk, one was a personal message from his aunt in Stevenage, another was a request to ensure his expenses claims were filled in

correctly and on time whilst the third was the one he was most interested in.

The rest of the office looked up with some surprise when Pointer suddenly and loudly celebrated something.

“Got you!” he called in triumph, tapping a photograph in the file that had been sent to him.

“Got who?” Dent asked, looking around the frame of his office door.

“What do you reckon boss?” Pointer then called as he walked briskly over to his superior and showed him the report and photographs.

“Bloody hell, that’s him” Dent responded, “The Invisible Man is no longer invisible!”

“According to my source at the Passport & Immigration Office, Alain Delfont entered the country at the Port of Newhaven three years ago, two days before the Holborn explosion” Pointer explained, “The passport was Egyptian and the name he was using was Edward Thistlewood.”

“Odd that he would such an English sounding name in a probably fake Egyptian passport” Dent remarked.

“Perhaps someone wanted us to know he was in the country, but it got overlooked instead?” Pointer then suggested.

“Well, the Security Services were in a state of chaos even back then so it wouldn’t surprise me” Dent admitted, “Any further trace of this guy’s journey?” he then asked.

“Newhaven is not exactly Felixstowe” Pointer remarked “It’s a one cross channel ferry a day pile of rusting industrial dereliction on the Sussex Coast, the sort of place that illegal immigrants take one look at, decide it was a bad idea and then promptly smuggle themselves back out of the country again.”

“I know, I have been there” Dent agreed to a slightly confused look from Pointer, “Family holiday to Seaford when I was kid” he then explained, “The place was a dump even then.”

“The trouble is the trail probably goes cold from there” Pointer then admitted.

“If I remember, there is a grotty shed which serves as a railway station there” Dent recalled, “It is possible our Mr Thistlewood or whatever he was calling himself at the time took a train towards London, either that or he got the bus which I can’t really see a guy like him doing if I am honest.”

“I’ll give the Transport Division guys a call, maybe they can find something” Pointer suggested.

“Good idea” Dent agreed “With Jack reopening the Holborn Bomb Investigation, he will be interested to hear this.”

“I’ll head over to Holborn personally” Pointer confirmed.

“Where is your girlfriend?” Dent then asked, looking around.

“She is getting patched up in the medical room” Pointer confirmed.

“As you two are getting close...” Dent began.

“Are we?” Pointer responded with concern.

“Yes, you are” Dent then confirmed, “I took the liberty of doing the customary background checks on her in advance of the request for personal friendship form you are about to submit.”

“Anything interesting?” Pointer asked out of curiosity.

“She still lives with her mother” Dent responded.

“Hardly surprising given the property market in this town” Pointer remarked,

“Indeed” Dent agreed “So I reckon she is a keeper, look after her” he then strongly suggested, “Opportunities for friendship very rarely arise in this profession I can tell you.”

“I will Sir, thank you” Pointer agreed before closing the file and with a slightly embarrassed smile, heading off.

“You are lucky Ms Brent” the medical officer remarked as she finished checking her injuries, “No broken bones that I can detect, just a few bumps and bruises.”

“Thanks Doc” Brent responded as she gingerly put her uniform tunic back on.

“You will feel a bit sore for a few days though” the Doctor then advised.

“I have had worse, believe me” Brent confirmed as she got down off the examination couch and winced a bit “I got knocked sideways by a runaway bus with a dud hand brake in Oxford Street once.”

“Ouch...” the Doctor remarked.

“Made a bit of a dent in it too” Brent admitted, “Mostly made of plastic these days apparently.”

There was a polite knock at the door and Pointer duly entered.

“How is the patient?” Pointer asked as he and Brent exchanged smiles on seeing each other again.



“Nothing a few days rest and recuperation won’t sort out” the Doctor confirmed, “I will leave her in your capable hands Gareth” she then declared.

“Thanks Doc” Pointer responded before escorting Brent out of the room.

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“Oh, they are making noises, are they?” Tracy exclaimed over the telephone at the New Scotland Yard reception desk, “Well you can tell them from me that I don’t care if they are dancing around with their underpants on their heads, going wibble and singing kumbaya with the Vienna Boys Choir!” she then loudly declared, “Colonel Ings is under arrest and is bloody well staying there until our investigations are concluded, then and only then will I decide what we are going to do with the scumbag” she then confirmed before slamming the handset down hard.

“If they call back, shall I just tell them you are unavailable, Ma’am?” Janice asked.

“If you would be so kind...” Tracy confirmed, now a little calmer.

As she headed off towards the lifts, she met Jack coming the other way.

“Oh, hello” Jack called, “I heard there was some excitement?”

“A spot of bother with one of Burgette’s military hit teams” Tracy confirmed, “Things got a little heated and I just dragged their commanding officer in for some serious questioning.”

“I take it you have seen the declaration from Burgette, sorry, Commissioner Burgette as she is calling herself?” Jack then asked.

“Oh yes...” Tracy confirmed, rolling her eyes upwards in disbelief, “Basically she seems to have given control over to the military detachment led by this Colonel Ings character.”

“Do we know anything about this Ings guy?” Jack then asked as he and Tracy headed towards the stairs and down to the custody suite area.

“Commander Monroe just sent his life story over a few minutes ago” Tracy confirmed, indicating a large file in her hands which she then opened and proceeded to summarise its contents, “Apparently he was a serving officer for fifteen years, working his way up the ranks mainly thanks to generous supporters and sponsors, only to get booted out ten years ago when the late Major Ford found out he was basically an evil bastard.”

“So, what the hell is he doing back in uniform, in command and on the streets?” Jack then asked.

“Two years ago, he was signed back on under the supervision of The Committee as a Special Advisor on urban terrorism and civilian behavioural correction, and now he is the London Garrison Commander in Chief with some shiny new powers of thuggery

courtesy of that cow Burgette” Tracy confirmed.

“Can I take a look at that?” Jack then asked, indicating the file.

“Yeah, sure” Tracy confirmed, handing it over.

“Colonel James Sebastian Ings” Jack read from the file before turning the page to reveal a couple of photographs which was when he stopped suddenly and looked on in astonishment.

Tracy only realised after she had gone ahead a few steps that Jack had stopped and she duly paused herself to look back, seeing him looking on with a sense of rage and incredulity.

“Something wrong?” Tracy asked, clearly concerned.

“That's him!” Jack declared.

“Sorry, you've lost me” Tracy admitted.

“The military guy who ambushed Lieutenant Grant and I at that mobile checkpoint yesterday” Jack then explained as he showed Tracy the photographs in the file, “He is a little older now but that is definitely him.”

“Are you sure?” Tracy sought clarification.

“Absolutely certain” Jack confirmed “I never forget an asshole!”

“Well,” Tracy responded “That changes things remarkably...” she then declared.

“Where is he?” Jack then called, marching ahead, “Let me at him!”

“Whoa!” Tracy quickly caught up and stopped Jack from heading into the detention area “You can't just go barging in there and creating merry hell, you are too close and besides, kicking up all sorts of merry hell is my job, the bit I most enjoy as it happens.”

Jack reluctantly nodded in agreement and stepped back.

“Chief Superintendent!” came a familiar voice from behind them which caused them both to look around and see Christopher Dent walking briskly towards them.

“Hi Chris” Tracy responded, “What brings you to our dungeon?” she then asked.

“I heard you had a special one in” Dent explained, “Colonel James Ings?”

“Oh yes...” Jack confirmed, still clearly furious.

“Something I missed?” Dent sensed something was not right.

“The Colonel through there is the same meat head that ambushed the late Lieutenant Grant and I yesterday” Jack explained.

“Ah...” Dent responded, realising the significance.

“And this morning he and his team of well trained morons decided to knock seven bells out of some innocent civilians, your deputy and one of my best officers on Westminster Bridge” Tracy then added.

“I just came from Thames House” Dent confirmed “Gareth filled me in on what happened, and he is ensuring the delightful Lieutenant Commander Brent is being patched up in our medical facility.”

“I have already informed Divisional Commander Regent here that he is too close to this and cannot interview the Colonel” Tracy indicated Jack, “so do you want in?” she then asked Dent.

“Try and stop me” Dent readily agreed.

“Jack, I would head back to Holborn if I were you” Tracy then instructed “Don’t worry, we got this” she then reassured him.

“Okay...” Jack slightly reluctantly agreed.

“If I were you, I would keep working on the Appleby case and the Holborn bombing” Dent wisely suggested, “See if the name Thistlewood or Alain Delfont comes up?”

“Who?” Jack and Tracy responded in unison.

“Something one of Gareth’s contacts has turned up, it is the assumed and real name of the infamous Invisible Man...” Dent then revealed.

“Thank you, I’ll check it out” Jack replied with a bit of a smile.

“All right, keep in touch” Dent then called whereupon Jack duly nodded and left.

“Well done, Gareth...” Tracy remarked.

“He is good, isn’t he?” Dent then admitted.

“So, what is he doing now?” Tracy then asked out of curiosity.

“I gave him the rest of the day off” Dent confirmed, “He is probably developing interjurisdictional relations with a certain Metropolitan Division Lieutenant Commander I suspect...” he then remarked with a knowing smirk.

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“Just what the hell is going on?” Burgette demanded to know of her staff as she came steaming into the office, clearly furious.

“This just in Commissioner” one of the staff confirmed and handed across a piece of paper which Burgette snatched away before looking at the details printed on it intently.

“She can’t do this!” Burgette then loudly protested, waving the piece of paper angrily in the air with indignation, “That bitch does not have the jurisdiction, I do!”

“Yes Commissioner” the member of her staff quietly agreed.

“I want that Chief Superintendent cow on a video call in thirty minutes” Burgette then demanded, “and get me Colonel Ing’s second in command, I want their units mobilised immediately.”

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“Colonel James Sebastian Ings” Tracy called as she entered the detention room where she found the senior military officer pacing officiously up and down the width of the room, his hard soled boots making loud dominant footsteps on the cold solid concrete floor.

“Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent” Ings responded formally in kind, “You will release me immediately” he then demanded.

“Really?” Tracy responded.

“You have no jurisdiction over me, my officers, men or operations” Ings officially stated, “and as such, my detention and that of my men by your so-called Service is illegal and you will release us all at once.”

“But you can’t leave now, things are getting interesting” Tracy remarked “We have so much to talk about despite the dozen or more high-ranking people who have contacted me in the last hour demanding your release at once, however what they fail to appreciate is that you are in my castle, and I am the Queen which means I am duty bound to tell them all to sod off.”

“I have to admit Chief Superintendent, I do like your style” Ings remarked, almost complimentary, “It will almost be a shame when you and your dinosaur of a Service are shut down and replaced by us.”

“In your dreams...” Tracy responded, looking distinctly unimpressed, “For a starter I would like to talk about what you and your men were doing yesterday afternoon when two of my colleagues from the Transport Division were ambushed by one of your mobile hit teams which resulted in the death from gunshot wounds of one of them.”

“Which one?” Ings asked.

“Lieutenant Commander Melanie Grant died from her injuries approximately one hour after the initial incident” Tracy officially informed him, “Unfortunately for you, the other officer you attacked was uninjured, physically at least and has positively

identified you as the man in charge of the team that attacked them.”

“Ah, that meddling little git is still alive then” Ings responded with a slightly disgruntled look, “Pity...”

“Do you want another right hook?” Tracy stared Ings directly in the eyes and partially raised her hand.

“There is no need for unnecessary violence Chief Superintendent” Ings casually responded.

“Oh, and what have you and your band of thugs been doing for the last couple of weeks up to and including the major fracas on Westminster Bridge earlier today then?” Tracy demanded to know.

“Necessary violence” Ings calmly confirmed “All required in the interests of The Greater Good.”

“What a load of old bollocks...” Tracy tersely replied.

“Check with your boss” Ings then responded.

“My boss?” Tracy remarked, rather confused.

“Commissioner Burgette” Ings confirmed, “She is really in charge, don’t you know?”

At that moment there was a knock on the door.

“Come in!” Tracy called back over her shoulder towards the door whereupon the Custody Suite Duty Officer came in.

“Apologies Chief Superintendent, there is an urgent call for you” he explained.

“Who is it?” Tracy then enquired but she could tell from the confident expression that Ings was displaying what the answer was already.

“Video conference call from Police & Crime Commissioner Burgette, urgent” the Duty Officer confirmed.

“Well, well, well,” Tracy sarcastically responded, “Now there is a surprise.”

“I strongly suggest you take that call...” Ings remarked.

“Don’t go away” Tracy sternly suggested to Ings before swivelling smartly on her feet and leaving the room.

It was with a determined pace that Tracy marched through the building to the lift, selected the button for the top floor and seethed to herself as the lift car ascended.

Moments later Tracy marched into the main Control Room where the Duty Supervisor

handed her a headset microphone and she duly put it on.

“All right, put her on...” Tracy reluctantly declared.

“Yes Ma’am” the Duty Supervisor confirmed whereupon there was a beep and the grinning face of Burgette appeared on the main screen.

“Ah, finally!” Burgette then called.

“Sorry to keep you waiting” Tracy sarcastically responded, “I was busy interviewing your friend Mr Ings.”

“Colonel Ings” Burgette reminded her.

“Mr Ings” Tracy reiterated, “He was chucked out of the Army many years ago and holds no legitimate rank in any United Kingdom armed forces.”

“I think you will find, Chief Superintendent that we overturned his unfair dismissal and reinstated him with full rank and privileges restored” Burgette sincerely pointed out.

“In other words, you hired this professional thug to do your dirty work” Tracy summarised.

“A surgeon, cutting away society’s dead flesh” Burgette responded.

“He and his men killed one of the Transport Division’s officers yesterday” Tracy reminded her.

“I must remind you Chief Superintendent that we are in the middle of a war on terror, a fight to maintain the nation in the interests of the Greater Good” Burgette declared to which Tracy merely rolled her eyes upwards.

“You can patter away with as much sycophantic bullshit as you like” Tracy tersely responded, “Ings stays in my detention cells until we have got this mess sorted out.”

“Regrettable...” Burgette responded, “In which case you leave me no choice other than to impose The Committee’s official ruling.”

“What official ruling?” Tracy demanded to know.

“Oh, you will find out soon enough” Burgette evasively confirmed, clearly enjoying the way this situation was unfolding seemingly in her favour, “When you are ready to discuss this matter in a more civilised way, you know the number.”

With that closing remark, Burgette abruptly terminated the call, and the screen went blank.

“Cow...” Tracy remarked as she took off the headset and handed it back.

In her plush office, Burgette settled back in the chair with a satisfied smirk on her face before she looked across at the telephones on her desk, the red one of which she reached across to and picked up the handset which instantly connected it through to the one single number that it was linked to.

“Lieutenant Colonel Stewart” Burgette then called, “I regret to inform that the Rozzers are refusing to release your Commanding Officer” she confirmed, “I am authorising you to proceed with Operation Liberation with immediate effect.”

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At the same time that Burgette was making calls, Tracy was making a few of her own but in person, making her way through New Scotland Yard and rounding up a number of officers, culminating with locating Divisional Commander Matthews in the Main Control Room.

“Stephen” Tracy called, “Can I borrow you for ten minutes please?” she requested.

“Yes Ma'am of course” Matthews quickly agreed, grabbing his uniform tunic, and then following her out of the room.

“I am sorry to disturb you” Tracy then apologised as she led him down the corridor towards the Special Operations Room “I need a senior head that has been around for the last few years to lead an investigation.”

“What or who are we investigating?” Matthews then asked as they headed inside.

“Our friend the Colonel downstairs” Tracy confirmed, “Take a seat and I will explain all” she then prompted.

“Sorry, I got here as quick as I could” Dent then called as he came into the room and joined the others around the table.

“I apologise for the hasty way in which you were all summoned here” Tracy then announced from the front of the room to the various officers present, “Unfortunately I feel this won't wait.”

“Where's the fire?” Dent asked out of curiosity.

“Downstairs in the basement” Tracy confirmed “Right now we have the so called Commander in Chief of the London Military Battalion downstairs, one Colonel James Sebastian Ings and thus far he has all but admitted the killing of Transport Division Lieutenant Commander Melanie Grant, the attempted murder of Divisional Commander Jack Regent yesterday and the assault of Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent this very morning. “

“Naughty boy...” Matthews quietly remarked.

“Quite” Tracy confirmed as she produced Ings' file and passed it around “In addition

to the man's horrific attitude, his past history as a violent thug and general bastard, he is also in the pocket of our *beloved* Crime Commissioner Burgette who, along with a dozen other prominently placed members of the Westminster elite have demanded his immediate release without charge.”

“I take it you have told them all where to shove it?” Dent asked.

“Oh yes, with interest” Tracy confirmed, “Unfortunately I fear time is short as I have just had a frank exchange of views with Burgette and the implications she was making were distinctively threatening.”

“So, what is the plan?” Dent then asked.

Tracy scratched her head as she thought carefully for a moment.

“How many Service officers have died in either violent or unexplained circumstances since the death of my Husband?” Tracy asked.

“Off the top of my head, at least seven” Dent recalled as he called up a file on the computer, “The last one was Divisional Commander Appleby a few weeks ago, SO13 Division Anti-Terrorism Squad Chief Alan Harding died in a car crash six months ago, still no clues as to what happened there, Commander Amber McWilliam who died when the helicopter she was travelling in went down over the English Channel about three years ago, Commander Connor Shelby we all know about, Lieutenant Commander Dave Kensington shot dead by an unknown assassin about three months before that and then there are over a dozen other cases of serving Security Service officers who have died in circumstances not entirely explained as natural or normal over the last six years.”

“I presume that this list does not include any members of your illustrious profession who have similarly been lost?” Tracy asked Dent directly.

“Indeed...” Dent grimly confirmed.

“And add to that list Transport Division Commander Melanie Grant yesterday” Matthews added.

“Is it me or have we been fighting an ongoing silent war for years?” Tracy asked.

“Pretty much, yes Ma’am” Matthews grimly confirmed, “With the exception of a handful of Ixion Brotherhood followers, those two members of The Hand we unceremoniously threw out of the country a few years ago and an assortment of nutters, loons and general idiots, we have nothing.”

“Until now...” Dent pointed out, “Now we have Ings downstairs, that could be a game changer...”

“Unfortunately, Ings seems to be in the pocket of Commissioner Burgette and in turn she is basically a puppet of The Committee” Tracy then summarised.



“I err, probably shouldn’t mention this...” Dent began to remark, clearly uncomfortable about what he was about to say, “but I have had a couple of my people snooping around Commissioner Burgette’s office and just before I got here, something interesting came up.”

“Oh, I am all ears...” Tracy prompted.

“It may just be coincidence” Dent then continued “but there is definite possibility that Burgette has connections to a certain Lord Chaos...”

“Orbison?” Matthews responded, “That smarmy slime ball?”

“She is a bit old for him, isn’t he?” Tracy remarked, “I thought that old leech was more into teenagers as his preferred taste for his bedroom antics?”

“Maybe he fancied a change?” Dent suggested, “Whatever the situation, it is clear that there is a link between Orbison and his Ixion Brotherhood to Commissioner Burgette and in turn she is obviously a puppet of The Committee...”

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave...” Tracy concluded.

The meeting was suddenly interrupted by an urgent sounding knock at the door.

“Come in!” Tracy responded, “and this had better be good!” she then added, the annoyance clear in her voice.

“I am sorry to interrupt Ma’am” the Duty Supervisor called as he stuck his head around the door “but we have a rather large problem, Commissioner Burgette is approaching the main entrance...”

“Oh God...” Tracy rolled her eyes upwards.

“...and she has brought along some friends, actually a lot of friends” the Duty Supervisor then added.

“She has friends?” Dent remarked with a surprised look.

“In this case the friends are a rather large contingent of military personnel” the Duty Supervisor then confirmed.

“How many?” Tracy then asked, clearly concerned.

“Err, all of them I think” the Duty Supervisor admitted.

“Meeting adjourned” Tracy then declared, “Scramble everyone we have got and get me Regional Administrator General Eric McDonald in Edinburgh on a secure line, it is time to call in some favours.”

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Orbison looked up from his manuscript that he was working on when the BBC News Channel that he had on in the background got his attention which prompted him to put down his pen and turn the volume up a bit before watching the breaking news report with extreme interest.

“We are getting reports that the Police & Crime Commissioner, Dame Harriet Burgette has in the last fifteen minutes ordered an immediate military lockdown of several areas of Westminster outside of the central secure zone, including Millbank, the areas around the former Houses of Parliament, Westminster Bridge and Embankment including New Scotland Yard” the main BBC News Channel presenter announced, looking down at his screen on the desk in front of him where he was being fed live updates as they happened.

“Details are somewhat sketchy at the moment, but initial reports indicate that this move has come following what a Commissioners Office source describes as “credible intelligence” that a terrorist atrocity is imminent” the News Presenter continued to relate from his information.

“As a certain Chief Superintendent would say, such dazzling bullshit...” Orbison wryly remarked to himself before pushing his chair back and standing up, whereupon he yawned and stretched before leaving the room.

Outside his personal quarters, there was a melancholy atmosphere with Facilitators and Followers of the Brotherhood all around the Citadel complex who stopped what they were doing when Orbison came through, bowing reverentially.

Orbison revelled in the adoration that his presence was generating as he proceeded through the complex before reaching a security door which was being guarded by two fully dressed and armed Soldiers of Ixion who stood to attention as he approached.

“Relax my brothers” Orbison instructed before he proceeded to input a code into the security lock on the door which then beeped and then opened allowing him to enter.

Inside the secure room was the nerve centre of Orbison's computer operation, a large number of computer terminals and screens, a Facilitator sat at each terminal constantly monitoring and working on numerous information feeds that were coming in constantly.

“My friends, my brothers” Orbison grandly announced, “Our friends in London have announced the Revolution is on the move therefore it is time to start the music.”

“My Lord” O’Dell declared from the main control console “We stand ready to access the system.”

“Engage the decryption codes, all levels” Orbison then called with a look of glee “Give me full control.”

“By your command...” O’Dell confirmed whereupon on the main screen, the Damocles access screen appeared and the three decryption codes were duly input.

Moments later the Damocles System operating screen appeared, and Orbison rubbed his hands with glee.

“All right then” Orbison declared “Let's make them blind and deaf” he ordered “and I want full mobile surveillance across the entire area, let's hear what they are saying.

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“Oh, what fresh hell is this?” Tracy commented as she arrived in the reception area and looked out through the windows at the scene outside where a significant number of military personnel were proceeding through the streets whilst the sound of heavy vehicles approaching increased in volume.

“I think we may have a problem Ma'am...” Janice remarked from behind her desk.

“Definitely” Tracy grimly agreed, “Janice, call the control room and tell them to scramble everyone we have on site straight away as I think we are about to have visitors.”

“Yes Ma'am” Janice confirmed as she urgently picked up the telephone.

Tracy meanwhile reached for her mobile as it began to ring whereupon she checked the number and immediately answer it

“Regional Administrator General Sir Eric McDonald please” Tracy then formally requested as soon as her call had been answered, “Chief Superintendent Tracy Regent, New Scotland Yard, urgent” she then added.

As Bob and his specialist firearms team emerged from the lift and arrived in Reception, Tracy indicated towards the front door.

“Ah...” Bob responded on seeing what amounted to a military siege in the process of being initiated outside.

“If you could keep the hounds from the door, I would appreciate it” Tracy responded as she waited for her call to be answered.

“You've got it Ma'am” Bob readily agreed, “Come on Long” he then called to his Unit's newest recruit “Let's go and say hello, shall we?”

“Eric, it's Tracy” she then called a few moments later as her opposite number in Scotland came on the phone from his office in Edinburgh, “Sorry to be a pain but I need to call in a few favours.”

Outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard, Bob and his Specialist Firearms Unit team stood firm in a protective line across the doorway as a large military armoured personnel carrier along with an accompanying escort of half a dozen vehicles approached and screeched to a stop just feet away from them whereupon numerous armed military personnel deployed and proceeded to surround the building.

As the troops spread out in a perfectly executed deployment, Bob indicated to his officers to hold the line.

“Hold your nerve ladies and gentlemen” Bob called, “I don’t want anyone opening fire or making any aggressive move towards our, err... guests, Lieutenant Long, you stick close to me.”

“Yes Sir” Long confirmed.

The troop deployment was also being carried out with slick military position right across the area with new barriers being swiftly erected as they proceeded to extend the Westminster Secure Zone, now encompassing Horse Guards Parade, Parliament Square, Westminster Bridge, the south end of Victoria Street and along Millbank past the derelict Palace of Westminster as far as the MI5 building near Lambeth Bridge.

The streets echoed to the sounds of hard soled military boots, rattling armoury, weapons and equipment plus numerous vehicles and helicopters.

Outside New Scotland Yard, a pair of tracked armoured personnel carriers approached, flanking a military command and control vehicle.

Tracy came to the front door as the military lines moved aside to allow the three vehicles to come right up to the entrance steps and looked on with a serious expression.

“Look who the cat dragged in...” Tracy then remarked as Burgette emerged from the command and control vehicle with a gleeful look on her face.

“Good evening Chief Superintendent” Burgette formally called.

“What's good about it exactly?” Tracy dismissively asked.

“That depends upon your point of view...” Burgette simply replied.

“The view from where I am standing has a certain foul stench I must say” Tracy tersely replied, her breath forming a cloud in the cold evening air.

“Chief Superintendent” Burgette then called, producing an official document, “I have an official warrant here which requests you to immediately release from your custody Colonel James Ings without condition or restriction.”

“And if I refuse?” Tracy asked as the tense stand off continued.

“Then Colonel Ing's associates, on my express orders have the authorisation to retrieve their commanding officer from these premises, by force if necessary” Burgette formally informed her.

“You wouldn't dare...” Tracy responded, maintaining her stare directly at Burgette.

“Gentlemen...” Burgette then called to the group of military officers stood either side of her which was when they prepared their weapons and began to step forward.

“Stop!” Tracy called whereupon Burgette held up her hand and the men immediately ceased their advance.

“Reconsidering?” Burgette then asked.

“I took an oath to protect the public, keep the peace and uphold the law” Tracy explained “As I have seen your paid thugs at work on a number of occasions; I know full well that if I decline, we could wind up with a particularly ugly incident, I will therefore reluctantly comply.”

“Good girl...” Burgette mockingly replied with a big smile.

“...besides, the jerk isn’t worth the hassle or the paperwork” Tracy then added with a smirk before turning to her left, “Bob, go and fetch our guest will you please?”

“Yes Ma'am” Bob duly confirmed, “Lieutenant, you stay here” he then called to Long before heading back inside.

The stand off remained in place as both sides continued to hold their lines facing each other as the sound of hovering helicopters filled the air overhead.

“How are you doing Lieutenant?” Tracy asked aside to Long.

“Very well, thank you Ma'am” Long duly confirmed, not taking his eye off the opposition even for a moment.

“The boy has become a man” Tracy commented, “Well done...”

The military personnel suddenly began to cheer and a few even started firing their weapons in the air as Colonel Ings appeared from the main entrance with Bob and a couple of other officers escorting him just behind.

“Victory!!” Ings called, his arms held aloft in triumph but before he could proceed any further, Tracy stepped in front of him, causing him to stop in his tracks.

“Let me mark your card me old china” Tracy formally addressed Ings, “You and your band of muppets may have won this particular battle, but you have not won the war, I will ensure that you and your associates are duly removed from the streets of this city once and for all, personally if I have to. Is that clear Mr Ings?” she demanded to know.

“Your time is past you old cow” Ings defiantly responded “The Revolution is here and you are not invited.”

“Bob!” Tracy called over “Remove this sack of shit off the premises!”

“With pleasure Ma'am” Bob willing agreed, “Come on, move it” he then prompted the Colonel who merely smirked and strolled on.

The cheering and shouting increased in tempo as Ings approached them, where much back slapping, hand shaking and welcoming embraces greeted his arrival back in the ranks.

“Now, if you don't mind” Tracy then called across to Burgette “Sod off!”

“Oh deary me Chief Superintendent” Burgette responded “You still don't get it, do you?”

“And I suppose you are going to educate me?” Tracy remarked.

“In case you were not aware, didn't get the memo I suppose,” Burgette replied, “I just extended the Westminster Secure Zone in the interests of National Security and the greater good.”

“Uh huh...” Tracy responded.

“...and right now, your little castle here” Burgette indicated around her towards the New Scotland Yard building “is right in the middle of my military secure area which means, ahem, you are all confined to the building.”

“Are you taking the piss?” Tracy retorted.

“As of this moment, nobody is permitted to enter or leave the building without my express permission or that of my military commander, Colonel Ings” Burgette then explained “Effectively I am placing you all under house arrest, it's funny isn't it?”

“Hi-bloody-larious...” Tracy responded before sneering at Burgette and then storming back inside.

“Ma'am” Janice called as Tracy appeared back in the Reception area, clearly displaying the look of a very angry woman, “Do you want the bad news or the very bad news?” she then asked.

“Give me the bad news” Tracy reluctantly responded.

“All our radio channels have been apparently switched over to the military system so we can be monitored by those bozos out there” Janice explained.

“Great...” Tracy replied, “and the very bad news?”

“They've just cut off our landlines, we have no working telephones” Janice indicated the now useless telephone on her desk in front of her.

“And our mobiles are almost certainly being monitored as well” Tracy added with a slightly resigned look, “Ah well, time for Plan B then...”

“Plan B Ma'am?” Janice asked.

“Yeah” Tracy confirmed before grimly storming off towards the lifts.

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“Ah, room service!” Brent remarked as Pointer appeared at his bedroom door with a tray, “I could get used to this...”

“Evening breakfast I suppose, my treat” Pointer confirmed as he got back into bed, snuggled up to Brent and placed the tray in front of them.

“That is just what I needed” Brent then remarked as she took her first gulp of coffee “and it’s the good stuff too” she complimented.

“For you, only the best” Pointer confirmed with a smile, “I keep the cheap nasty coffee for when my landlord comes around.”

“I hope your landlord isn't going to come around now, I haven't a thing to wear, literally” Brent then pointed out with a cheeky giggle.

“Oh, don't worry” Pointer reassured her “We have a very good understanding, I don't bother him, he doesn't bother me.”

“I still live with my mother...” Brent then admitted.

“I know” Pointer confirmed.

“Did I mention it earlier then?” Brent asked, trying and failing to recall.

“We didn't really talk that much once we got in did we?” Pointer remarked with a smile.

“No, we didn't...” Brent recalled with a very satisfied smile herself as she fondly recalled the afternoon of heavily passionate sex they had enjoyed before both falling asleep exhausted from their efforts curled up in each others arms.

“My Guvnor pulled your file” Pointer then explained “Standard procedure when someone in my profession begins a relationship with someone who isn't with the firm as it were.”

“Anything else 'exciting' other than I still live with my mother?” Brent casually asked as she munched on a freshly baked croissant.

“All very normal” Pointer confirmed with a confirming smile.

“Excellent” Brent responded “You see? I am the perfect woman!”

“I am so glad we met” Pointer agreed.

“Here's to us” Brent then raised her coffee cup and he responded likewise.

“I'll drink to that” Pointer readily agreed, and they clinked their cups together.

“Actually, now I come to think of it, where is my uniform?” Brent then asked, looking around the bedroom floor.

“I tidied up whilst you were still sleeping” Pointer confirmed “Your uniform is hanging up in the wardrobe, your gun and ammunition clips are in my secure cupboard and the rest is currently on the spin cycle in the washing machine.”

“Blimey!” Brent was impressed “Domesticated too, you are a keeper!”

“When you have been on your own as long as I have, you get used to doing everything for yourself” Pointer admitted “It is nice to do something for someone else for a change.”

“Do I get a guided tour of your magnificent abode?” Brent then asked, “Only I didn't really see much of it when we arrived, we just went straight to bed...”

“Yeah, we did...” Pointer responded with a big smile, “Dressing gown over there, try that for size” he then suggested.

“Thanks...” Brent duly slid out of the bed and picked up the soft fluffy white dressing gown off the back of the bedroom door and wrapped it around herself.

“Where did you nick this from?” she then asked, “It's very nice!”

“A little bonus from an operation in the Park Lane Hilton a few years ago” Pointer admitted as he finished his coffee.

“Nice and snugly...” Brent remarked as she wrapped it tightly around her naked body, enjoying the softness of the material against her skin.

“Are you ready for the grand tour then?” Pointer then asked.

“By all means” Brent confirmed with a very happy smile, “Lead on...”

“Well, the bedroom you have seen” Pointer duly confirmed as he led Brent by the hand, out of the door, “Over on the left there is the luxurious bathroom, complete with traditional 1970's Soap On A Rope which was a naff Christmas gift from my mother about ten years ago.”

“Mother's, eh?” Brent remarked, “What does your mum think you do for a living?” she then asked.

“She actually believes I work for the Department of Inland Waterways” Pointer admitted, “I had to Google facts about canals and freshwater fish once just to keep her convinced.”



“My mum is going a bit dotty, she thinks I am a Traffic Warden, must be the uniform I guess” Brent then remarked, “Mind you when you are the youngest of nine kids like me, I guess she has a little freedom to get confused as to which of her kids does what.”

“You would have thought the gun would have given the game away that you weren’t a Traffic Warden, wouldn’t you?” Pointer then suggested.

“Yeah...” Brent agreed.

“So, having now shown you the luxurious facilities, let me introduce you to the lounge” Pointer then duly escorted Brent through to the lounge.

“Now, that is a big telly” Brent looked on, seriously impressed at the large flat screen television mounted on the front wall.

“I am more of a reading person really” Pointer then admitted, “The telly came with the flat actually.”

“Oh, what do you read?” Brent asked, noticing the well-stocked bookcase on the other side of the lounge.

“On the rare opportunity I get the chance, pretty much anything really” Pointer confirmed as he watched Brent look around the room before something caught her eye on his desk.

“Did you study political history at university?” Brent then asked, clearly intrigued by something she had seen on Pointer’s desk.

“No...” Pointer responded, clearly confused, “Why do you ask?”

“Oh, it’s just these notes and doodles on your desk” Brent explained, “I did political history at UCL before I joined the Service and noticed Cato here.”

“You know what Cato is?” Pointer asked, clearly intrigued by this, “Only it’s part of an ongoing investigation we are working on, the trouble is, we have no idea what it means.”

“Well, what you have here are some names and they are all connected to the word Cato” Brent then went on to explain, “The Cato Conspiracy of February 1820, these names you have here are the names of some of the original conspirators.”

“This is interesting” Pointer remarked, “What did they do?” he then asked.

“Well, the short version of it was that the conspirators planned to overthrow the Government by ambushing the entire Cabinet and the Prime Minister, executing them and then installing their own committee in their place, effectively a coup” Brent summarised.

“What happened to them?” Pointer then asked.

“Someone ratted on them and they got nicked before they could carry out their plan” Brent explained, “Killed a couple of police officers in the resultant battle but if they had not succeeded then the cabinet would have all found themselves beheaded with the most prominent ministers heads mounted on poles outside the Houses of Parliament.”

“That shows a certain sense of style” Pointer commented.

“I don't suppose there was someone called Ings on the list of conspirators was there?” Pointer then asked out of curiosity.

“Erm, yes there was I think” Brent confirmed as Pointer passed over her uniform, “Why?”

“Because that was the name of that Colonel fellow who thumped you yesterday afternoon on Westminster Bridge” Pointer explained.

“Oh hell...” Brent responded, “But hang on a minute, the chances of this lot being hell bent of overthrowing the establishment is a bit far fetched, isn't it?”

“Actually, now I come to think about it, maybe it isn't” Pointer responded with a note of caution “After all we have had The Committee running rough shod over the establishment for the last three or four years, they have effectively muted the Prime Minister, and established a rebel military base in the centre of the city.”

“But if there aim was to depose the Government and replace them with an unelected Committee, they would need to target the Cabinet but they do nearly all their meetings virtually since all that virus business” Brent remarked, “The only time they would meet together in one place would be in the event of major incident or occurrence like a war or a pandemic or a change of Prime Minister...” Brent tailed off.

“Oh hell...” Pointer responded and reached for the telephone whereupon he speed dialled a number but a few moments later put the telephone down again, “Damm...” he then exclaimed.

“Problem?” Brent asked.

“I just tried to call the office and got an emergency tone rather than an answer” Pointer confirmed, “It's a precautionary measure activated to warn anyone calling in that the lines are down and or being monitored by an outside source.”

“I'll call it in” Brent agreed as she reached for her radio, “Lima Charlie Four Six One to Control, over.”

The response to her radio call was a shrill beeping noise which caused her to look down at her radio with a rather confused expression.

“What the hell...?” Brent responded.

“Oh dear...” Pointer responded.

“Come on” Brent then declared as she picked up Pointer's jacket and tossed it to him, “We need to get dressed and get back to The Yard” she announced, “We will have to report in directly.”

-----

“All right, how are we doing?” Tracy asked as she entered the main control room  
“Badly or very badly?”

“Very badly, Ma'am” the Duty Supervisor confirmed, “The military units have taken up position all through the newly extended military zone and we are here” he tapped the map on the wall where a red dot signified the location of New Scotland Yard.

“Right in the middle of it” Tracy ruefully remarked.

“All our land lines are down, radio frequencies have been hijacked or monitored and it is a pretty good bet that any mobile phones we have are being monitored too” the Duty Supervisor confirmed.

“What about actually leaving the building?” Tracy then asked.

“Anyone in uniform is being told they cannot leave until further notice, civilians and anyone not in uniform are being searched and questioned in the street” the Duty Supervisor explained, “We are also getting sketchy reports about officers and civilians being hassled in the street pretty much all across central London.”

“Right, try and find some way of securing our communications with our people on the ground” Tracy then urged, “If necessary, send someone up to the roof and start recruiting the local pigeons as emergency messengers!”

-----

Commander Monroe walked at a brisk pace into the King William Street Control Centre and surveyed the busy scene before him.

“All right everyone, all hell is breaking loose out there so let's get some secure communications established, shall we?” he then urged.

“Divisional Commander Regent just called in Sir” one of the officers in the room called across “He has a plan...”

“Uh oh...” Monroe responded with a worried frown.

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“Ma'am, BBC News Channel, right now” came the call over the intercom on Tracy's desk which prompted her to put down the file she was reading through and grab the

television remote control, pointing it at the wall mounted screen and turning it on.

“...we have just received this recording from a correspondent who was near Russell Square” the BBC News Presenter announced as the television came on in the middle of the report as a rather shaky sequence of mobile phone footage was shown, “It seems to show an incident involving a military operations team performing some sort of stop and search on a couple of civilians in the street.”

“Bloody hell, talk about excessive force!” Tracy exclaimed as she saw on the footage how roughly handled the two civilians were on the footage.

“The incident seems to have escalated when the military officers were then confronted by a number of National Police & Security Service officers” the BBC News Presenter then continued as the footage on the screen continued, showing a number of uniformed Security Service officers entering the scene.

“Oh hell...” Tracy remarked as the scene unfolded on the screen in front of her.

“It appears that a stand off duly took place before weapons were drawn which was when further military men arrived on scene, overpowered the Officers and then appear to have detained them” the report continued but by then Tracy had seen enough as she was already on her way out of the office and heading for the Control Room.

“I have just seen some civilians and some of our guys getting lamped in Russell Square, broadcast on the BBC!” Tracy called as she entered the room.

“With our communications down, we are effectively blind right now” the Supervisor confirmed, “We have managed to establish a back door text messaging system using codes which is a start and I believe the Transport Division reportedly has what is described as a daft idea.”

“At the moment, I will take anything going” Tracy admitted whereupon she then looked up at the BBC News Channel feed on one of the large screens at the front of the room, “Hang about...”

“Something wrong Ma’am?” the Supervisor asked.

“Where has the story about our guys in Russell Square gone?” she then asked, noticing that it had suddenly disappeared from the BBC News feed.

“Look at the subtitles!” the Supervisor then pointed out.

On the screen, the digital subtitles that were scrolling along the screen had suddenly become broken and full of gibberish, not matching the words being broadcast at all. In the middle of the broken words could be made out a short message.

“Pulled, Commissioner” Tracy identified from the gibberish.

“It seems Commissioner Burgette is able to censor the media too now” the Supervisor

confirmed.

“If we manage to get any kind of communications with the outside world established” Tracy then instructed, “I want the BBC Director General added to the list of those I need to speak to first, I think he and I have the same problem.”

-----

“Oh, that isn’t good” Brent remarked as she and Pointer came around the corner off the north end of Westminster Bridge and, upon seeing the scene ahead of them, instinctively ducked down behind a large refuse bin.

A short distance up the road along The Embankment towards New Scotland Yard was a large number of military personnel who were forming a perimeter around the various buildings in the area and at least one uniformed Security Service officer could be seen been forcibly dragged away to a waiting army truck.

“Well, we aren’t going to get in there without some major issues” Pointer concluded.

“Yeah. I had enough problems with those bone heads today, thank you very much” Brent commented, “We need a plan B” she then confirmed, “Any ideas?” she then asked.

“Err, yes” Pointer responded, taking her hand, “Come with me.”

“Where are we going?” Brent asked as Pointer escorted her quickly across the road and ducked into the Underground Station, out of sight of the military personnel.

“A little secret bolthole I know” Pointer evasively explained as they headed down the escalator to the District & Circle Line platforms.

Despite the station being one of those closed in the area due to the expansion of the secure military zone, the trains services were still running through it non stop.

“Okay, I do love a trip on a train, but I can see one inacey wincey little technicality here” Brent remarked as another train sped through the platforms without stopping, sending a draft of wind through which caused her hair to billow.

“Not a problem” Pointer confirmed as he duly opened an access panel in the platform wall, inserted a key which he turned before pressing the large red plunger button inside.

A few moments later, the next eastbound District Line train formed of brand new S Series stock came into the station, slowed and then came to a perfect smooth stop.

“Oh, very clever” Brent complimented which was when the driving cab door on the front coach opened and the driver appeared.

“Someone called for a ride?” the driver cheerily called down the platform as the couple approached.

“Indeed we did” Pointer confirmed, producing his identification.

“That will do nicely” the Driver duly confirmed, “All aboard!”

A few moments later with Brent and Pointer safely onboard, the Driver duly shut the cab door and drove off, the train plunging into the dark running tunnel.

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“And so, our merry dance unfolds...” Taylor remarked with a very satisfied look as he surveyed the latest reports that his well-placed sources had submitted over the last twenty minutes.

A few moments later the door to his study opened and in walked Colonel Ings and Burgette.

“Ah, my friends” Taylor then declared, standing up “Welcome...”

“Mr. Taylor” the Colonel responded, “I am delighted to announce that those dinosaurs over at Scotland Yard saw the light and released me from their illegal incarceration.”

“The fact that we flooded the whole area and surrounded the building with hard bastards had a bit of an influence though” Burgette added with a very broad smirk.

“I have just been reading the reports” Taylor indicated the papers in front of him, “They are going to have some serious problems communicating with anybody without us listening in...” he chuckled at the merest thought.

“We have them sewn up pretty tight Sir” Taylor confirmed “and my men are actively discouraging their street patrol officers with affirmative action...”

“Basically, dragging them off the street and throwing them unceremoniously into detention cells...” Burgette commented.

“...and we have not been too subtle about it either” the Colonel confirmed, smiling menacingly.

“So, we have a new Prime Minister, and the revolution is here” Taylor then declared, “Our time has come.”

“I will alert my Lord and Husband to begin the festivities” Burgette then confirmed, “This is going to be so much fun!”

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“What’s going on over at Westminster?” Jack asked as he arrived back at Holborn and came into the main briefing room where he found Eisley and Baxter pouring over files and photographs.

“Apparently that stupid cow, Commissioner Burgette has arbitrarily extended the extent of the Westminster Secure Zone which now includes New Scotland Yard who are now cut off as a result” Eisley explained.

“Burgette again” Jack responded with a dismayed look.

“Ah, but something interesting has come up about the aforementioned lady” Eisley then added.

“I think ‘lady’ is pushing it a bit...” Jack drolly commented.

“Oh yes, I forget you two were the best of friends...” Baxter remarked with a wry sarcastic tone.

“We have managed to analyse a lot of the material our late Guvnor left us, and this came to light” Eisley then passed a couple of photographs over.

“What do we have here then?” Jack then asked as he took the photographs and then did a double take, “Whoa! There is a familiar face...”

“Nice friendly get together don’t you think Sir?” Baxter commented.

“Indeed” Jack readily agreed, “It looks like Burgette is very good friends with our old pal Michael Lord Chaos Orbison.”

“It certainly explains a few things” Eisley agreed.

“Could she be the latest in a long line to assume the title of Lady Chaos?” Jack then ventured.

“Judging by some of these surveillance images I reckon there is a definite possibility” Eisley confirmed.

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave...” Jack then remarked, “Where were these taken do you reckon?” he then asked.

“Could be anywhere Guv” Eisley remarked as he looked at some of the other photographs from the same set, “If you are willing, I know a good location analyst who may be able to look through this lot and match some possibilities for us.”

“Do it” Jack agreed, “Meantime, who is running the Service in Central London with The Yard cut off?” he then asked.

“Communications are a mess” Eisley confirmed, “Radios are being monitored, mobiles are not secure, all the land lines have been cut off and no one is being allowed in or out but we are working on seeing if we can reactivate the old analogue radio channels, that way we can bypass the compromised digital system.”

“I like that” Jack responded, “Still, it is pretty clear that Burgette has played a right number, hasn’t she?” he then remarked.

“In addition, there are reports from various sources that officers in the streets are being harassed and arrested by Colonel Ings’ military goons” Eisley continued, “So far we haven’t been touched yet and Borough Commander’s are keeping the Metropolitan Division ship afloat as best they can.”

“What is the status of our jurisdiction?” Jack then asked.

“The military units have closed all the stations in the expanded secure area” Eisley indicated the map on the wall, “Westminster and St. James’s Park with restrictions and a reinforced presence of our people at Victoria, Piccadilly Circus, Green Park and Waterloo to try and keep people moving without running into the goon squads.”

“We need to get a direct secure communications line into New Scotland Yard” Jack then summarised before pacing around thoughtfully, “I have an idea...”

“Uh oh...” Eisley sarcastically remarked.

“Get me Divisional Commander Jennifer Caverner” Jack then requested, “I want her outside the front entrance in a fast car with the engine running in twenty minutes.”

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Whilst the Westminster area was descending into a state of armed stand off, much of the rest of the city was still largely going about normal business all be it with some distinct tension in the air.

Commander Tarbett was still checking possible subterranean locations but with no leads forthcoming, he was heading back to Holborn when a signalling failure on the Central Line meant he was forced to alight one stop short of his intended destination at Chancery Lane.

Tarbett made his way up towards the ticket office which was situated below the street, and it was as he passed through the ticket barriers, he noticed the Station Supervisor, someone he knew well standing nearby.

“Evening Derek” Tarbett called as he approached.

“William! Sorry, Commander Tarbett” Derek, the Station Supervisor responded as they shook hands, “Haven’t seen you in this part of town for a while.”

“The boss sent me on a rather roundabout errand” Tarbett explained as they both watched the crowds passing through the ticket barriers in both directions.

“I heard you got a new boss” Derek remarked “I always thought young Jack was destined for greatness.”

“He is experienced beyond his years, a good choice I reckon” Tarbett agreed, “So, how’s business around here then?” he then asked.



“Oddly busy” Derek admitted, “The ticket barriers have been bleeping non stop lately.”

“Oh yes, does look a bit busy, doesn’t it?” Tarbett remarked as he looked at the screen which showed the ticket barrier entry and exit statistics for the last eight hours, “Has it been like this for long?” he then asked.

“Last couple of week’s maybe?” Derek recalled, “The thing is, there is something odd about it.”

“Oh yes?” Tarbett asked.

“I was covering the late shift supervisor the other night” Derek began to explain, “Checking the station prior to the last train and then locking up for the night. The strange thing is that I reckon there must have been forty of fifty people entering and leaving the station in the last ten minutes before lock up but when I browsed the CCTV later, only two, maybe three of them actually boarded or alighted one of the last trains.”

“Where did the rest go?” Tarbett then asked.

“I don’t know” Derek then admitted, “All I can tell you is that about twenty people left the station having apparently appeared out of thin air and another fifteen or twenty vanished somewhere between the ticket hall and the platforms.”

“I presume they have tickets?” Tarbett wondered, “You have the ticket barriers on right until shutting up shop time, don’t you?”

“There is usually the odd ticket less drunk to let out at the end of the day but pretty much everyone else passes through the barriers as normal, tickets, Oyster Card and contactless” Derek confirmed.

Tarbett looked across at the row of ticket barriers as they bleeped with the passing through of each incoming and outgoing passenger.

“How far back do your ticket barrier records go?” he then asked thoughtfully.

“Six months I think, why?” Derek asked.

“Could I take a shuftly at them do you think?” Tarbett inquired.

“Yeah, sure” Derek agreed, “Come through to the office, I’ll even stick the kettle on.”

-----

“Divisional Commander Jennifer Caverner to see your Chief” Jennifer introduced herself to the Receptionist upon arriving in the entrance of the Holborn offices.

“I’ll let him know you are here Ma’am” the Receptionist confirmed, picking up the telephone.

Everyone in the office was busy to the extent that when the telephone rang, Jack went across to answer it.

“Investigation Room” Jack called, “Oh, hello Bill” he then responded on hearing Tarbett on the other end of the line, “Where are you?”

“Chancery Lane Sir” Tarbett confirmed as he looked up through the two way glass window that looked out from the Station Control Room towards the main ticket barriers, “It’s probably nothing but I wanted to check something.”

“Believe me, I am ready to clutch every straw going no matter how desperate” Jack confirmed “What have you got?”

“For the last five months, the passenger numbers passing through the ticket barriers have not added up” Tarbett explained, “Loads of people going in and out but way in excess of the numbers who actually get on or off the train, it is like they come into the station, go through the barriers and then disappear into thin air.”

“Okay, I’m intrigued” Jack replied.

“I took a look at the ticket barrier records and one code that comes up repeatedly is sixty six but I cannot recall that one being on the list” Tarbett then remarked.

“Sixty six?” Jack responded.

“Yes, that’s the one” Tarbett confirmed, “Seems to be a lot of them in bunches on a regular basis.”

“Ryan, can you pass me that green folder over on the shelf there” Jack then called to Russell who duly reached for it.

“Here you go Guv” Russell confirmed, handing it over.

“Cheers” Jack responded as he took the folder, placed it on the table and then opened it before scanning down the pages inside.

“Right...” Jack called, “We have got a sixty five which is ticket entry time limit exceeded and a sixty seven which is payment card declined error but no sixty six on the list.”

“That’s odd Sir” Tarbett remarked “because there are an average of a hundred pass in and out hits on code 66 according to the computer logs here.”

“It could be worth a look, it could be nothing” Jack pondered the options for a moment, “I’ll tell you what, let’s run with it and see where it leads” he then declared “Bill, I am going to send a couple of covert surveillance guys over to you, I want you to find a nice cosy spot where you won’t be seen and watch what is going on, maybe try and identify one of the Code Sixty Sixer’s and see where they go?”

“You got it Sir” Tarbett confirmed.

“I’ll try and pop over later but as you can imagine all hell is breaking loose at the moment” Jack then admitted.

“Not a problem Sir” Tarbett agreed “I’ll see you later.”

No sooner than Jack had put the telephone down than it rang again.

“Investigation Room, Divisional Commander” Jack responded once more.

“Oh right, yes” Jack then replied, “I’ll be right down” he confirmed.

“You off Sir?” Eislely asked as he saw Jack grab his uniform overcoat and put it on.

“Yes, hold the fort whilst I am gone will you?” Jack then requested, “I am just popping down the The Yard.”

“But Sir?” Eislely responded “Isn’t it surrounded by bad guys?” he then pointed out.

“Just a minor technical detail Mos” Jack replied with a knowing wink before leaving.

Down in Reception, Jennifer looked up when she heard the ping of the elevator arriving followed by Jack appearing.

“Good evening Divisional Commander” Jennifer formally called, “What can I do for you?”

“I have a plan” Jack announced, “We can talk on the way.”

“Err, right...” Jennifer responded, “The car’s outside.”

“Lovely” Jack responded as they both proceeded towards the exit.

“Thank you for arresting my husband by the way” Jennifer jokingly remarked as they reached the car and got in, “I actually got a decent nights kip for the first time in ages.”

“He snores?” Jack suggested as he fastened his seat belt on the passenger side.

“Like the fog horn on the Queen Mary” Jennifer admitted as she started the engine, “So, where to?” she then asked.

“Southwark tube station” Jack confirmed, “I need to sneak in undetected and you need to come with me.”

-----

“Here we are” Pointer declared as they reached a non descript door in the curved side street a short walk from Monument Station where they had emerged into the early evening gloom a few minutes earlier.

“Erm, where is here?” Brent asked as she looked around with an understandably confused expression.

“Allow me” Pointer confirmed as he took out a key and put it in the lock of the anonymous door, turning it and then opening it to reveal a lift car inside.

“Well, I wasn't expecting that” Brent remarked as she peered inside before Pointer took her hand and escorted her in.

Using his key, Pointer activated the lift whereupon the doors closed and it began to descend.

“There is one thing I ought to mention about where we are going” Pointer then ominously warned, “Your name is not on the list as it were...”

“Huh?” Brent replied as the lift slowed to a stop and then the doors opened.

“Drop your weapons, hands up!!” came the sudden shout from the four armed officers waiting for the lift to arrive.

“Yikes!” Brent responded, immediately putting her hands up.

“It's okay, she is with me” Pointer quickly confirmed which was when the armed officers slowly lowered their weapons and their commanding officer came through.

“Brent?” came the response.

“Commander Monroe?” Brent responded, equally surprised.

“It's okay” Monroe then confirmed to his officers, “Stand down, I'll take it from here.”

“I take it you two know each other?” Pointer asked.

“Commander Monroe was my Guvnor over at West End Central until he disappeared a while back” Brent explained.

“I got a better offer Lieutenant” Monroe honestly admitted “As Operations Commander here, may I formally welcome you to X-Ray Division.”

“X-Ray Division?” Brent responded, still clearly confused, “I thought that was a myth, an old wives tale?”

“That's what we like people to think” Monroe explained, “Keeps people from poking about where we don't want them to.”

“We just came from New Scotland Yard, it seems that there is a bit of a problem”

Brent remarked.

“That's putting it mildly” Monroe remarked, “Come through, we should talk.”

Brent and Pointer followed Monroe through to the main briefing room where there was a hive of activity going on.

“Nice setup” Brent remarked, “You could run the entire Metropolitan Division from here I reckon..”

“We virtually are” Monroe admitted, “New Scotland Yard has been virtually cut off both physically and electronically so it has fallen to the Borough Commander's at the various stations to co-ordinate the efforts off grid as best they can whilst we are feeding them what information we have by any means necessary.”

“Anything we can do?” Pointer asked.

“At the moment, I think we have got things covered” Monroe confirmed, “But you are both welcome to stay, its a safe haven here and I know you two have had a busy day, you probably need the rest.”

“There is something though, it's probably nothing, mere coincidence” Brent then remarked, “If possible, I would like to bring it to the attention of a full briefing of everyone involved?”

“Okay” Monroe readily agreed, clearly thinking carefully, “It will probably take an hour or so to set up so if you want to rest for now?”

“It's err, been quite a tiring day” Brent admitted with a wry smile which caused Monroe to do a double take at the couple which was when he smiled when he realised what was going on.

“All right...” Monroe then responded, “There are some sleeping quarters down the back, the Duty Officer will fix you up with some refreshments and a change of clothes.”

“Thank you Sir” Brent responded whilst Pointer also nodded in thanks.

“I presume it will be a room for two?” Monroe then remarked with a knowing smile.

-----

Grey was resting when there was a polite knock at the door whereupon Orbison entered.

“Good evening” Grey responded, “I was just reading your book, you have quite a talent for writing, I am surprised, even if the subject matter isn't really my cup of tea.”

“Why, thank you” Orbison replied, quite flattered.

“So, to what do I owe the pleasure of your presence?” Grey then asked.

“Get your glad rags on my dear” Orbison gleefully declared, “we are going out!”

“Oh?” Grey was surprised, since she had been brought to the Ixion Brotherhood Citadel, despite being well treated, she had been resigned to being incarcerated there indefinitely.

“The Revolution is here, and it is time to announce our presence” Orbison called with glee, “and you are invited.”

“I'm honoured...” Grey responded with some uncertainty, “I'll just grab my coat...”

Orbison looked on as Grey picked up her jacket and her handbag before he showed her through the door.

As she was escorted through the Citadel complex, Grey noted that there was considerable activity, far more than usual with Facilitators and Followers including some in a form of military dress all seemingly busy, carrying and loading materials and equipment into a number of waiting black vans parked in the loading bay area.

“Moving out?” Grey asked.

“Indeed...” Orbison confirmed with a knowing smile, “A new chapter is about to begin...”

“Don't tell me there is another book on the way?” Grey suggested.

“Maybe my dear, maybe...” Orbison agreed.

Parked in the loading bay past the row of black vans was Orbison's personal car, a vintage stretched Mercedes in dark blue with gleaming chrome trim.

“Nice motor...” Grey complimented as the rear door of the car was opened for her and she was shown inside before Orbison joined her on the other side.

“It's a step up from my old VW microbus I admit” Orbison agreed as he indicated to his driver to proceed.

A few moments later, the car exited out into the street, two of the dozen or so black vans following behind in close escort.

Grey watched out of the window as they headed in towards the centre of the city.

“Ah, here they are...” Orbison remarked as they approached one of the first military checkpoints on the way into central London where Grey expected the officers on patrol to stop the car, instead they were waved through without obstruction or delay.

“Err...” Grey remarked, somewhat bemused.

As Orbison's car passed the groups of military personnel, Grey looked on in shock as they started cheering and shouting.

“Behold my dear” Orbison called as he lowered the window and waved in response, “Cast your eyes upon the Soldiers of Ixion, the largest private army in Europe and...”

“...right under our noses the whole bloody time” Grey regretfully concluded.

“It's taken years of careful planning, carefully coordinated infiltration and the application of superior intellect” Orbison proudly announced, “The Revolution is well and truly here, just a little housekeeping to take care of first...”

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“Commander Tarbett?” called a voice around the doorframe of Chancery Lane Underground Station Control Room.

“Yes, that's me” Tarbett confirmed.

“Divisional Commander Cassini, Commander Iggy” he duly introduced himself and his deputy, “Sneaky surveillance specialists.”

“Good to see you” Tarbett responded “Have you been briefed?” he then asked.

“Just that you need some discrete surveillance doing” Cassini confirmed.

“It's a bit of an odd one” Tarbett admitted, scratching his head, “What I need to know is where certain people disappear to when they pass through the ticket barriers.”

“I presume the answer 'get on a train' doesn't fit?” Cassini asked.

“Apparently not” Tarbett explained “All we know is that we think a considerable number of people pass through the ticket barriers here on an apparently non-existent code and then disappear into thin air and vice versa.”

“Okay, I think my man here and I can handle that” Cassini confirmed “Iggy, let's find a nice discrete spot near the ticket barriers and see who turns up.”

“Right Guv” Iggy confirmed, “Over there looks good” he indicated ahead through the window.

“I can monitor the ticket barrier codes as they flash up in here” Tarbett confirmed, “As soon as we get one, I'll give you the nod.”

“Sounds like a plan” Cassini agreed “Okay Iggy, let's roll.”

Cassini and Iggy moved discretely through the ticket hall, blending in well.

Tarbett meanwhile remained in the Station Control Room, not taking his eyes off the ticket barrier status screen in front of him.

“Knowing my luck, nobody will turn up now” Tarbett remarked.

His theory was starting to look like it was coming true after almost thirty minutes had passed when suddenly he noticed the code 66 appear.

“Cassini” Tarbett quickly called into his radio “Barrier number fifty four now.”

“Iggy” Cassini called over his earpiece radio.

“Got her boss” Iggy confirmed as he moved off and proceeded to follow.

“What have we got?” Tarbett asked.

“IC1 female, mid twenties, short dark hair, wearing a yellow top, pale cream coat and black trousers and carrying a brown attaché case” Cassini confirmed.

“Target confirmed” Iggy replied, “She is taking the first down escalator now.”

“Got her on the CCTV” Tarbett called.

“Turning left at the mid escalator landing” Cassini then called.

“Looks like she is heading for the eastbound platform” Iggy confirmed.

“All nice and ordinary so far” Tarbett commented.

“Target is right onto eastbound platform and continuing along it” Iggy called.

“There she goes” Tarbett continued to monitor the eastbound platform CCTV where the woman could just about be seen making her way among the crowds of waiting passengers.

“Hang on, I have lost eyeball” Iggy the called.

“I got her” Cassini then confirmed, “She has just ducked into a side passage off the platform.”

“Where the hell is she going?” Tarbett remarked.

“Perhaps she wanted to go west instead” Cassini suggested.

At that point Cassini and Iggy met up.

“You take that passage; I’ll take this one” Cassini instructed whereupon Iggy nodded, and they headed off.

“What’s happening guys?” Tarbett asked over the radio.

“This passage is a dead-end Guv” Iggy then called.



“Tarbett, can you see her anywhere on the CCTV?” Cassini then called as he walked briskly down the passageway he was following.

Tarbett, with the help of the Station Supervisor quickly flicked through the camera views but were unable to locate the target anywhere.

“That’s a negative” Tarbett then confirmed “She has vanished.”

By this point Cassini had been re-joined by Iggy and they followed the passageway left around a corner, down some stairs and along another long tubular corridor until they emerged on to the westbound platform.

“Impressive little disappearing act” Iggy remarked.

“Yeah, she seems to have disappeared somewhere between the entrance to the passageways and here” he indicated the westbound platform in front of them just as a Central Line train arrived.

“Try again boss?” Iggy then suggested.

“Yeah, might as well” Cassini agreed, “This time though, I want you to hang around by the passageway entrances on the eastbound platform, I’ll follow the next target down from upstairs.”

“You got it boss” Iggy confirmed and headed back up the passageway whilst Cassini headed for the lower escalator concourse to make his way back up to the ticket hall.

“Guys, we got another one” Tarbett then suddenly called as Cassini was reaching the top of the lower escalators.

“Talk to me” Cassini called over the radio.

“IC1 male, about six foot, blue overcoat, red briefcase, just heading down the upper escalators now” Tarbett confirmed from the CCTV screens.

“I am approaching the mid escalator landing now” Cassini responded as he stepped off the top of the lower escalator and walked forward to look up the upper escalators at the people heading down towards him, “Got him” he then called.

“I am in position on the eastbound platform” Iggy then confirmed,

“Stay put” Cassini then discreetly confirmed as he proceeded to walk closely behind the new target as he stepped off the upper escalator and like the last one, turned to his left to head towards the eastbound platform again, “Rolling to you now.”

The second target never noticed Cassini following him as he walked briskly and business like along the eastbound platform towards the passageway entrances where Iggy was waiting, blending into the background reading a newspaper.

At the passageway entrances, Cassini strolled on past, handing off the tailing to Iggy who calmly folded his newspaper and turned on his heels to follow the second target closely.

As the two men proceeded up the passageway, Cassini quickly double backed and joined them a short distance behind, all whilst being monitored by Tarbett on the station CCTV screens.

The passageway proceeded for a short distance before turning sharply to the left and as the target with Iggy right behind him approached it, Tarbett realised that there was no CCTV coverage of that spot.

“Keep close guys” Tarbett advised over the radio, your target is about to disappear from camera view.

“Target stopped at dog leg in passageway” Iggy called as he continued past allowing Cassini to get a good look at what the target was doing.

“Looks like the target is fiddling with something” Cassini called, “What the hell?” he was then heard to say over the radio.

“Talk to me guys” Tarbett called, a tone of concern apparent.

“Target just entered some sort of doorway” Cassini explained, “There seems to be some kind of secret entrance down here.”

By this point Iggy had double backed himself and re-joined his superior officer at the point where the target had disappeared.

“I don't see any door boss” Iggy commented as they both looked at the tiled wall in front of them.

“It's well hidden” Cassini explained, “Look carefully; you can see a little accumulation of dust in the tiny crack around its outer edge.”

“Oh yes...” Iggy agreed.

“Well, wherever our Code 66 people are going, it's behind this wall” Cassini concluded.

“Thanks guys” Tarbett called, “I'll let the boss know.”

“We'll hang around down here in case anyone else shows up” Cassini then confirmed.

“Appreciate it” Tarbett responded before picking up the landline telephone on the desk in front of him and dialling a number, “Divisional Commander Regent please, urgent” he then called.

Jack was just about to get out of Jennifer's car around the corner from Southwark Underground Station when the satellite telephone he was carrying began to ring.

“Regent” Jack called as he and Jennifer proceeded around to the main entrance to the Underground station, “Oh, hello Mos, what have you got?” he then asked.

“I have Tarbett on the line” Easley confirmed from the Holborn Control Room, “I think he and Divisional Commander Cassini have found something interesting at Chancery Lane.”

“Can you patch them through?” Jack then asked.

“Putting the secure link in now” Easley responded, “Okay Sir, you are on the air.”

“Bill, it’s Jack” he then called, “What have you got?”

“Cassini and his deputy managed to track one of the Code 66's through the Station” Tarbett confirmed “The individual vanished behind a hidden door in a passageway between the two platform levels.”

“Bingo...” Jack responded.

“In the last couple of minutes since that first confirmed contact, we have noted half a dozen others coming and going from the same location, all with Code Sixty Six on their travel passes when they pass through the barriers either going in or out” Tarbett then added.

“I wonder...” Jack began to consider a thought.

“Err Jack, I think we had better make a move” Jennifer then suggested, nodding towards some military personnel who could be seen in the distance.

“Ah...” Jack agreed before returning to the telephone “Bill” he then called “Get Cassini to round up as many of his team as he can and get an air tight lid on the station” he ordered, “As soon as I have dealt with the first couple of items on my long list of problems, I shall get over there and see what is going on.”

“Right you are Sir” Tarbett confirmed before hanging up.

“The list of jobs I need to attend to seems to be getting longer by the minute” Jack admitted as he and Jennifer headed inside the Underground Station.

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“It's probably coincidence” Brent began to explain as she paced nervously around the main meeting room of the X-Ray Division Operations Centre deep in the heart of the former King William Street station, “as I was saying to Gareth earlier, there are a number of names that have come to the attention of us in various roles, all of which have a rather obscure connection.”

“I'm intrigued” Commander Monroe remarked as he dished out some coffee all around the room.

“Admittedly, unless you studied political history at University” Brent continued “You would probably would not have noticed it, however what you have here” she indicated the piece of paper in her hand “are the names of several members of a conspiracy that occurred in the early 19th century, the Cato Conspiracy.”

“Cato...” Fuller commented.

“Ah...” Sir Richard remarked.

“So called because the conspirators met in a place in Cato Street, not far from King's Cross” Brent continued, “Their plan was to depose the Government by launching a military raid on a full meeting of the Cabinet, arrest and execute them before putting their severed heads on pikes outside the Houses of Parliament.”

“Now that sounds like fun” Sir Richard remarked.

“However, before the conspirators were able to act, one of their number turned supposedly turned traitor, doxed them in and they were arrested” Brent explained.

“So, are you saying that these names we have come across could be deliberately chosen aliases?” Monroe asked.

“It is a definite possibility” Brent agreed.

“The question is, do we have a modern day Cato Conspiracy on the plot?” Fuller asked.

“Why not?” Monroe responded, “The Government is in disarray, faith in authority is at an all-time low, the lunatics are taking over the asylum and The Committee has effectively taken over control.”

“Perhaps it is The Committee?” Sir Richard tentatively suggested “They have all but taken over anyway; the Prime Minister was effectively neutered and then pulled from office, so the only thing that really stands between them and ultimate power is the Cabinet and the new Prime Minister.”

“I have just had a nasty thought...” Monroe responded.

“Yeah...” Brent agreed “So have I...”

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“So, let me get this right, we have no way of communicating with anyone outside of this building other than by radios that are being listened to, waving flags out of the window or issuing smoke signals up on the roof?” Tracy asked the officers she had gathered in the Situation Room on the top floor.

“I am afraid not” one of the officers present in the room confirmed, “We do have sketchy reports via the BBC that Borough Commander’s are holding the fort out in

the field as it were but are coming up against strong opposition in the central London area from Colonel Ings thugs.”

“All right, find me a way to communicate securely with the outside world, get inventive” Tracy then urged.

“Yes Ma’am” the various attendees of the meeting confirmed.

“All right, dismissed” Tracy then declared whereupon they all got up and proceeded to file out of the room.

Tracy looked out of the window which looked down onto The Embankment and the River Thames in front of it and let out a slightly depressed sigh as she saw yet more military personnel arrive and reinforce the secure zone.

“We need a miracle...” Tracy remarked to herself before she too left the room.

Outside in the corridor she was just making her way back to her office when the lift doors opened whereupon Tracy did a bit of a double take on seeing her twin sister Jennifer emerge swiftly followed by Jack.

“Hello Sis!” Jennifer called with a big smile at seeing her identical twin sister again.

“Hi!” Tracy responded in kind before something suddenly occurred to her, “Hang on a minute, how did you two get in here?” she then asked.

“Tradesman’s entrance in the basement” Jack explained, “Didn’t you know about it?”

“Err, no” Tracy was forced to admit “but then again, I am the boss and the last person to find out about anything around here...”

“I bring an idea and a gift” Jack then declared, handing over the case in his hand, “One satellite phone, a bit old age in terms of tech but completely outside any systems the bozos outside and their puppet masters may be tapped into.”

“Brilliant” Tracy responded, clearly delighted at the first bit of good fortune she had received in what seemed to her like ages.

“With that, you have a direct, secure and unmonitored link to the control rooms at both King William Street and Holborn from where you can be connected through to the Borough Commander’s, the Prime Minister, hell even the Queen if you wish” Jack explained.

“Let’s not wake Her Majesty up” Tracy wisely suggested.

“Probably for the best” Jennifer agreed.

“Now, we need to get you out of here” Jack then declared.

“The old tried and tested Caverner Twins Two Step by any chance?” Tracy asked.

“Exactly” Jennifer duly confirmed.

“All right” Tracy slightly reluctantly agreed, “Here Sis, you had better take this” she duly handed across her identification, “This is just in case they can electronically scan the building, as long as this is here, they will think I am still inside.”

“Here’s mine” Jennifer duly swapped the identifications over, “Any instructions?” she then asked.

“Look forlornly out of the window in my office every so often, don’t eat all the biscuits and if that cow Burgette happens to pop by, be as rude, undiplomatic and officious as you can” Tracy duly instructed.

“I think I can manage that Sis” Jennifer confirmed with a smirk, “You two had best get going” she then strongly suggested.

“Thanks Sis” Tracy then responded as she and Jennifer embraced briefly, “I’ll see you when this is all over, I hope.”

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Twenty minutes later Jack and Tracy emerged from the main entrance of Southwark Underground Station and made directly for Jennifer’s car still parked around the corner in a side street.

“Hopefully we can get over to King William Street without being noticed” Jack commented as he got in the drivers seat and started the car whilst Tracy joined him alongside.

“I just hope that nobody on either side does anything rash until at least tomorrow morning” Tracy remarked as they headed off.

“The way things are going, I somehow doubt our luck will hold out that much” Jack admitted.

“I need to make a lot of telephone calls I reckon” Tracy then casually remarked which resulted in Jack suddenly staring ahead in realisation and slamming the brakes on hard.

“That’s it!” Jack declared.

“Err, that’s what?” Tracy asked, completely confused.

“We need to take a slight detour on the way” Jack then explained as he resumed their journey, “via Chancery Lane.”

“Chancery Lane?” Tracy asked.

“Commander Tarbett has discovered a large number of people have been passing

through the station without actually getting on or off a train” Jack explained, “All of them have flashed up the apparently non-existent gate access code sixty six on the ticket barriers and when Cassini and Iggy tried to follow one of them, they disappeared through a hidden door in the lower platform levels.”

“How do telephones feature in this conclusion of yours?” Tracy then asked, still not entirely clear where this was going.

“If I am right” Jack concluded “then we may have found the underground home of The Committee, the old Kingsway Telephone Exchange...”

“The what?” Tracy responded, still none the wiser.

“During the cold war, a large network of deep tunnels was built beneath High Holborn in the vicinity of Chancery Lane tube station” Jack went on to explain, “it was a supposedly nuclear proof facility that provided the communications for London in the event of a nuclear war.”

“Good place for a hideout” Tracy agreed.

“It was supposedly all but mothballed decades ago” Jack continued “I guess someone decided to move in.”

“Right, let’s go pay them a visit” Tracy agreed, “I have a few bones to pick with The Committee...”

“You and me both...” Jack confirmed.

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“That’s thirty six in and twenty three out since we got here” Tarbett totalled the numbers written in his official Security Service issue pocket book, “There must be one heck of a party behind that door.”

“All the people Iggy and I have observed have been well dressed, neatly presented” Cassini remarked “Many carrying briefcases or other smart business like baggage.”

“Evening” Jack called as he entered the Station Control Room, “How are we doing?” he asked.

“We definitely have something going on here Sir” Tarbett confirmed, showing Jack the numbers in his pocketbook to which Cassini discreetly leant over and added another one to the count.

“Crikey...” Jack responded, “I think we definitely need to take a look down there.”

“What is down there Sir?” Tarbett then asked, sensing that Jack already knew something.

“If I am right, the old Kingsway Telephone Exchange complex is down there” Jack

explained, “Bomb proof, spacious, well connected and most importantly, turn key vacant possession as an estate agent would say.”

“So, what are we going to do Sir?” Tarbett then asked.

“We can't just waltz in there” Jack concluded “Not with just the five of us.”

“Err, five?” Cassini asked.

“The Chief Superintendent is waiting outside in the car” Jack explained “I am sure she would be happy to help if it kicks off, but we need more bodies and try and work out where the various different entrances could be to this place, there must be half a dozen at least.”

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Tracy was sitting quietly in the car parked in a side street, reading the Evening Standard when she heard a number of heavy vehicles approaching.

“Hello...” Tracy remarked to herself, lowering the newspaper and squinting a little to try and see what was going on in the failing light of early evening.

Ahead at the far end of the street, a large classic Mercedes stretched limousine and three dark grey vans were approaching and then slowing to a stop a short distance away. Tracy's car being unmarked meant she went unobserved, so she slunk a little lower in her seat to ensure she remained hidden.

“Well, well, well...” Tracy then remarked as she recognised Orbison and Grey as they emerged from the back of the limousine and proceed towards an innocuous looking doorway, “Look what the cat has dragged in...”

Then a few moments later the doors of the three vans opened and a significant number of armed men appeared

“Oh dear...” Tracy then responded before reaching for the satellite phone and discreetly starting it up.

A few moments later the satellite phone that Jack was carrying in his pocket began to vibrate which caused him to withdraw to the opposite corner of the Chancery Lane Station Control Room to answer it.

“Hello?” he called.

“I don't want to be the bearer of bad news” Tracy quietly called “but I think we have company.”

“Erm, what sort of company?” Jack asked with obvious concern.

“Three van loads of armed Ixion Brotherhood goons, the main man himself and Jayne



Grey are heading into a building just in front of me in Furnival Street” Tracy explained.

“Furnival Street...” Jack thought for a few moments...

“Any ideas?” Tracy asked, “Only with three dozen of them and just one of me, I think I am a tad outnumbered.”

“What the hell...?” Tarbett suddenly exclaimed as loud screams began to come from down in the lower platform levels

“Lima Tango One to Control” Jack called over his radio with extreme urgency “All available units, we have a major incident in progress at Chancery Lane Underground Station, possible armed suspects on the premises.”

“Christ...” Cassini exclaimed as suddenly people began to appear at the top of the upper escalators, running, screaming and in a panic to get out of the station as fast as possible.

“I thought so” Jack declared as he checked his mobile, “Furnival Street is a back entrance to the old Kingsway Telephone Exchange.”

“Ah...” Tarbett responded.

“Come on” Jack then called as he drew his firearm and checked it “Let's see what's going on.”

Below ground, there was mass panic amongst the people who were in the lower levels as the various passageways were suddenly flooded with armed Soldiers of Ixion who randomly opened fire in order to scare people and quickly secure control of the underground complex.

Some however did manage to escape through the doorway and into the lower level passageways of Chancery Lane station.

“Ah, such efficiency” Orbison remarked as he followed the Soldiers of Ixion through the complex, rubbing his hands with glee.

“You're enjoying this, aren't you?” Grey remarked as she followed along behind, escorted by two Ixion Brotherhood Guards to ensure she did not take the opportunity during the ongoing incident to escape.

“Absolutely my dear” Orbison called as Colonel Ings came up to them and saluted.

“Brother Ings, report” Orbison then prompted.

“The complex is secure My Lord” Ings reverently confirmed, “A few of the personnel on the premises did escape via the station exit when we arrived but everyone important is still contained in the main committee room.”

“Excellent” Orbison responded, “In which case it is time to make my presence felt” he then declared “Fetch the special package” he instructed with a knowing grin.

“By your command...” Ings bowed in respect before leaving.

“Come my dear” Orbison then called to Grey, offering to take her arm in his “It is time to get this party started.”

Grey and the two guards followed Orbison as in the opposite direction; various personnel from the complex were being taken away by the Soldiers of Ixion.

Soon they arrived at the far end of the network of tunnels where the doors to the main committee room crossed the entire width of the tunnel, still firmly closed and with two guards on duty either side.

“My Brothers, let us pass...” Orbison then instructed whereupon both guards bowed reverently and stepped aside.

“I hope you have a very good explanation my friend” Taylor called as he looked up when Orbison entered the room.

“Consider this...” Orbison began to explain, “For what, seven, eight years now you and I have worked together to change the world and we have done remarkably, don't you think?”

“Indeed” Taylor agreed.

“Your group here, The Committee, the Cato Group have worked wonders and achieved so much” Orbison continued “and we, the Brotherhood have supported you all the way...”

“Indeed, you have” Taylor agreed, with accompanying nods from the other members of The Committee and murmurs.

“...and yet I was thinking about a conversation I had with someone some years ago now” Orbison continued “It was a thoughtful few minutes but the words were prophetic, soul stirring, more so when you consider the circumstances of the person with whom I found myself so unexpectedly in conversation.”

“Very poetic” Taylor responded, “I take it these ramblings of yours are getting to a point at some point or other?”

“Indeed” Orbison enthusiastically confirmed, “The essence of that revelation was that what should happen when the music stops, who would be without a chair” he then explained, “and in all the time that we have had our special relationship, it has always been that you were the one playing the music whilst I and my Brothers danced to the tune.”

“Such a beautiful dance to a perfect tune....” Taylor admirably remarked.

“But now the time has come to change the record” Orbison then called, “You see what you fail to realise my old friend is that all this time you have been in charge or rather, that is what I have been very happy to let you think, in fact I have been running the whole thing, all in front of you in plain sight and you have beautifully played along.”

“So, what happens now....?” Taylor then asked.

“Time for a little revolution” Orbison responded with a very big smirk before proceeding to call into an earpiece radio, “Brother Ing's, send in the package...”

“Package?” Taylor asked.

“A little farewell gift, courtesy of the Brotherhood” Orbison declared as the doors opened again and a figure dressed in a black cloak silently entered.

“Wait...” Taylor then called, “What is this?”

“A moment of pure perfection” Orbison responded “To Life Immortal...” he then called before turning smartly on his heels and proceeding past the hooded figure and out of the room, laughing manically.

The doors were duly closed, leaving Taylor and The Committee alone in the room with the silent hooded figure who then removed his cloak to reveal it to be Delfont, producing his two swords and brandishing them with a menacing evil smile.

Outside, with the doors closed, Orbison stood silently whilst Grey looked on with concern as muffled noises could be heard from behind the supposedly sound proof doors, giving a little indication of what was going on inside.

“What happened to the Committee?” Grey asked as the noises just about audible from inside began to subside in intensity.

“The Committee has been adjourned...” Orbison explained with a very satisfied looking smirk as the doors opened once again and Delfont emerged, the two swords dripping with blood and an evil grin readily apparent, “...permanently” he then concluded.

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“No, it's no good” Jack gave up and stepped back from the hidden door in the lower levels of Chancery Lane Station, “It's sealed from the other side, it won't budge.”

“Lima Tango One from Alpha One” Tracy was heard to call over the satellite phone link “The guests are leaving and...”

“Alpha One?” Jack responded after a few moments of worrying silence from Tracy.

“Sorry...” Tracy was then heard to whisper, “I have just seen our friend the Invisible Man being escorted back into one of the vehicles.”

“Sit tight Ma'am” Jack then called, “We are rolling to you.”

Tracy discreetly watched as Orbison, Gray and the Ixion Soldiers loaded up back into their vehicles before speeding away, leaving just a single military specification Land Rover parked nearby.

“Well, I'll be damned...” Tracy quietly exclaimed as she saw a final individual emerge from the doorway and approach the Land Rover.

That individual was Colonel Ings who was the last to leave the premises having ensured that all of his personnel were out and the location secure.

As Ings opened the door of his Land Rover, he stopped in his tracks when he heard his name being called.

“INGS!” Tracy shouted, her voice echoing around the otherwise deserted side street whereupon he looked around to see her standing there in the middle of the street, the streetlight above her shining down directly upon her.

“Well, what do you know...” Ings responded with a smirk, “Queen Bitch herself!”

“You're nicked!” Tracy responded.

“Oh?” Ings laughed in response, “You have a very strange sense of humour, Chief Superintendent.”

“Okay, how about we dispense with the formalities, shall we?” Tracy then suggested.

A short distance away, Jack, Tarbett, Cassini and Iggy were emerging out of the exit from Chancery Lane Station when two gunshots rang out.

“Where did that come from?” Jack quickly asked as they all looked around, the echoing of the gunshots through the streets meaning its specific source was difficult to identify.

“That way I think” Cassini confirmed, pointing to a side street nearby.

“Come on” Jack then urged as they quickly ran off towards Furnival Street.

A few moments later they turned off the main road into Furnival Street and discovered Tracy standing there, gun drawn and pointed directly at Ings who was on the ground, clasp his leg and seething in anger.

“You shot me, you bitch!” Ings angrily protested.

“Oh don't be such a wuss!” Tracy dismissively responded “It was a warning shot,

barely grazed you” she informed him.

“I am sure you have had worse” Jack casually pointed out as he and Tarbett helped Ings to his feet, disarmed him and then handcuffed his hands behind his back, “and if you haven't, I am sure we would be happy to arrange it.”

“You can always take it up with The Committee if you want” Tracy tersely added but then looked on with a sense of confusion when Ings started laughing in response.

“That may be a little difficult...” Ings smirked, “Well, unless you have got a Ouija board handy...”

At that point, backup in the form of two Metropolitan Division patrol cars and a van arrived on the scene and Tarbett proceeded to direct operations.

“Take this idiot away” Tracy instructed whereupon Jack and Tarbett handed over custody of Ings to the arriving officers “and this time, don't let anyone con us into letting him out again!”

“Yes Ma'am the two officers confirmed before unceremoniously bundling Ings into the back of the waiting van.

“These look familiar” Jack remarked as he examined the firearms he had taken from Ings when he was arrested, “Top of the line South African made hardware.”

“What an amazing coincidence...” Tracy responded with more than a hint of sarcasm.

“Where did Ings and his motley crew go in and out of?” Jack then asked, looking around.

“That door there” Tracy indicated ahead towards an old and very nondescript industrial looking doorway set in the front of a 1950's style utilitarian building that contrasted vividly with the modern buildings immediately adjacent and all around.

“Right, let's take a look” Jack then declared, “Bill” he then called to Tarbett, “Coordinate the scene up here, make sure nobody enters or leaves either this door or Chancery Lane Station without my say so.”

“You got it Guv” Tarbett immediately agreed.

“Right then” Jack turned back towards the doorway, “Let's see what secrets are hiding in here, shall we?”

“After you” Tracy agreed.

Jack tentatively pushed open the large heavy black metal door and discovered it was not secured, swinging open easily and allowing them to enter.

“Well, this place just screams 1960's Government facility, doesn't it?” Cassini remarked as they all looked around inside the doorway where an old freight elevator

was located.

“So, where do we go now?” Tracy then asked.

“Down I reckon...” Iggy remarked as they all stepped forward into the lift car before Tracy closed the diamond pattern gates and then pressed the only option on the control panel.

With a harsh mechanical sound, the lift began its descent to whatever was waiting for them in the lower level.

“What exactly is this place?” Cassini asked as the lift continued its gradual descent.

“The old Kingsway Telephone Exchange complex” Jack explained, “It was built in the 1950's as a communications hub as well as for certain other related functions, the idea being if the Cold War got too warm and London was hit, this place was sufficiently bomb proof to keep essential communications going.”

“Lovely...” Cassini responded.

“It was effectively redundant by the 1970's, used as a basic telephone exchange and training facility and then finally decommissioned in the late 1980's I think” Jack continued, “Supposedly it is meant to be vacant and mothballed.”

“Looks like someone else decided to take on the tenancy” Tracy concluded as the lift slowed to a stop and she proceeded to open the gate before they all stepped out into the lift landing passageway.

“The lights are on...” Cassini remarked as they all looked around the utilitarian tube shaped passageways.

“...but is anybody home?” Tracy then asked.

“I've got blood over here” Iggy then called from over to one side whereupon the others came over and looked down at where he was indicating on the floor.

“Seems to be a trail, leading that way” Cassini pointed off down one of the tube shaped passageways.

“Let's see where it leads” Tracy then suggested.

Cautiously they proceeded along the tunnel, following the distinctive trail of dripped blood until Jack stopped suddenly.

“Can you hear something?” he then asked.

“Yeah, something coming from behind this door” Cassini remarked as he put his ear to a door in the tube wall before trying the handle which was when he discovered it to be locked.

“Hello?” Tracy called, knocking on the door, “Is there anybody in there?”

The response was muffled panic sounds which was definitely cause for alarm.

“Stand away from the door!” Jack shouted through the door before barging hard up against it, which dislodged it a bit which resulted in him resorting to kicking the door in instead which saw it give way.

“Holy...” Tracy exclaimed as they looked inside to see over a dozen people sitting on the floor, all tied up and gagged.

“Calm down everyone, we are the good guys” Jack reassured them as he and Cassini began to carefully remove the gags.

“All right, who are you?” Tracy asked.

“Admin support” one of the women present responded, gasping for air having only just had her gag removed, “They came steaming through here like animals!”

“Who?” Jack asked.

“Men, armed, guns, knives...” another of the personnel in the room called, also clearly shocked.

“Then there was some General army guy...” the first woman recalled.

“Oh, we just nicked him” Tracy confirmed.

“...there was that tall guy who the soldier guy called My Lord, The Committee seemed to think he was some kind of high flying religious type” a third person in the room called.

“Orbison...” Jack concluded.

“And then there was the psycho in the cloak” the first woman then suddenly recalled.

“Erm, this guy?” Jack asked as he took out the photograph he still had inside his tunic pocket and showed it to them.

“Yeah, I think that is him” the second woman confirmed, a look of fear apparent on seeing the image, “Tall, black guy, looked like a one man killing machine.”

“That's him” Tracy concluded, “The Invisible Man...”

“...only not so invisible anymore it would seem” Cassini remarked.

“The Committee” Tracy then asked, “Where are they?”

“The main conference room, far end of this tunnel” one of the personnel confirmed.

“Just follow the blood trail” the first woman ominously suggested.

“Right...” Tracy responded with understandable hesitation as she foresaw that this was leading to a potentially very nasty discovery.

“Cassini, Iggy” Tracy then instructed, “Take care of these people, get them checked over, interviewed and secured.”

“Understood Ma’am” Cassini agreed whilst Iggy merely nodded respectfully.

“Right, let’s see what awaits us then” Tracy then declared.

It was not a difficult trail to follow, the dripping of blood had left a very clear path to follow through the complex of tunnels until Tracy and Jack reached the large doors that sealed the route ahead.

“So, who gets to open the door?” Jack asked.

“This is an underground facility attached to a tube station” Tracy mused, “I reckon it counts as Transport Division turf” she then concluded, “Sorry...” she then admitted on see Jack’s facial reaction to her conclusions.

“Oh boy...” Jack responded, drawing his firearm and preparing to open the door, “Here we go” he then called and pulled the door open.

“Oh my God...” Tracy exclaimed, putting her hand over her mouth and nose in response to the sight that was revealed before them.

“I don’t think God had anything whatsoever to do with this” Jack responded, struggling not to be sick at the sight of the massacre that had taken place in the room.

“The Committee I presume...” Tracy concluded as she tentatively stepped inside the room and made her way past the bloodied and battered dead bodies that were on the floor and slumped across the table where they had fallen when they were slain.

“I recognise the handy work that is for certain” Jack confirmed, “Definitely the Invisible Man’s trademark here.”

“Wait...” Tracy then called before taking out a torch and shining it over into the corner of the room, “What’s that?” she then asked.

“Got it” Jack confirmed as he headed over to the corner of the room where he found one man cowered in the corner, “Looks like we got a live one here.”

“A miracle or deliberately left alive to tell the tale I wonder?” Tracy mused as she and Jack helped the man up which revealed the sole survivor to be Taylor, clearly in a state of shock but otherwise unhurt.

“Come on fella” Jack called as he helped Taylor past the bodies and the blood and out of the door, “We’ve got you.”



Outside the Committee Room, Cassini came up to them just as Jack was setting Taylor down on a chair in the corridor.

“Trust me; you don’t want to go in there...” Tracy called, clearly feeling somewhat queasy at what she had witnessed in the room and wisely closing the door again.

“Err, right” Cassini responded.

“This one is going to need an ambulance I reckon” Jack confirmed, “Shock mostly I think.”

“The ones we found back there are all secured and on their way to Paddington Green nick Ma’am” Cassini confirmed, “No one is hurt other than a few bumps and bruises from where Ing’s thugs bundled them in there and tied them up.”

“What’s your name mate?” Jack asked to which Taylor mouthed something, but he was in such a state of deep shock that words simply could not come out of his mouth.

“According to this, his name is Malcolm Taylor” Tracy announced as she looked at the identification she had found in his suit pocket.

“Taylor?” Jack immediately responded.

“Yeah...” Tracy confirmed, handing the identification to Jack, “You know this guy?”

“In a manner of speaking” Jack admitted, “The name Taylor has come up in Appleby’s notes here and there, one of the Cato Group supposedly.”

“Right, I think we need to have a nice long chat you and I” Tracy remarked to which Taylor merely nodded in reluctant agreement, “Cassini?” she then called, “Get this guy checked over then once the Force Medical Examiner gives the green light, I want him in a secure interview room with at least a dozen heavily armed guards outside the door.”

“Got an address here” Jack confirmed as he checked through the wallet, “His place I presume?”

“Careful now” Tracy advised as Cassini and Iggy helped Taylor away.

“What are you thinking?” she then asked.

“Go and get a couple of my lads and give this guy’s drum a spin” Jack confirmed, “and quickly too before someone spirits away any evidence.”

“Good idea” Tracy agreed before taking the satellite phone and making a call, “X-Ray One to X-Ray Control” she then called, “The former Kingsway Telephone Exchange site beneath Chancery Lane Station, I need a full lockdown of the site and the best forensic team you can find to go through this place with a fine-tooth comb” she ordered.

“Understood Ma’am” Commander Monroe responded from the King William Street Control Centre.

“Co-ordinate our efforts with the Transport Division guys” Tracy then continued, “It seems someone has decided to cancel The Committee, and you had better alert Sir Richard Crowthorne, I think we will need his quizmaster skills.”

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“I hope you keep that guy on a tight leash...” Grey remarked as she and Orbison travelled through the City in his vintage Mercedes limousine.

“Oh, definitely” Orbison quickly agreed, “He’s quite a little firecracker when he gets going.”

“So, you’ve dispatched The Committee, taken over the armed forces, neutered the Government, deposed the Prime Minister and locked down most of Westminster” Grey then summarised, “What do you have planned for the encore?” she then asked.

“Oh, believe me my dear, I haven’t even begun yet” Orbison responded with a hearty chuckle, “There is still so much more to do before I can declare the Brotherhood as the ruling elite of a Conspiracy of Chaos!”

“Yeah...” Grey replied with a worried look out of the side window, “I had a feeling you were going to say something like that...”

A few minutes later at Orbison’s instruction, the car was pulled over on the Embankment in front of New Scotland Yard.

“What are we doing here?” Grey then asked.

“Got to pick someone up...” Orbison evasively explained, “She will be along in a minute.”

“Ma’am” Janice called over the telephone from the Reception Desk “You know who is at the door...”

“I’ll be right down” Jennifer confirmed before reaching for her twin sister’s uniform tunic and putting it on.

A few moments later Jennifer arrived in the Reception foyer where Janice indicated towards the main doors.

“Oh great...” Jennifer remarked on seeing Burgette standing on the other side of the glass doors with an armed soldier stood either side of her.

“What do you want?” Jennifer tersely called as soon as the doors were opened, and the two women met face to face.

“Just popped by to see how you were doing” Burgette mockingly responded, “After all, I am the Police & Crime Commissioner, don’t forget.”

“Chance would be a fine thing...” Jennifer remarked to herself, “If there is a point you would like to make, please cut to it as it is half three in the morning and I am more than slightly tired, pissed off and grumpy which I warn you, is not a good combination...”

“Very well Chief Superintendent” Burgette agreed “I just wanted to remind you that we have jurisdiction here and you need to repeat to your dedicated army of flat footed plod of these little facts of life and not to interfere with our operations or personnel.”

“Why don't you get back on your little tank and naff off?” Jennifer tersely responded.

“Oh, Chief Superintendent...” Burgette remarked, shaking her head with a knowing smirk, “You have no idea of the revolution that is rolling down the street two steps behind me, do you?”

“You can take your Revolution lady and shove it where the sun doesn't shine” Jennifer confirmed, “Good night!” she then angrily called before closing the door firmly and walking away.

Burgette looked on through the glass doors at Jennifer heading off into the distance inside.

“Where did you get that limp Chief Superintendent?” Burgette then wondered to herself before turning smartly on her feet and heading off back into the night with her two armed guards in close attendance.

A few moments later she duly got into Orbison’s limousine.

“Well, this is a turn up for the books” Grey remarked as Burgette settled herself down on the seat directly opposite and smiled knowingly, “I take it you two know each other?”

“Oh yes...” Orbison confirmed before he and Burgette promptly kissed as if to emphasise the point.

“Oh, please...” Grey responded with a sense of disgust.

“Drive on!” Orbison then called up to his driver which was when his limousine with the three vans in close formation immediately behind it moved off, soon reaching Parliament Square in the shadow of the derelict scaffolding clad edifice of the old Houses of Parliament.

“What the hell...?” Grey remarked when to her immense surprise, the convoy turned left and proceeded through the barbed wire clad wrought iron gates and onto the grounds of the Houses of Parliament itself.

“Welcome to the Ixion Brotherhood’s new home!” Orbison proudly declared as the car stopped by the main entrance, partially hidden behind tatty wooden boarding with faded signs warning all visitors to keep out and advising of the potentially dangerous nature of the structure.

“Err, I don’t understand” Grey responded as Orbison got out of the car and then escorted her out herself, “I thought this place was falling down?”

“It’s a bit of a doer upper I will admit” Orbison confirmed as his three van loads of military personnel disembarked from their own vehicles and joined the couple of hundred similarly dressed and armed men who were already on site, “however the reports of its dangerous physical state were suitably over exaggerated, just for us.”

“Whoa...” Grey exclaimed.

“What can I say?” Orbison then continued as he escorted Grey in through the main entrance doors accompanied by several Facilitators and aides, “The décor is a bit tatty I will admit and the damp downstairs has to be seen to be believed but the rent is cheap and the neighbours friendly, well, most of them...”

The interior of the building was far removed from its glory days of old which Grey could recall, the fixtures and fittings were broken or gutted altogether, parts of the structure were enclosed in numerous sections of scaffolding and discarded, or abandoned construction materials were to be found strewn about almost everywhere.

“And here we are!” Orbison then declared, throwing open a set of ornately carved wooden doors and proceeding inside the main parliamentary chamber, still just about recognisable despite years of abandonment and neglect, “Welcome to our House of Fun!!!”

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“What can you see Mos?” Jack asked as they drove through the streets of central London in the dead of night in the marked patrol car.

“Nothing...” Mos responded.

“Exactly” Jack confirmed, “The streets are empty...”

“Where have the military goons gone?” Commander Baxter remarked from the rear seat.

“A very good question” Jack agreed before checking his London A to Z atlas book “Take a left up here Mos” he then indicated.

Eisley duly turned off into a narrow cobbled back street before bringing the car to a stop outside a specific premises whereupon the three officers got out.

“I’ve seen this place before” Jack pondered as they looked up at the front of the building.

“So have I Sir” Eisley agreed before turning around to look at the building directly opposite, “The surveillance footage in Divisional Commander Appleby's archive, taken from that window up there looking directly across to this building here.”

“Good place for an obbo point” Baxter commented, “From up there you can probably watch the entire building, straight in the windows.”

“Come on, let's see what secrets this place contains” Jack then urged as they proceeded forward which was when he noticed a circular blue plaque mounted on the wall and he duly shone his torch up onto it.

'Cato Street Conspiracy, discovered here 23 February 1820' Eisley read from the plaque.

“Curiouser and curiouser...” Jack remarked as he then stepped forward and tried the door “Anyone good with locks?” he then asked.

“Just the old fashioned way Sir” Baxter responded.

“In which case, be my guest” Jack then indicated the door, stepping back.

With a swift kick from his size twelve boots, Baxter demolished the door, sending it crashing to the ground.

“Very nicely done” Jack complimented before, treading carefully over the wreckage, he led them inside.

“Not enthusiastic about the décor Sir” Eisley remarked as they looked around, “Bit to neo-classical for my tastes...”

“Has the wife got you redecorating by any chance?” Jack asked.

“Yeah...” Eisley reluctantly confirmed to a knowledgeable smirk from Jack and Baxter.

“All right then, let's get to work” Jack then declared, and they duly proceeded to conduct a careful room by room search of the building.

For the best part of twenty minutes, their systematic room by room search which began with the ground floor and worked upwards yielded nothing except empty rooms, all neatly maintained and cleaned but otherwise devoid of anything even approaching evidence.

“Ah, now we are getting somewhere” Jack then declared as they reached the top of the stairs which revealed to be much more of an inhabited area in the form of a luxuriously appointed apartment, expensive looking antique furniture complimented by a range of antique paintings hanging on the walls.

“Whoever this Taylor guy is, he must have some serious cash to splash about” Baxter

commented.

“Well, he did have cash to splash about until he forked out for this lot I reckon” Jack replied.

“What’s this through here?” Eisley then called, proceeding through a side door whereupon he found a study.

“The last refuge of the scoundrel?” Jack ventured.

“Likes his spirits, look at this lot Sir” Eisley remarked on seeing the very well stocked drinks cabinet containing many rare and high-quality spirits.

“I must ask Sir Richard if they share the same supplier” Jack suggested

“Nice classy headed notepaper, proper ink pen too, all very traditional” Baxter looked across the desk, neatly laid out in a kind of suspended animation awaiting the return of its owner.

“Nothing in the drawers” Eisley confirmed as he finished checking the desk thoroughly, “It’s clinical, clean, not so much as a shopping list, it doesn’t make sense.”

“Certainly not what you would expect in the office of the man planning world revolution” Jack agreed, “We are missing something here.”

Baxter looked around thoughtfully before heading back out of the study and then trying the next room along, stepping inside revealing it to be a cloakroom, just a few coats hanging up on the wall; it was then that something occurred to him which saw him return to the study.

“Something up?” Jack asked as he and Eisley watched Baxter thoughtfully looking at the walls of the study.

“Maybe...” Baxter pondered before leaving the study again which made Jack and Eisley look at each other with a rather bemused look.

A few moments later Baxter returned once more.

“Come on Bill, don’t leave us in suspense!” Jack urged.

“It’s probably nothing” Baxter began to explain, “My old man was an expert on historic buildings and some of it rubbed off I guess.”

“Right...” Jack responded.

“All the rooms are the same depth except for the one immediately next door to this one” Baxter continued to explain, “There is a space that I cannot account for.”

“Whereabouts?” Eisley asked.

“Window end of this wall here” Baxter indicated the main wall to their right which was completely covered with wooden bookshelves.

“Lots of nice leather bound volumes” Jack remarked as he ran his fingers across the rows of books only to suddenly stop when he realised something about a group of the books was slightly different.

“Something up Guv?” Eislely asked.

“Tell me Mos” Jack asked, “Are you a man of reading?”

“Not really Sir” Eislely admitted, “The wife is a Mills & Boon fan though...”

“Strewth...” Baxter responded.

“What about you, Sir?” Eislely asked.

“Subscription to Railway Modeller is my limit” Jack replied, “Our man Taylor though, I would be very surprised if he ever read these.”

“Why is that Sir?” Baxter asked.

“Open sesame...” Jack then declared as he pulled a block of four books back and it released a hidden door in front of him which he then duly pulled fully open.

“Oh, very clever” Eislely remarked as the three of them peered inside.

“Whoa...” Jack remarked as he led them into the room, “Now we are getting somewhere.”

“Wow...” Eislely exclaimed as they all looked at the desk and the huge cabinet containing dozens of files and folders, all neatly organised, indexed and labelled, presented in leather folders or drawers.

“Now we are getting somewhere” Jack agreed as he sat at the desk and surveyed the various meticulously handwritten labels on the files and drawers, it was then that he paused and reached forward for one file in particular.

“Oh look, he has got a file on me” Jack remarked as he took the folder and opened it, “Blimey, he is thorough, isn’t he?”

“Wait...” Baxter cautioned when he heard something, “Someone is coming.”

“Shut the door” Jack whispered as he drew his firearm in anticipation, and they quickly switched off the lights.

The stairs below them creaked as the mysterious visitor slowly approached from below.

“When he gets close, hit the lights” Jack whispered.

“Got it Guv” Eisley agreed.

The sound of footsteps got progressively closer until they reached the top floor where they were.

Suddenly the lights came on and the visitor found himself pinned to the floor, handcuffs being applied, and a gun pointed directly at his head.

“Whoa!” the stranger protested, “It's cool!”

“What the...?” Jack responded as he recognised the person detained as being Dent, “Chris? What the hell are you doing here?” he then asked.

“Funny, I was about to ask you guys the same question” Dent admitted as Jack holstered his firearm and they helped him back to his feet.

“Enlighten me” Jack then requested.

“When you picked up new friend Taylor, we did some checking on what we had on him which was when we got a match between this place and some of your old Guvnor's surveillance material” Dent explained, “So I thought I ought to get over here sharpish in case anyone tried to run off with the evidence.”

“Looks like we all had the same idea” Jack agreed.

“When I entered, I heard you guys moving around up here and thought someone had beaten me to it” Dent continued.

“Looks like we were the first to arrive” Jack confirmed, “Nothing of interest on the lower floors though but I am pretty certain this place is where the filming of the damning evidence that brought down Alfred Oscar six years ago and his little extra curricular activities took place.

“Find anything interesting?” Dent then asked.

“Oh yes...” Jack confirmed, “Step this way” he then gestured Dent over into the study and on through to the secret room beyond.

“Holy...” Dent responded on seeing the contents of the secret room.

“Looks like our Mr Taylor was very fastidious” Jack explained, “There are files here on pretty much everyone involved on all sides in what has been going on for at least the last seven or eight years” he confirmed.

“We need to get this lot secured and analysed” Dent responded.

“Mos” Jack then called to his Deputy who returned to join them.



“Yes Guv?” Eislely replied.

“Rustle up a van and a couple of trusted officers” Jack instructed, “I want the entire contents of this room secured and taken to King William Street for analysis.”

“Where?” Eislely responded with a quizzical look.

“Oh yes, of course you don’t know about that” Jack suddenly remembered, “Get on the satellite phone and contact X-Ray Alpha One, that is Commander Monroe, tell him exactly what has happened, and he will tell you what to do.”

“Aye Sir” Eislely confirmed before leaving the room again.

“Christ!” Dent remarked as he casually looked through some of the files at random, “The secrets contained in this lot must be something.”

“He even has a file on my girl” Jack confirmed as he picked up two of the files, “This and the one he has on me are staying with me” he then explained.

“Probably a good idea” Dent agreed, “I think the sooner we get back to King William Street and work out just what the hell is going on here, the better” he then suggested.

“A very good idea” Jack readily agreed, “So, what do you have on this Taylor guy?” he then asked.

“I have got the night shift working on that now” Dent confirmed, “Chief Superintendent Caverner has appointed Sir Richard Crowthorne as chief inquisitor on this job as soon as Taylor has recovered sufficiently to answer some questions.”

“Should be interesting...” Jack remarked.

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“Oh God, what time is it?” Tracy asked as she stirred from where she had collapsed into a deep sleep on a couch in a rest room at King William Street a few hours earlier, waking only when Commander Monroe had waved a cup of freshly brewed coffee in her direction.

“Ten to five in the morning Ma’am” Monroe confirmed as he handed over the coffee mug which a somewhat bleary-eyed Tracy gratefully accepted, “I would have let you sleep longer but Divisional Commander Regent and Christopher Dent just returned from Cato Street, and they have brought some very interesting files with them.”

“Great...” Tracy sarcastically responded, “More paperwork...”

“Apparently this is the archive of our new friend Mr Taylor” Monroe explained, “It seems he was quite the organised gentlemen, kept detailed files on pretty much everyone.”

“Essential reading then” Tracy agreed as she stood up and brushed down her

somewhat creased uniform with a slight disdain.

“In light of developments, I thought it prudent to get everyone together and thrash out what happens next Ma'am” Monroe then informed her, “Especially in the light of the interesting historical input that Lieutenant Commander Brent added to the proceedings which I think has most definitely come into context.”

“Well, there won't be any shops open at this time of the morning” Tracy checked her watch, “Better break out our emergency supply of frozen bread and croissants and fire up the oven, we are going to need breakfast.”

“I just hope we have got milk and butter in the fridge...” Monroe agreed with a knowing smile before heading out of the door.

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“Oh, you are a sight for sore eyes” Megan remarked when Jack walked in the room.

“Likewise love” Jack agreed as they embraced, “I take it you didn't head home then?”

“Not sure there was much point what with the lunatics roaming the streets” Megan confirmed, “I may be a civilian but with the reports of various incidents on Security Service officers around and about, I reckoned it wasn't worth the risk.”

“Probably for the best” Jack readily agreed, “Commander Monroe is making a start on breakfast, and we are having a pow wow in the main conference room as soon as he has finished incinerating the croissants.”

“Do you think they would mind if I sat in?” Megan asked.

“You are a part of the family, of course you are welcome” Jack confirmed, taking her hand, “Come on” he then prompted.

The main conference room was located as the other end of the corridor and as Jack and Megan proceeded towards it, voices could be heard echoing down the corridor.

“Right, give me a summary of the shambles we are in” Tracy called as Jack and Megan entered the room.

“We have several problems, all related” Monroe summarised, “With the demise of The Committee, apparently courtesy of the Ixion Brotherhood, all we have left is Taylor who is recovering in the secure medical unit at Paddington Green nick.”

“Was it luck or deliberate that he was left alive?” Dent asked.

“Definitely deliberate” Jack concluded, “They sent in their walking doomsday machine, Delfont, previous known as The Invisible Man to do the job, he doesn't leave anything alive or for that matter still in one piece unless there is a very specific reason, if they had wanted Taylor dead, he would have been left as a bloodied and

dismembered corpse along with the rest.”

“That Delfont guy doesn't exactly do subtle does he?” Monroe remarked.

“Err, no...” Jack agreed.

“Whilst the Commissioner proceeded to expand her empire yesterday and cut off our communications to New Scotland Yard” Monroe explained “we have managed to run a under the counter communications system from here, using the Borough Commander's as points of contact and with Divisional Commander Matthews overseeing it from the Yard using satellite communications which fortunately are outside of the Damocles System and therefore reasonably safe from being overhead by the bad guys.”

“At least we can still keep domestic operations going” Tracy confirmed, “We just need to deal with the idiots occupying the so called Whitehall Military Secure Zone and the Ixion Brotherhood.”

“In which case Ma'am, we need to seriously consider this...” Lieutenant Commander Brent ventured.

“Is this going to upset me?” Tracy cautiously asked.

“Quite probably...” Pointer confirmed with a regrettably look.

“Top me up” Tracy indicated to Monroe with the coffee mug pushed forward.

“Okay, yesterday whilst I was err recuperating at Gareth's place” Brent began to explain “I happened to look over Gareth's notes regarding the current situation which was when my Criminal History Degree kicked in on noticing the names he had written down.”

“Criminal History Degree?” Tracy remarked, “All I ever managed was an A Level in English Language, and I wasn't exactly brilliant at that.”

“Never thought it would come in useful I have to admit” Brent confirmed with a wry smile “Anyway, the names of a significant number of characters we have encountered, be they real, assumed or code names, match the names of persons involved with the Cato Conspiracy of 1820 which was named after the meeting place of the conspirators in that very same building in Cato Street where Taylor had his little archive.”

“Interesting...” Tracy responded.

“When Gareth made me aware of this a couple of hours ago, we did some digging through the archives over at Thames House” Dent added, “It appears that our infamous Mr Taylor is a direct descendent of one of the original conspirators.”

“Fascinating...” Tracy remarked.

“What was the intention of the conspiracy?” Monroe asked.

“In a nutshell, to depose the Government and place their own people in control, effectively installing an unelected committee to take command” Brent confirmed.

“And how was this to be achieved?” Tracy then asked, sensing where this might be going.

“The plan was to attack the cabinet when they were all together in the one place, execute them and for a nice little finale, place their decapitated heads on poles around Westminster as a warning to others” Brent explained.

“Well, we have or rather had the Committee, the conspirator in chief in the form of Taylor, a military group roaming around the streets and at one point they managed to even depose the Prime Minister” Tracy summarised.

“Gareth and I were thinking about what happened with the original conspiracy” Brent continued, “Their plan was to attack the Government cabinet when they were all together in one place, the thing is that these days since the pandemic a lot of Government meetings are now online, it is now virtually unheard of for them all to be physically in the same place at the same time.”

“Except for when there is a major occurrence” Pointer then continued “Such as death of a monarch, general election or...”

“...the installation of a new Prime Minister” Tracy concluded.

“Oh hell...” Monroe responded.

“Right, get a hold of my sister, wake her up if you have to” Tracy then ordered, leaping to her feet, “I need to know exactly where the Prime Minister and the senior members of the cabinet are going to be over the next twenty four hours.”

“I am on it Ma'am” Monroe confirmed as he hurriedly left the room.

“We are going to need a plan, ready to go at a moment’s notice” Tracy then continued, “And we will need a diversion.”

“But with the Committee out of the picture, surely the conspiracy has collapsed?” Dent suggested.

“Unfortunately, there is still a significant problem remaining” Tracy pointed out, “The Brotherhood is still around and there is no guarantee that they will not continue Taylor and The Committee's work, especially with their tame soldiers on their side.”

“We think that our old friend Commissioner Burgette may well be in bed, positively in the literal sense with Orbison” Jack then added, “That would explain a few things as well.”

“Just when I thought I could not possibly hate that evil cow anymore, she goes and

lower the bar yet again” Tracy responded as Monroe returned and handed her a note which she took and then read.

“I’ll get my Transport Division guys briefed and ready to roll” Jack then confirmed.

“Hang on Jack” Tracy called, “There is something I need you to do later” she then proceeded to hand over the note to him, “Pick up a delivery from London City Airport, it should be arriving from Scotland at about half four this afternoon.”

“Err right...” Jack responded, looking at the message, “It’s not a consignment of shortbread then.”

“Oh, I wish it were” Tracy remarked, “It’s important, I need you to see to this personally, it needs a senior command rank officer to take care of it.”

“Okay, I’ll see to it” Jack agreed.

“Ma’am, your sister is on a secure line” Monroe called, passing a telephone handset over to Tracy.

“Cheers” Tracy responded before taking the call, “Hi Sis!” she then enthusiastically called.

“Speaking purely as your twin sister” Jennifer sleepily replied, “Do you know what time it is?”

“Yeah, sorry about that” Tracy agreed “Erm, we may have a problem with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet which needs our urgent attention.”

“I had a feeling you were going to say something like that” Jennifer responded, “So, what sort of trouble are we looking at?”

“Possible attack” Tracy confirmed, “If the entire cabinet are due to meet in the next day or so then it is entirely possible that they are at significant risk of being targeted unless we stop them.”

“They are due to have a full meeting at ten o’clock this morning” Jennifer confirmed, “I have the transport organised for it.”

“Oh, I was afraid of that” Tracy responded, looking upwards at the ceiling as if in search of some sort of inspiration, “Where are they meeting?” she then asked.

“I don’t actually know” Jennifer confirmed, “It’s all being done on a need to know basis and apparently until the various members of the cabinet and the Prime Minister are sat in the back of my cars and fastening their seatbelts, I don’t need to know.”

“How helpful...” Tracy sarcastically replied.

“Tell me about it” Jennifer agreed, “The best I can do is try and get the destination to you as soon as my people are told.”

“It’ll have to do I guess...” Tracy responded with a noticeable sense of frustration, “How are things over there?” she then asked.

“Got a middle of the night visit from your old friend Burgette earlier” Jennifer confirmed, “I think I managed to pull off being you when we had a chat.”

“What did she want?” Tracy asked.

“I think she just called around to rub our noses in it” Jennifer explained, “You are right, she is a right bitch, isn’t she?”

“Twenty four carat cow” Tracy agreed, “And for a bonus point, it seems she is in bed, potentially literally with that nut job Orbison.”

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave...” Jennifer responded, also rolling her eyes up in semi-disbelief.

“Quite...” Tracy confirmed.

“From what I am hearing through the back channels, it seems that the military presence has started to retreat back towards the expanded Westminster Secure Zone” Jennifer then remarked, “leaving just a few rouge patrols out beyond the perimeter.”

“Matches what we have seen out here” Tracy agreed, “Ever since The Committee got taken out a few hours ago, there has been a noticeable shift in their tactics and deployment which hopefully will give us some breathing room to deal with the problems at hand.”

“The Committee is gone?” Jennifer responded with a sense of disbelief.

“Orbison, his Soldiers of Ixion and that one man massacre machine Delfont waltzed into their hidey hole under Chancery Lane and annihilated them” Tracy confirmed, “They left us with a load of scared witless support staff, a pile of dead people and a very shocked Taylor.”

“So, assuming the Government remains held with one hand behind its back, who is calling the shots now?” Jennifer then asked with a sense of understandable concern.

“Orbison and his nutters I presume?” Tracy suggested.

“I don't like this; I don't like this at all” Jennifer then remarked.

“You and me both” Tracy readily agreed, “We need to know where the cabinet is meeting in the morning, can you pull a few strings at your end?” she then asked.

“I can try” Jennifer mused for a few moments, “Yes, there are a few people I can trust who owe me favours, I shall kick over some proverbial rocks and see if anyone squeaks.”

“Get on it” Tracy urgently suggested.

“I’ll call you as soon as I get something” Jennifer confirmed.

-----

“Harriet, my gorgeous girl!” Orbison called, his arms held aloft as Burgette returned, marching triumphantly through the main entrance of the Palace of Westminster, a beaming smile stretched right across her face.

“My Lord and Master!” Burgette called, casually dismissing her two escorting guards who bowed in reverence and departed leaving them alone to firmly embrace.

“The pieces are falling into place my darling” Orbison confirmed with a glowing sense of pride, “The Committee is no more, Taylor is now incarcerated with the authorities and our revolution is here, nothing can stop us now!”

“I popped by New Scotland Yard on the way over” Burgette confirmed “I thought I would annoy the Chief Superintendent again.”

“I bet she loved that” Orbison smirked in response.

“Odd thing thought” Burgette then recalled, “She had a limp, I could have sworn she didn’t have one before, unless one of our goons has had a go and I was not aware?”

“None of my people have touched her” Orbison confirmed, “Oh, hang on...” he then realised something and began to laugh, “Very clever...”

“Huh?” Burgette responded, clearly not understanding what Orbison was thinking.

“There is one unique thing about Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent that you have not taken into account my love” Orbison then explained, “She has an identical twin sister...”

“Ah...” Burgette began to realise, “Jennifer Caverner I believe?”

“The very same” Orbison confirmed.

“...and by any chance, does she happen to have a limp?” Burgette then asked.

“She had a nasty accident some years ago” Orbison then explained, “which resulted in her receiving an artificial lower leg and foot.”

“How did you know about that?” Burgette then asked.

“I took a browse through our mutual friend Taylor’s extensive files whilst he wasn’t looking” Orbison confirmed with a satisfied smile, “It’s amazing what that chap knows.”

“What’s happened to those files now Taylor is out of the picture?” Burgette then

asked.

“Oh, I am sure for someone, they have just become essential reading...”

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“Well, I never knew that” Jack remarked as he read through the rather thick file he had in his hands.

“Sir?” Eislely asked as he came into his office.

“Apparently I was born three weeks early, weighing five pounds two ounces” Jack confirmed, “It seems that Taylor's files are even more extensive than we thought.”

“Do I have a file?” Eislely asked, purely out of interest.

“Doesn't look like it, sorry” Jack confirmed.

“I guess I am not important enough” Eislely remarked with a wry smile, “Still, I prefer the cloak of anonymity, makes life simpler.”

“Very wise” Jack agreed, “And then there is this” he indicated another file on his desk “He had a file on Megan too...”

“Whoa...” Eislely responded.

“I take it you are not going to let that join the pile currently being scrutinised by Dent's finest MI5 analysts?” Eislely then ventured.

“Hell, no” Jack confirmed “Megan has had enough problems in her life without any more being added to the list by this getting into circulation.”

“The Control Room Supervisor would like a word when you are free, Sir” Eislely then confirmed.

“I'll come down now” Jack confirmed as he proceeded to put the files in his office safe and lock them away.

“I am about to give the morning shift their briefing” Eislely then informed him, indicating the clip board in his hand, “I have no idea how we are going to sort this mess out” he admitted as they left Jack's office and headed down the corridor.

“Just tell everyone to stay on their toes and watch their backs” Jack suggested, “There are a lot of nervous people out there, we need to be their reassurance.”

“Aye Sir” Eislely agreed.

“Whilst I remember, I need you to join me for a little job later on” Jack explained, “If you could find a suitably decent patrol car, assuming we have any left still in one piece that is, meet me at London City Airport for four o'clock this afternoon.”



“I’ll be there Guv” Easley confirmed before disappearing through the door into the Briefing Room whilst Jack continued on towards the Control Room which was a hive of activity, even more than usual which, given the circumstances was to be expected.

“Jim?” Jack called to the Duty Control Room Supervisor.

“Oh, hello Sir” Jim responded, “I thought you should know that we have managed to re-establish secure radio communications with our Transport Division offices across Greater London and the Metropolitan Division guys are using our places as points of contact to coordinate on the ground operations, it took a bit of McGuyvering and some duct tape on the old analogue system, but we did it.”

“Blimey” Jack remarked as he looked through the duty log with a sense of amazement, “I never thought I would see the day when a bank robbery in Bromley would appear on the Transport Division's books.”

“Along with three taking and driving aways, a couple of domestics in Barking and a pile up on the M25” Jim added, “And that is just this morning's list.”

“The day is still young...” Jack added with a sense of foreboding before handing the duty log back, “Keep me posted.”

“Will do Sir” Jim confirmed before turning back to his console as yet another call came in which needed to be answered in a hurry.

-----

Sir Richard Crowthorne was widely recognised throughout the intelligence community as one of the best interrogators there is, his many years of experience meaning he was often the one to go to for the most sensitive and important jobs.

In these enlightened days, the term Interrogator was rarely used, the more subtle title of Quizmaster was the preferred description, and it was for this role that he was preparing.

He had a routine for this, one he had gone through so many times, and this was no different.

Neatly laid out on a tray on the table in front him were a number of items, a folder containing various documents, another folder containing photographs and other evidence to be presented, two pens as he always made sure he carried a spare, there was no way he would interrupt an interview just to go and get another pen, a leather bound A3 size notebook plus a glass decanter of pure still water and two glasses, no poor quality paper cups here.

Taking off his overcoat, Sir Richard carefully hung it up on the hook provided before gathering his thoughts, taking a last brief look at the evidence file, adjusting his tie and then picking up the notebook and pens.

A few moments later Sir Richard was shown into the Interview Room, followed by a guard who brought in the tray and placed it on the small metal table in the centre of the room.

Sat opposite, facing the door was Taylor, unusually for him in a relatively untidy state, his shirt had been replaced with a fresh one from the Security Service Uniform Stores as he original along with his jacket and tie had become damaged and blood stained.

“Good evening” Sir Richard politely declared as he took the seat directly facing Taylor, placed his notebook and pen down on the table and then signalled to the Guard to leave.

“I thought it was morning...” Taylor responded as the heavy metal interview room door was closed, shutting out all sound from outside and leaving the two men alone, just the sound of their breathing and the background hum of the lights and air conditioning being audible.

“Is it?” Sir Richard responded with a slightly sarcastic raised eyebrow, “Perhaps it is, perhaps it isn’t” he casually remarked, “In here, this little room, there is no way of telling, I have no watch, there are no clocks, no windows, just you, me and perception, point of view.”

“Hmmm...” Taylor responded, sitting back in his seat, and crossing his arms.

“So, what shall we talk about?” Sir Richard calmly asked as he consulted his notes, “When was the last time you and I met?” he then pondered “Hmm, must be quite some time ago, I do believe it was the Hainault Inquiry perhaps.”

“Indeed, Dickie old boy” Taylor confirmed with an agreeing nod.

“So that leaves me wondering just how long you have been working, behind the scenes, above the law?” Sir Richard continued to ponder, “Years, many years I reckon...”

Taylor merely smirked in response, saying nothing.

“Malcolm David Sinclair Taylor” Sir Richard then proceeded to read from his file.

“In living colour” Taylor confirmed with a slight nod of the head.

“What would be the best description I could use for you?” Sir Richard then pondered, “Collector of information, manipulator of people, and seeker of worldwide domination?”

“Oh, that's funny...” Taylor responded with a smirk “I quite like it though.”

“At this very moment, a contingent of the best analysts that MI5 and the National Police & Security Service have, are working through your extensive collection of files” Sir Richard then continued, “Quite the treasure trove of information...”

“You would be amazed at how many skeletons are lurking in there, you see I know where the bodies are buried” Taylor confidently responded.

“I probably still have the shovel...” Sir Richard smirked in response.

“Oh, I am sure there is a record of its location in my files somewhere” Taylor confirmed.

“Admittedly this is just the result of an initial glance at the wealth of material seized from your premises” Sir Richard continued “but it seems you have been gathering information and intelligence for a very long time.”

“Conservative estimate, about twenty five years, at least” Taylor responded, a sense of pride apparent, “What would you like to know?”

“I am surprised by your openness in this matter” Sir Richard then remarked “Are you a man who takes pride in his work perhaps?” he then asked.

“Absolutely” Taylor confirmed, sitting back, smiling and crossing his arms.

“Your infamous Committee has been wiped out” Sir Richard then stated the facts at hand, “Butchered by a man known as Alain Delfont, a man who I reckon you had a major part in ensuring his undetected arrival in this country and yet he turned on you.”

“Did he?” Taylor suggestively responded with a smile as he proceeded to light up a cigarette.

“You were the only person in that room to survive” Sir Richard then pointed out, “Was that deliberate or just good luck?”

“There is no such thing as luck Mr Crowthorne” Taylor politely informed him.

“Your Committee is gone, you are in the custody of the authorities, we have all your files, we know what you were up to” Sir Richard summarised, “There is nowhere left for you to go, other than prison of course.”

“Oh, come on now” Taylor replied matter of factly, “Do you really think I am even going to get as far as a prosecution trial let alone a jail cell?”

“Confident little bastard, aren’t you?” Sir Richard responded.

“Thank you” Taylor replied with a smile.

“It wasn’t meant as a compliment” Sir Richard then swiftly pointed out.

“I know, but I am more than happy to take it as such” Taylor quickly responded.

“Hmm...” Sir Richard contemplated his next move in this rapidly developing battle of will and mind.

“All right” Taylor then declared, thoroughly stubbing out the cigarette, “Let me tell you a little secret.”

“I am all ears” Sir Richard indicated Taylor to proceed.

“It was all me” Taylor simply stated, “The Committee, the Cato Group, all my creation” he then continued, “A thirst for knowledge, power and most importantly of all, control all achieved through patience, hard work and knowing the right people in the right place at the right time, what buttons I needed to press to persuade them to my viewpoint or get them to work with me, and do what I wanted of them.”

“And when they are finished with, what happens then?” Sir Richard asked.

“Like any surplus item in an inventory, they are discarded” Taylor confirmed, “The Committee no longer served any useful purpose, so I had them disbanded.”

“You mean that little bloodbath circus beneath Chancery Lane was a put-up job orchestrated by you?” Sir Richard asked with a sense of slight disbelief.

“Absolutely” Taylor confirmed, “Everything that has happened in the country’s sphere of politics, crime, law enforcement and justice has happened according to my express wishes.”

“Everything?” Sir Richard remarked.

“Admittedly that whole pandemic thing was not one of my ideas, but it did provide an unparalleled opportunity to undermine the country in just the way I required to achieve my aims, and in the process make an awful lot of money” Taylor confirmed with a very satisfied look.

“Oh, that is where it all went...” Sir Richard commented as he consulted his notes, “Let’s move onto the former Mayor of London, Alfred Oscar” he produced some of Appleby’s surveillance photographs and placed them on the table before pushing them across towards Taylor.

“Oh, rather good shot, thankfully that is my good side” Taylor commented.

“There are four people in this photograph” Sir Richard then continued, “You, Alfred Oscar, Michael Orbison also known as Lord Chaos of the Ixion Brotherhood and a fourth person who we believe to be one Olivier Torore, the photograph believed to have been taken approximately six years ago.”

“Well, seeing as Alfred Oscar has been locked up in the Broadmoor loony bin for the criminally insane since he organised the assassination of the Commander and I believe Mr Torore met with a rather sticky end at the hands of a large guillotine in his home country of Mobuto a few weeks later, I would say you are probably correct in your estimation” Taylor confirmed.

“What was your involvement with the death of Sir Edward Regent, also known as The

Commander?” Sir Richard then inquired.

“Ah yes, The Commander” Taylor fondly recalled, “My opposite number I suppose you could say, a potential thorn in my side and barrier to my ambitions since, well probably the Hainault Inquiry incident I reckon.”

“Go on...” Sir Richard then prompted.

“Alfred Oscar ordered the killing of Sir Edward Regent, no question about it” Taylor confirmed with a distinct sense of pride, “Of course, the ways and means to carry out his wishes just happened to fall into place at just the right time.”

“Organised by you and your associates of course” Sir Richard then concluded to an agreeing slow nod from Taylor “and then you just pushed the right proverbial buttons in Oscar, and he duly did your bidding whereupon, with the deed done you happily threw him to the wolves.”

“That was the easy bit” Taylor admitted, “The man was a prat of the first order, he just needed some nudging along the road he was already travelling towards his own self destruction.”

“And now he is incarcerated probably for the rest of his life in a lunatic asylum” Sir Richard added, “Couldn’t have happened to a more deserving fellow.”

“On that Mr Crowthorne, we can agree” Taylor confirmed with a smile, “Of course Oscar will never come to trial you know?”

“We’ll see about that” Sir Richard warned in response.

“I don’t mind telling you this, but that day when it was confirmed that The Commander was dead, we cheered, we popped the champagne corks, we cried victory” Taylor then honestly admitted, “It had taken so many years to reach that moment it resulted in a state of euphoria that even my associate Lord Chaos would have been impressed by.”

“Give me one very good reason why I shouldn’t strike you down, right here, right now?” Sir Richard then ominously warned.

“Simple” Taylor responded, “You need me alive and undamaged.”

“Sometimes in life there are some sacrifices worth making...” Sir Richard tentatively suggested.

“You want to know what I know” Taylor continued, “What’s lurking in here, not in the files, don’t you?” he pointed to the side of his head and smirked knowingly.

“I do have a couple of very good pain technicians on speed dial you know” Sir Richard menacingly suggested.

“How very uncivilised...” Taylor responded with an indignant look.

“For now, let’s just keep talking, shall we?” Sir Richard then proposed.

-----

“Thank you, Brother,” Orbison responded to the message that had just been discreetly whispered in his ear, “I’ll take care of this. If you could send in Brother O’Dell right away please.”

“By your command...” the Facilitator confirmed, bowing reverently, and backing away before leaving.

A few moments later, O’Dell appeared, carrying a metal briefcase that was handcuffed to his wrist.

“A little over the top Brother?” Orbison remarked on seeing the security.

“My Lord” O’Dell cleared his throat as if to further emphasise his point, “The contents of this case can bring about the downfall of the country if used incorrectly, or indeed correctly for that matter.”

“Indeed Brother” Orbison agreed, “So, shall we play?”

“Yes, My Lord” O’Dell confirmed as he proceeded to release the handcuffs and then set the case down on the table whereupon he opened it to reveal a complex high tec mobile computer workstation built into the shell of the case.

“Oooh, new toy” Orbison remarked, rubbing his hands with glee.

“What you have here My Lord, is the world at your fingertips, literally” O’Dell began to explain, “A custom made portable gateway into the Damocles Network. As long as you can get a decent 5G mobile phone signal, you can control pretty much everything.”

“Excellent, most excellent” Orbison responded with a sense of awe, “You have done well.”

“Thank you, my Lord,” O’Dell gratefully responded.

“It’s time to put your new toy into play” Orbison then declared as O’Dell sat down in front of the portable terminal.

“What is your command My Lord?” O’Dell then asked as he started up the terminal and prepared to accept his instructions.

“Our friend, Brother Taylor, I have been told by reliable sources of his current location” Orbison explained, “I think it is time we helped him out as it were...”

-----

Sir Richard had been in that interview room for over two hours now, the constant back and forth banter between him and Taylor covering so many subjects that he had almost run out of space to make any notes.

“You said earlier that you have influenced political appointments, used your connections to put the people you want into the right place at the right time” Sir Richard remarked, “Do we have you to blame for foistering that odious woman, Harriet Burgette on us by any chance?”

“One of my master strokes” Taylor admitted with a sense of pride before looking across at Sir Richard with a look of curiosity but then leaning back in his chair and beginning to chuckle.

“What's so funny?” Sir Richard asked.

“You don't know, do you?” Taylor responded with a huge smirk, “Harriet Burgette is the lawful wife of Malcolm Orbison, in other words she is better known as Lady Chaos.”

“Good grief” Sir Richard responded, “How many is that now?”

“Oh, at least a dozen I reckon” Taylor confirmed.

“Well, that explains a few things...” Sir Richard concluded.

Suddenly there was a clunk and the lights went out, in the distance an alarm could be heard sounding.

“Would you like a shilling for the meter?” Taylor wryly suggested.

“I am sure it is just a technical glitch” Sir Richard responded confidently.

At that moment the interview room door opened and in the darkness the sound of something rolling across the floor could be heard.

Sir Richard took out a lighter and stuck it before shining it around which revealed the source of the sound, a small black cylinder which was slowing down having been rolled in through the door unseen.

“Ah...” Sir Richard remarked but it was too late to do anything as the cylinder, a stun grenade suddenly exploded with a massive flash and a boom, instantly blinding him, and knocking him to the ground.

He was disorientated for at least thirty seconds, maybe longer, he could not be sure before he managed to struggle to his feet, his eyesight still impaired from the flash and his ears ringing.

Taylor was gone, the chair he had been sitting in now empty, fallen onto its back on the floor and the door of the interview room wide open.

Sir Richard staggered to the door and looked out down the corridor where the only illumination was a few tiny LED type emergency lights fed off a battery backup system.

“Is there anybody there?” Sir Richard called out which resulted in the sound of hard soled boots approaching from three different directions.

“Are you all right Sir?” called a voice.

“Who’s there?” Sir Richard responded cautiously.

“Lieutenant Caverley Sir” a Security Service officer confirmed as he arrived along with a number of his colleagues which was when the power and lights suddenly were restored once more.

“The prisoner has escaped” Sir Richard confirmed, indicating the empty interview room immediately behind him.

“It looks like he isn’t the only one Sir” Caverley confirmed, “That Colonel Ings has gone too.”

“Drat!” Sir Richard exclaimed as the officers helped him to the seat inside the interview room as he was clearly in a bad way as a result of the detonation of the stun grenade in such a confined space.

It was then that he noticed something odd about his notes on the table in the room, his notebook had been altered.

“Cheeky sod!” Sir Richard exclaimed as he saw that someone had written a note for him which read simply:

*‘Be seeing you.... T’*

“Someone shut our power down Sir” Caverley confirmed, “In the chaos somebody got down here and broke Ings out of the cells.

“And took Taylor with them in the process” Sir Richard concluded, rubbing his eyes as he was still suffering from the affects of the stun grenade.

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“Oh, tell me you are joking!” Tracy exclaimed over the telephone, rolling her eyes upwards with disbelief.

“I don’t like the sound of that...” Pointer remarked to Brent as they happened to walk into the operations room at just that moment.

“All right, lock the area down as best as you can, but I reckon they will all be long gone by now” Tracy confirmed.



“Definitely not good...” Monroe agreed.

“You are not going to believe this” Tracy explained “Taylor and Ings have been broken out of Paddington Green.”

“Well, that makes us look like a right laughing stock...” Brent honestly admitted to which Tracy reluctantly nodded in agreement.

“Somebody shut down the power grid and before anyone knew what was happening, Taylor and Ings were gone, leaving a trail of destruction and chaos in their wake” Tracy then confirmed.

“X-Ray Alpha One to Lima Tango One” Monroe then urgently called over the satellite telephone system.

“Err, Lima Tango One receiving” Jack’s voice came over the speakers in the room.

“For your information, be aware that Colonel Ings and Malcolm Taylor have effected their release from Paddington Green” Monroe informed him.

“Oh, for...” Jack began to respond.

“My thoughts exactly” Tracy readily agreed.

“All right, I’ll advise my guys to keep their eyes open” Jack confirmed “You never know, they might turn up on the District Line...” he sarcastically added.

-----

“Come on people, we have got a huge break here” Dent called as he entered the room at the MI5 operations room where several of his analysts were busy working through copies of some of Taylor’s files, “What have we got?” he then asked.

“Lots of background on lots of prominent characters, the good, the bad and the indifferent” one of the analysts confirmed, “This is particularly interesting” she then passed one file across.

“Ah, now there is a familiar scumbag” Dent remarked on seeing some of the photographs in the file, “Former Mayor of London Alfred Oscar.”

“It seems that he has always had a hatred for the Security & Police Service in general and the Commander in particular, dating back twenty odd years” the Analyst explained, “Orbison and Taylor wanted The Commander taken out of the picture so that he could no longer stand in the way of their plans so they simply encouraged and cajoled Oscar, pressed all the right buttons to commission his death.”

“Then they threw him to the wolves as the perfectly packaged fall guy” Dent concluded, “Smart...”

“You have got to hand it to them, they certainly knew what they were doing” the

Analyst remarked.

“Some of this evidence is the same that fell into our laps after The Commander was killed” Dent then commented, “Taylor and his Committee have been playing us since day one.”

“Like a puppet on a string...” the Analyst concluded.

“Time to cut those strings” Dent declared, “With a bloody great chainsaw...”

-----

One section of the law enforcement community in Greater London that had remained largely independent and unaffected by the upheaval was the overseas military intelligence service, better known as MI6.

It's head of operations for over seven years, John Hewitt was looking out at the view across the River Thames from his office near the top of the MI6 Headquarters building at Vauxhall Cross on the south side of the river.

Hewitt looked back at his desk when the telephone began to ring which made him reluctantly put his coffee mug down and turn around to answer it.

“Is this going to depress me?” Hewitt then called as soon as he was connected.

“Prime Minister's office on the Green Scrambler, ultraviolet priority” came the confirmation.

“That will be a yes then...” Hewitt agreed to himself under his breath, “All right, put them through” he then requested.

Hewitt picked up his coffee mug and finished off the contents before pressing a green button on the telephone.

“Hewitt Sir” he then called.

“John, it's Davis” the Prime Minister called from the back of his official car as it was speeding through the streets of London with, in the background the sound of the sirens of the accompanying escort vehicles being audible over the line.

“Prime Minister” Hewitt formally responded.

“I know you have been keeping out of things” the Prime Minister called “but I believe you are the man to get a message to the right people in the right place at the right time.”

“Uh huh...” Hewitt agreed knowingly, he knew that there was still the possibility that the line was being monitored and the Prime Minister knew it too.

“The Queen of Sheba will want to know where the team talk is happening” the Prime

Minister continued, "Tell her that the kick off is at ten o'clock and it is expected to be a full house."

"Understood" Hewitt confirmed as he made some notes.

"Location Delta" the Prime Minister then added, "We would appreciate no gate crashers please."

"I'll pass on the message Sir" Hewitt confirmed, "Good luck Prime Minister."

"To us all..." the Prime Minister readily agreed before the call was concluded.

Hewitt paused for thought for a few moments before taking out a satellite phone from the bottom desk drawer and making another call.

Across the other side of the city, Tracy was consulting with Commander Monroe amid the bustle of the operations centre at King William Street when the red telephone on the desk rang, causing her to immediately stop and answer the call.

"Caverner" Tracy she called before looking on intently as a message was relayed; "Thanks" she then called before hanging up again.

The activity in the room had quietened down during the call with everyone now looking towards her.

"Right boys and girls, pack up you stuff, we are rolling" Tracy then declared.

"Where to?" Monroe asked.

"Location Delta, Ten O'clock kick off" Tracy confirmed, "Get word to Bob and his gun toting heavies, we are going to need them."

"Fortunately, they were not in Scotland Yard when Burgette extended her secure zone so they are all still available" Monroe confirmed.

"How are things over at the Yard?" Tracy then asked.

"Details are sketchy, but the Transport Division have managed to jerry rig the radio system to evade the Damocles network by basically going back to the older analogue system" Monroe then explained.

"Like it" Tracy responded.

"Divisional Commander Matthews had an idea which we are working on" Monroe continued, "Effectively playing the enemy at their own game, he is feeding bogus information through the compromised channels, which will hopefully throw them off the scent a bit."

"We can use that" Tracy agreed.

“Ma’am!” came a call across the room, “Commander Thompson from the Armed Response Division on Line Three for you.”

“Oh, great” Tracy enthusiastically responded, picking up the telephone, “Bob, how many of your guys do you have available ready to roll?” she then asked.

“Two on standby tucked out of sight and a third in Croydon whom I can wake up at a moments notice if required” Bob confirmed.

“In which case, wake them up” Tracy formally confirmed “We have work to do.”

-----

“And so, a dream finally comes true” Orbison proudly declared as he walked through the doors into the main chamber of the old Houses of Parliament, his arms held aloft and bathing in the glory of his own self-congratulation.

All around the main chamber, numerous Facilitators and followers were busy working, assembling and installing equipment or removing some of the construction debris which was still strewn around the place following the aborted rebuilding and restoration project that stalled some years earlier.

“My Lord, where do you want this?” a couple of Facilitators asked as they brought in a large object covered in a tarpaulin.

“Ah, we can’t have a show without The Wheel, can we?” Orbison remarked with a gleeful look, “Let’s have it up at the back there” he then indicated towards the far end.

“By your command” the two Facilitators acknowledged before moving off whereupon they were followed in by four Soldiers of Ixion in fully armed military battledress escorting Grey.

“Ah, there you are my dear” Orbison then declared as she arrived, “I am sure you remember this place” he then gestured around the chamber with a broad smile.

“In my nightmares...” Grey regretfully remarked.

“You should take a seat Ms Grey” Orbison then indicated one of the old green leather upholstered benches, covered in tatty clear polythene sheets, “The show is about to begin!!”

-----

The Prime Minister looked nervously at his watch as he waited in the large boardroom for the arrival of the members of the Cabinet. His heavy breathing and the ticking of an ornate antique grandfather clock were the only sounds as he stood alone until in the distance, the sound of approaching footsteps and voices began to come into earshot.

“Here we go...” the Prime Minister remarked to himself as he took a deep breath,

straightened his tie and then proceeded to open the double doors.

Approaching down the well-lit corridor were over twenty-five individuals from across the various political departments and ministries, all talking quite openly and enthusiastically.

“My friends” the Prime Minister declared as they arrived, “Welcome back, it is good to finally be all together again.”

There were many positive welcoming responses to his words from the others before the Prime Minister then indicated inside.

“We have so much work to do, so let’s make a start, shall we?” he then suggested.

At his instruction, the various members of the cabinet began to file into the room and take up their seats around the huge oval meeting table.

“Right, let's begin...” the Prime Minister then declared.

Elsewhere in the building there was the sound of hard soled boots making their way rapidly down the corridors of the vast complex, accompanied by the ominous clanking sounds of the equipment they were carrying with them.

As they proceeded through the building, suddenly the electricity supply was cut off, this however did not deter the group of men who continued to proceed without even missing a beat.

They soon reached a large set of double doors and without any hesitation, burst through into the room.

Suddenly the lights came on and the armed men stopped in their tracks with surprise upon seeing the room being completely empty.

“What the hell is going on Sir?” one of the men called to their leader who, in response took off his face mask and looked around with an equal sense of confusion.

“Good morning gentlemen!” Tracy called behind them causing the men to turn around suddenly, coming face to face with her and twenty armed Security Service officers all with their weapons pointed directly at them, “I'm afraid you have been misinformed.”

“You bitch!” the lead officer responded and was about to open fire when a further detachment of fully armed Security Service officers appeared and cut the group off from the front, surrounding them completely with a significant advantage in firepower and determination.

“Now, we can do this the easy way or the difficult way” Tracy then continued, “The mood I am in right now, I have no real preference either way” she admitted.

With extreme reluctance, the men began to lower their weapons before putting their hands up.

“That's better...” Tracy then remarked with a sarcastic smile before going up to the leader of the group and staring him squarely in the face “This time, no escape” she then advised him.

“We will see...” the officer determinedly responded.

“Hmm...” Tracy remarked before turning smartly on her heels and, as the officers began to escort the attackers away, she strolled purposely off down the corridor.

She headed along the corridor to the stairs and then ascended one floor before proceeding through to another identical set of double doors which was being guarded by two specialist officers from the VIP Protection Division who nodded in respect before allowing her inside.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, apologies for the interruption” Tracy apologised as she came into the room.

“Not a problem Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister responded, “We are honoured by your presence.”

“Thank you for your co-operation” Tracy then continued, “You will be delighted to know that Colonel Ings’ thugs and his second in command have been detained downstairs and are being removed from the building as we speak.”

“Excellent work Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister responded, standing up.

“I'll leave you ladies and gentlemen to it then” Tracy agreed, “I have some pest control to do...”

With that, Tracy turned smartly around and left the room, the doors being closed behind her.

“Right, ladies and gentlemen” the Prime Minister then declared as he sat down once again, “I am delighted to confirm that The Committee is gone, and we can finally take back control and get things on the path back to normality.”

Outside the building, Bob and his Specialist Firearms officers were loading the prisoners into a number of high security prisoner vans ready to be taken away.

“Hmm...” Bob remarked thoughtfully, “I think we should do a last sweep of the building just in case we missed anyone.”

“Aye Sir” his officers confirmed.

“Long, you come with me” Bob then instructed, “The rest of you, stay with the prisoners, do not let even one of them out of your sight under any circumstances.”

“Yes Sir” the other officer duly confirmed as the last prisoner was loaded and

secured.

“Gary, let's go” Bob then called whereupon they both headed off back inside the building.

On the third floor of the east wing, Tracy was heading towards the lift when she briefly heard a noise echoing through the corridors that caused her to turn around and look.

“Hello?” she then called, her voice echoing down the seemingly deserted and dimly lit corridor.

Suddenly, there was a noise behind her causing Tracy to spin around once again where she was confronted with a tall dark figure holding two swords out towards her.

“Ah...” Tracy responded, “Mr Delfont I presume?” she then wondered.

“Now, you die...” Delfont declared menacingly “Slowly...”

Bob and Long were making their way through the building doing their final search.

“Urgent assi...” came the burst of a radio transmission that was suddenly cut off.

“What the hell was that?” Long asked.

“Trouble...” Bob responded, “Come on!” he then encouraged and they ran off down the corridor.

“I can tell you are a man who really enjoys his work” Tracy remarked as she rolled out of the way just as Delfont brought one of the swords down towards her, breaking the plaster of the wall and smashing a chair into smithereens.

In the struggle, Tracy had already lost her firearm and was now fighting hand to hand with Delfont who was almost a frenzied blur as he continued to attack.

“Your butchered entrails will be the last thing you see” Delfont then called.

“Charming...” Tracy responded, out of breath.

“Now, time for you to die...” Delfont declared, raising his sword high above her.

“Don't even think about it!” came a shout from behind him causing Delfont to stop and look around and see Bob and Long stood there, their weapons trained directly on them.

“Wait your turn” Delfont responded menacingly, “She's first.”

Delfont raised his sword ready to strike which saw Long instantly respond by opening

fire, striking him.

Whilst it stopped Delfont, it was as if he had been tapped on the shoulder by a passing stranger rather than taking two shots in the torso.

They all looked on with a mixture of shock and amazement as Delfont merely smiled menacingly as he raised his sword once again, preparing to strike down.

Tracy scabbled out of the way as Bob and Long instantly reacted by opening fire once more, striking Delfont with multiple rounds which after a few moments of deafening gunfire finally saw him fall to the ground.

“Thanks guys” Tracy called as Bob helped her back to her feet whilst Long stood firm with his gun still drawn and aimed at Delfont who was lying in a pool of blood on the floor.

“Is he dead?” Bob asked back towards Long as Tracy retrieved her firearm from the floor.

“Actually, no he isn't” Long confirmed.

“Hmm...” Tracy responded, looking down at Delfont who was still moving slightly before, with cold calculation, she shot him in the head, “He is now...”

-----

“So, we are all in agreement” the Prime Minister called, “We have our plan.”

There were nods and murmurs of agreement around the room which was when there was a knock at the door and Tracy returned, looking somewhat battered with rips in her uniform tunic.

“Oh...” the Home Secretary remarked, “Are you all right?”

“Just a little problem with pest control” Tracy wryly admitted, “It’s taken care of now, put up a bit of a fight though.”

“Good to hear Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister responded, “You will be delighted to hear that we have a plan.”

“I am glad somebody on our side has” Tracy replied, “It has seemed to me that we have been doing a lot of blundering around in the dark on this mess.”

“Things are about to change, hopefully for the better” the Prime Minister then confirmed with a smile, “Advise the media, I have an announcement to make...”

-----

Orbison was in his commandeered office in the Palace of Westminster as the sounds of workmen in the background echoed throughout the building with preparations still



ongoing.

He was busy writing his latest thoughts in a large black leather bound notebook, using a traditional gold ink pen of the type that was filled from a bottle, the sound of the pen scratching on the paper filtering around the room.

In the next office down the corridor was Grey who had been biding her time, waiting for the right opportunity to slip away.

With so much activity going on throughout the still useable parts of the building, it was as if everyone had forgotten the guest among them and this had not gone unnoticed by her.

“Time for a discrete exit...” Grey remarked quietly to herself as she got up off the seat and looked around the edge of the door.

The corridor outside was reasonably busy with various individuals passing through but none of them took any notice of Grey as she slipped out of the door which was when she noticed her handbag sitting on top of a wooden packing crate where it had been left by the guards earlier.

Looking discreetly around, Grey quickly snatched the bag away and tucked it under her jacket before, with a brief break in the flow of people passing through, she slipped away.

Grey had an advantage over everyone else there; she had been in the building many times before and was familiar with its complex internal layout despite the very different appearance of it now thanks to the aborted rebuilding work and the resultant years of neglect, debris and disruption.

With the coast clear, she hurried down a side corridor and then tore off the restricted access construction warning sign that was taped onto a hidden carved wooden door and slipped through, out of sight.

Inside a dusty hidden corridor, Grey opened her handbag and retrieved from it a small handgun which was secreted in a hidden compartment inside the lining.

“Right, time to go” she then declared, checking the firearm, and then discarding the bag.

Whilst the interior of the building was a scene of much activity, noise, hustle and bustle, the outside and the surrounding grounds was largely silent despite the presence of a significant number of Ixion Soldiers patrolling, watching for any unauthorised entry or exit.

Grey emerged into the semi gloom of dusk from a side door near the St Stephens Tower and then ducked back inside again when she saw a couple of the Ixion soldiers nearby, fortunately they seemed not to notice her.

“Drat...” Grey muttered under her breath and headed off in a different direction, down a small flight of stairs and into a dusty basement area.

Footsteps above her head caused Grey to pause for a few moments until they had passed before she continued on through the complex of chambers and corridors.

After some minutes scrabbling around in the semi-darkness, Grey found a secure lattice gate which with a bit of a struggle, she managed to wrench open, disturbing years of dust which hung in the air.

Her footsteps then gradually faded away as she disappeared off into the dark...

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“Hmm, the enemy above...” Eisley remarked as he emerged from the escalators up from platform level and joined a number of Transport Division officers who were looking from the ticket hall of Westminster Underground Station through the closed shutters towards the street outside where some of the Ixion soldiers could be seen patrolling outside.

“Don't you find it odd that they are content with us being here, on their doorstep as it were?” Lieutenant Russell remarked.

“I think there is a whole different agenda at work here Ryan” Eisley replied, “What is it they say?” he then recalled, “The Revolution is here, and we are not invited?”

“Indeed Sir” Russell agreed.

It was then that their attention was diverted when the sound of a loud banging noise began to be heard, coming from somewhere below them.

“What the hell is that?” Eisley remarked as they all began to look around, trying to identify the source of the sound that was echoing all through the station.

“Down there I think Guv” one of the officers pointed down a set of stairs nearby, which was the cue for them to head off in the direction indicated.

The sound got louder as they approached the source, the banging coming from a sealed door located off a side tunnel in an intermediate level between the ticket hall and the platform levels, an area that had been sealed off from public access for many years.

“Sounds like someone is trying to get out” Eisley remarked.

“Anyone seen Quatermass and The Pit?” Russell wryly remarked.

“Anyone got a key?” Eisley then asked around.

“Here” the Station Supervisor came up to them and tossed over a bunch of keys that Eisley expertly caught, “Any key marked three.”

“Here we go” Eisley then remarked as he carefully unlocked the door and prepared to open it.

“Ready Guv” Russell confirmed as he and the other officers readied with their weapons pointed towards the door.

With a swift move, Eisley opened the door which resulted in a shriek from the person on the other side of the door who had been banging.

“It’s all right” Eisley then indicated to his officers to lower their weapons as from a dusty and dark corridor, Grey emerged into the light, looking somewhat bewildered.

“Please tell me you are the good guys” Grey called, looking relieved, frightened and exhausted.

“We’re the good guy’s Madam” Eisley reassured her, taking her hand.

“Thank God for that” Grey responded, clearly relieved, “I need to speak to the Chief Superintendent; we have a lot to talk about.”

“Lima Tango Zero Two to Lima Tango One” Eisley then called over his radio.

“Lima Tango One receiving” Jack voice came back, “You all right mate?” he asked.

“Yes boss” Eisley confirmed, “I’m currently in the lower levels of Westminster Tube Station and you will never guess who has just shown up?”

“The tooth fairy?” Jack cheekily responded.

“Oi!” Grey called out having heard Jack’s remark over the radio.

“Former Prime Minister Jayne Grey has just appeared here” Eisley explained, “Emerged from the old Houses of Parliament access point,”

“What the hell is she doing there?” Tracy was heard over the radio having overheard the call.

“A very good question” Jack agreed.

“May I...?” Grey indicated Eisley’s radio which saw him nod in agreement and hand it over to her, “Err, hello?” she then called.

“You’re on the air...” Jack responded.

“I don’t know if you are aware” Grey explained, “but your old friend Lord Chaos and his band of loons have taken over the old, abandoned Palace of Westminster and are making themselves well and truly at home.”

“Oh dear...” Tracy responded.

“My thoughts exactly” Grey readily agreed.

“Right, we need to bring you in for a full debrief ASAP” Tracy then declared.

“I can have her brought to wherever you require right away, Ma’am” Easley confirmed.

“Get her to Monument Station” Jack confirmed over the radio, “You will be met there.”

“Understood Sir” Easley responded.

“I am all yours Deputy Divisional Commander” Grey confirmed whereupon Easley duly indicated down the escalators and with another officer in escort, they headed down to the District & Circle Line platforms where, thanks to a very swift bit of work by the Transport Division Control Room, an empty London Underground S Type stock train was already waiting for them.

“After you Ma'am” Easley then indicated as a single pair of doors opened at the front of the train whereupon Grey duly boarded with Easley and the other officer in close escort.

As soon as they were aboard, they took their seats whereupon the doors closed and the train duly moved off.

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It was with some difficulty that the Downing Street Press Office had managed to get the press conference together at such short notice, but they managed it, reactivating an old press centre in an old Government building near the Bank of England which had been largely mothballed since the end of the Pandemic and summoning representatives from pretty much all the media organisations in the UK plus overseas agency correspondents based in London.

The additional issue of not having access to the facilities in Downing Street was a hindrance too so it was a scene of semi-organised chaos that greeted the Prime Minister as he arrived, being escorted by two armed officers from the VIP Protection Division.

Cameras flashed and questions were shouted at the Prime Minister as he made his way through the throng of press to the main briefing room.

The continuous news channels were already running live coverage complete with the usual speculation that they are well known for in the absence of any available facts and many viewers were watching across the country and beyond as the Prime Minister arrived at the podium, placed his hastily put together notes down in front of him and cleared his throat which was his signal for silence.

“Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen” the Prime Minister began, “Thank you,

please...” he then had to call in order to get everyone to quieten down.

“Thank you” he then called as soon as he managed to achieve silence, “I am delighted to announce that following the resignation of my predecessor and my appointment, that we have received permission from Her Majesty to form a Government” the Prime Minister then announced.

“As a result, we are now in a position to immediately introduce a package of measures that will deescalate the dire situation that we have descended in over the last few years” he continued “The National Interests Committee has been disbanded with immediate effect, removing a significant obstruction to the legislative system.”

There was a pause as the sound of cameras clicking continued to fill the air.

“Effective immediately, the Emergency Powers Act and associated legislation is hereby declared null and void” the Prime Minister continued, “The Westminster Secure Area including the recently announced extensions is to be abolished as soon as is practical, the military presence in the city is hereby dismissed, the position of Police & Crime Commissioner is immediately scrapped and the operational powers of the National Police & Security Service is fully restored to pre-declaration of emergency levels with immediate effect.”

“In addition,” the Prime Minister continued after an effective pause, “Further measures have been agreed which mean that with immediate effect, the organisation known as the Ixion Brotherhood and variations thereof has been added to the list of banned organisations as defined by the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2005 with the connected Certificates of Public Interest Immunity that were issued concerning key members of the aforementioned organisation now officially cancelled.”

Across the City, a number of people were responding to the announcements with a mixture of reactions.

“Fantastic!” Tracy declared as she watched the Prime Minister's speech on the large screen at King William Street “We can finally take the gloves off!”

Whilst Tracy was happy about the announcement, the opposite was the case in the old Houses of Parliament where Orbison was also watching on a television in the office he had commandeered to be his study.

“Oh, that is naughty, very naughty” Orbison remarked with a reserved tone of slight frustration, putting his pen down and consulting his pocket watch, “Time to start the show then...”

A few moments later he stepped out into the corridor where the bustle of activity had quietened down compared with earlier and looked up and down

“Brother O'Dell” Orbison called over to his computer expert, “Are we ready?” he then asked.

“Yes, My Lord” O'Dell confirmed reverently.

“In which case, summon the Followers and fire up the band” Orbison announced, “It's time to start the show!!!”

-----

“Ma'am” Monroe called through the office door which made Tracy look up from the files she was reading through, “Jayne Grey has arrived.”

“Ah, good” Tracy responded, closing the files and standing up before following Monroe out of the office where they met Grey being escorted in from the other end of the corridor.

“Welcome back to the land of the living” Tracy called as they came face to face, “Shall we bring each other up to speed?” she then suggested, indicating the way into the main briefing room.

“As long as there is fresh coffee” Grey responded, “God, do I need it.”

Inside the briefing room as they entered, Fuller was busy working on his computer with an increasing sense of frustration.

“So, Prime Minister” Tracy began before realising her mistake, “Sorry, what do I call you now?”

“Anything you like” Grey responded with a wry smile as she gratefully received a large mug of fresh coffee, “I am just a common or garden back bencher now.”

“Did you resign voluntarily?” Tracy then asked.

“Well, that’s a question” Grey admitted, “I was forced by The Committee but on reflection I am quite glad to be shot of the job, silver linings and all that.”

“You saw The Committee?” Monroe remarked with a look of surprise.

“Twice” Grey confirmed, “The head of The Committee was a nasty little weasel by the name of Malcolm Taylor.”

“Oh yes, we know about him” Tracy regretfully confirmed.

“And then there was the second time...” Grey recalled, clearly uncomfortable at her recollection.

“Ah, you saw that?” Tracy asked.

“Heard it” Grey confirmed “That is a sound I will never forget, the sound of death when Orbison sent in that human massacre machine to wipe them all out, blood curdling in the extreme.”

“We heard about that” Tracy responded, “Jack and his Transport boys stumbled on

their little hidey hole under Chancery Lane just in time to find the aftermath.”

“I bet that was not a pretty sight...” Grey remarked.

“It wasn’t, but fortunately Jack has a pretty strong constitution” Tracy confirmed, “Taylor survived...”

“WHAT!?!” Grey exclaimed.

“They spared him” Tracy explained.

“I want to see him; we have things to discuss” Grey determinedly ordered.

“Ah...” Monroe responded.

“What?” Grey then demanded to know, sensing that something was wrong.

“Sir Richard Crowthorne was interviewing him over at Paddington Green when someone switched off the power and, in the confusion, effected his release” Tracy explained, “and they took that thug of a Major, Ings with them.”

“Oh...” Grey responded, lowering her forehead into her hand in despair.

“My sentiments exactly” Tracy regretfully agreed.

“So, what else have I missed?” Grey then asked.

“Err, Davis is now the Prime Minister” Tracy proceeded to summarise, “An attempt to execute the Cabinet in a modern day version of the Cato Conspiracy was headed off at the last minute and he just declared the Emergency Powers Act null and void, cancelling Orbison’s Public Interest Immunity Certificate in the process.”

“That’ll annoy him” Grey remarked with a smile.

“Isn’t that a shame?” Sir Richard remarked as he came into the room.

“How’s your head?” Tracy asked.

“I have got a thumping headache” Sir Richard confirmed, wincing a bit, “Err, I haven’t been drinking before you ask.”

“That makes a change...” Tracy muttered sarcastically under her breath.

“How did they do it?” Grey then asked.

“What?” Sir Richard responded, “The breakout?”

“Yeah...” Grey confirmed.

“Someone shut the power down to the whole building” Monroe explained, reading

from the initial report he had only just received, “A very slick operation, they were in and out before anyone really knew they were there.”

“Damocles” Grey then called out in realisation.

“What do you know about Damocles?” Fuller quickly responded.

“The central computer network that basically controls everything from the Downing Street toaster oven to the national security grid” Grey replied, “You do know Orbison has access to Damocles, don’t you?” Grey warned.

“We thought it was Taylor and The Committee” Sir Richard confirmed with obvious regret.

“No, it’s Orbison all right” Grey confirmed, “He’s got some sort of computer wizard on his staff, erm, O’Dell I think his name is?”

“Err, Paul O’Dell?” Fuller asked with an obvious air of concern.

“Well, we were not exactly on first name terms” Grey admitted “but it could be.”

“Who is this O’Dell guy?” Tracy asked.

“Paul O’Dell is, in layman’s terms my opposite number in the international criminal underworld” Fuller explained, “If Orbison and his brotherhood of loons have got him on board then that explains a hell of a lot.”

“He had some sort of custom made portable terminal for accessing the Damocles System” Grey then continued, “Apparently you can’t just use an ordinary laptop so I am told.”

“No, you can’t” Fuller confirmed, “It would never work with a conventional domestic computer; it would require specially built equipment.”

“How many people are capable of building such equipment?” Tracy asked.

“Probably two or three people in the world” Fuller admitted, “Unfortunately, I am one, the second works for the CIA and O’Dell is the third.”

“Oh dear...” Sir Richard responded.

“The thing is” Fuller then continued “in order for a portable terminal to work, you would have to fit a transceiver governor physically into the system, you can’t just dial it in on a mobile.”

“That would suggest that it would be possible for them to access everything on the system” Tracy then concluded, “which is a theory that unfortunately fits the facts.”

“Pretty much every computer fraud and crime agency on the planet have had this guy at the top of their most wanted list for years” Fuller confirmed.



“If we could find this device attached to the system and disconnect it, would that cut them off and give us back control?” Sir Richard suggested.

“In theory, yes” Fuller agreed.

“In which case we had better find it and deal with it, quickly” Tracy urgently prompted.

“The question is, where is it?” Sir Richard then asked.

“I’m way ahead of you” Fuller confirmed as he was busy working on the computer.

“What are you doing?” Tracy then asked.

“Apart from hoping I can do this before my laptop battery runs out” Fuller explained, “I am tracing the course of the last command sent through the system before the lights went out.”

“A sort of electronic breadcrumb trail” Sir Richard suggested.

“As good as an analogy as you could come up with, I reckon” Fuller agreed “Ah, here we go” he then declared.

“Erm, what are we looking at?” Tracy asked.

“Whilst computers communicate seeming instantly” Fuller explained, “there is always a slight delay as a message is relayed from one part of the system to the next, it's only fractions of a second but it can be used to trace the path of a message.”

“And...?” Tracy prompted.

“The ultimate destination of the last command is there” Fuller indicated a point on the schematic that was being shown on the laptop screen, “then I can trace it back through various parts of the system and... bingo!”

“I am still none the wiser...” Tracy admitted.

“Server name Aurelius” Fuller explained, “It's in Aldwych.”

“Right” Tracy then declared “We need to get it dealt with, now.”

“Ah hell...” Fuller then called in frustration as his laptop shut down, “Looks like someone, probably our friend Mr O’Dell planted some sort of trace lock.”

“Come again?” Tracy asked.

“When I ran the trace, his system picked it up and spiked my computer and I am now locked out of my own system” Fuller explained, indicating the blank screen in front of him, “Until the governor connection is taken out, I am powerless, literally.”

“You should get down to Aldwych” Tracy then urged.

“Unfortunately, I am not omnipresent” Fuller then reluctantly admitted “I have to stay here, ready to work when my system comes back online” he went on to explain, “We need to send someone we can trust down there; I can tell them what I am looking for, they just need to find it.”

“I think I know just the pair for the job” Tracy confirmed, “Commander Monroe” she then called across, “Would you ask Brent and Pointer to join us please?”

“Right away Ma'am” Monroe confirmed before he left the room.

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The Ixion Brotherhood followers around the World were all tuning into the dedicated online channel, their subscriptions all paid up to access the otherwise encrypted feed, and the broadcast was about to begin.

As ever, the broadcast began in total silence, a black screen before subtle ethereal music began and a soft light began to illuminate a crouched praying figure, Orbison himself.

The single light grew in intensity until Orbison’s gold encrusted ceremonial robes were glinting and he was fully illuminated whilst his surroundings remained completely dark.

“By the powers invested in me by my Lord and Mentor, let Chaos reign supreme, To Life Immortal, Amen” Orbison quietly whispered before standing up in the darkened room, a serious look on his face that was being broadcast across the world.

“And so...” he then began to speak, holding out his hands in front of him in greeting, “My Friends, Followers, Brothers, Facilitators and Honoured Guests....”

There was a dramatic pause as the ethereal music in the background began to build up to a tempo.

“Let’s get this party started!!!” Orbison triumphantly announced which was the cue for the lights to come on, loud cheering and celebratory music to commence and also the moment that O’Dell, controlling the show from a dedicated control booth overlooking the scene proceeded to open up the feed so that it was now being broadcast across all television channels and social media feeds across the country and beyond.

“What the...” Tracy responded as the television screen in the King William Street main briefing room which had been showing the BBC News Channel was suddenly interrupted and changed to Orbison’s broadcast.

“Welcome to the House of Fun!!!” Orbison’s voice boomed out over the speakers

along with the accompanying music and cheering.

“Oh, did I forget to mention” Grey then remembered, “Orbison and his band of loonies are holed up in...”

“The old Houses of Parliament” Tracy confirmed as she recognised the setting for Orbison’s broadcast despite the dilapidation, set dressing and modifications that had happened to it, “Yeah, you said.”

“I don’t know how he has done it” Fuller called across the room “but he has managed to hijack almost every television channel, online news feed and public broadcast service in the country.”

“Makes a change from Eastenders I suppose...” Sir Richard wryly remarked.

“Oh, we have got to stop this” Tracy remarked.

“So my friends, for those who haven’t a clue what the hell is going on” Orbison then called, “We are the Ixion Brotherhood, some of you may recall us, the Prime Minister, gawd bless his little cotton socks just banned us apparently.”

“Oh, what a shame...” Tracy sarcastically responded.

“Well, we aren’t going quietly, in fact this party is just starting” Orbison then proudly declared, “We have dedicated our lives, our very souls to chaos and disorder and now the Revolution is here, and you are all invited!”

“Actually, scrub that” he then added after a moment of thought, “One or two I don’t really want along to this party, sorry Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent, oh but nice trick with the whole identical twin sister swaperoo thing, very clever, fooled my wife at least although to be honest just between you and me, she is a bit dim.”

“Was that supposed to be a compliment do you think?” Sir Richard asked around the room.

“Somehow, I doubt it...” Tracy confirmed.

“But that’s enough of the tittle tattle” Orbison then continued, “I promised you chaos and mayhem and I am a man who delivers on my promises, so let me ask you all a question” he then went right up to the camera until his face filled the screen, “Are you afraid of the dark?”

At that moment, O’Dell activated a specially written subroutine on his computer terminal and suddenly, across London and the South East of England, large swathes of the national grid electrical power supply began to switch off, plunging buildings into darkness and extinguishing street lights.

“Oooh, that was fun” Orbison then continued with a hearty laugh, “And for my next trick...” he then clicked his fingers which was the cue for O’Dell to activate another subroutine.

The effects were quickly felt across London and the Home Counties.

In the financial district of London, known simple as The City, the trading computer systems all suddenly went haywire throwing hundreds of thousands of international business transactions into a convoluted mess, the international stock markets immediately responding by crashing worldwide.

“What the hell is going on?” Jack called as he entered the Holborn Control Room with a torch which was the moment that the Transport Division Headquarters backup generators began to activate, and some power was restored to the lights and essential systems.

“Someone just went and messed with the computer system that controls basically everything by the looks of it” the Duty Control Room Supervisor confirmed.

“Guy” Baxter called as he came in the room, “Turn on the TV, something you should see.”

“Do it” Jack instructed whereupon the Supervisor attempted to bring up whatever television channels he could on some of the wall screens.

“What’s this crap?” Cornell asked as he joined them in the room.

“Well, it sure as hell isn’t Coronation Street that is for sure” Jack confirmed, “Looks like our old friend Orbison is going global.”

“Oh!” Orbison then suddenly called out, “I hear Jack and his intrepid little band of transport plod have just tuned in!” he then declared.

“Christ, he is so far infiltrated into the systems he knows when we turn the telly on” Jack remarked.

“So nice of you all to join us” Orbison then continued, “If you will just excuse me a moment as my Brother does something technical...”

“Whoa...” Jack exclaimed as the system maps of both the National Rail and London Underground networks appeared on the two largest screens, “Did you just do that?” he then asked the Supervisor.

“I can’t even adjust the brightness on the screen let alone anything else Sir” the Supervisor confirmed as he fruitlessly tapped away on his keyboard and mouse, “We are completely locked out.”

“Now Jack and friends, watch this...” Orbison then declared with glee.

At that moment the electrical power supply to the trains on National Rail and Underground Lines across Greater London was suddenly cut off bringing almost all trains to a standstill wherever they happened to be at that exact moment, only some diesel-powered trains were still moving but they were brought to a halt moments later

when every single controlling signal reverted to red.

All this was being displayed on the screens before them as Jack and the others looked on, powerless to do anything about it.

“He’s just shut down the entire railway network at the press of a button” Cornell concluded.

“Rustle up whatever bodies we can find” Jack quickly took control of the situation, “Use whatever uncompromised communication methods you can, there is no telling how long this is going to last, and we have hundreds of trapped trains outside stations that will need evacuating as soon as possible.”

“I’ll start with the Underground ones first” Cornell confirmed, “The Network Rail guys can handle the surface mainline ones, Baxter, you are with me.”

“Yes Sir” Baxter readily agreed as they both headed out of the room.

“Did you like that Jack?” Orbison then asked at the camera.

“When I find you, I am going to kick you so far up the backside you will turn inside out” Jack responded but of course, Orbison could not hear him but probably had a pretty good idea what he was saying.

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“Ma’am” Commander Monroe remarked as he came in the room, “I got the Director General of the BBC on the phone and he is pissed...”

“I bet he is” Tracy responded.

“Apparently the only channel still unaffected is the Cbeebies children’s channel and one of the home shopping networks” Monroe confirmed.

“Fine if we wanted to watch Dogtanien and the Three Muskehounds or buy a cheap watch but not much use for anything else...” Sir Richard remarked.

“Prime Minister on the Green Scrambler” Fuller confirmed, passing over the green telephone handset.

“Caverner-Regent” Tracy responded.

“Erm, we seem to be conducting Government business by candlelight over here” the Prime Minister called, “What’s going on?” he then asked.

“Orbison and his bunch of loonies must have accessed the Daedalus System and are basically shutting us down” Tracy regretfully confirmed.

“Do you have a plan Chief Superintendent?” the Prime Minister then asked, “Only apparently the UK stock markets have completely crashed and we are about two hours

from the country becoming completely bankrupt.”

“Ties in with my estimates” Sir Richard agreed, “I reckon we have maybe two hours before the damage is beyond repair” he summarised.

“In which case, we need to work fast” Tracy confirmed “I need arrest warrants and authorisation documentation within the next twenty minutes.”

“I have the Attorney General and the Home Secretary here” the Prime Minister responded, “As long as you don’t mind them being handwritten, you can have them as soon as you like. Where do you want them?”

“That may depend on the delivery of a package I am expecting” Tracy slightly evasively explained “but if all goes according to plan, now that we know exactly where they are holed up, we can set up a forward command point and go ahead from there, you just need to send someone along with the paperwork.”

“Done and done” the Prime Minister readily agreed.

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“Lima Tango One to Lima Tango Two” Jack called into his radio as he got into his official patrol car located in the basement of the Holborn Headquarters, formerly part of the old Kingsway Tram Subway.

“Lima Tango Two” Eisley was heard to respond, “Go ahead Guv.”

“Whereabouts are you mate?” Jack then asked as he started the powerful engine of his car.

“I have just dropped off Ms Grey at King William Street” Eisley confirmed as he was heading on foot down Monument Street towards Bank, “I was just going to check in with our guys at Bank Station to see how they were doing.”

“I’ll meet you there in five minutes” Jack confirmed before accelerating away up the cobbled ramp and out into High Holborn.

London was an eerie sight, all the buildings either side of the street as Jack drove through them were almost totally dark, just the odd twinkle and glow here and there from battery operated emergency lights piercing the gloom.

The streetlights and even the pedestrian crossings were all out as well meaning the only illumination was from passing vehicles, the blue flashes from Jacks car reflecting brightly as he proceeded at speed eastbound.

The effective total shutdown of the city had resulted in most people staying off the streets even with the Underground network completely paralysed which meant Jack’s journey was unobstructed and largely unobserved as he soon reached the financial district.

Pulling up in Threadneedle Street alongside one of the entrances to Bank Underground Station, Jack noted a steady stream of confused looking members of the public being escorted from the station by both Security Service officers and London Underground staff, using handheld battery torches to light the way.

“Mos!” Jack called across as he got out of the car, “What’s the S.P.?” he asked.

“Bit of good luck as it happens Guv” Eislely confirmed, “The London Underground guys managed to jerry rig the electrical supplies a bit and get most of the trains into platforms that weren’t already there, not all their power supplies are on ‘The System’ apparently.”

“Nice work” Jack complimented.

“With any luck we should have everyone out within the next hour” Eislely then confirmed.

“We have a package to collect” Jack then reminded him.

“Ah yes” Eislely recalled as they headed back to the car

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The festivities in the main chamber of the former House of Commons were continuing with plenty of cheering, dancing and loud music which allowed Orbison a moment to slip away from the action for a few moments and return to the control booth where O’Dell was very busy working on multiple computers.

“I do enjoy seeing a man who takes pleasure from his work” Orbison remarked as he entered the room.

“Thank you, My Lord,” O’Dell responded, not even blinking as he continued to work on the computers, his fingers almost a blur from the speed with which he was typing.

“So, how are we doing Brother?” Orbison then asked.

“We control pretty much all the media channels with only a few insignificant exceptions” O’Dell summarised, “I have full monitoring of all the digital radio communications that our friends in the Security & Police Service use, I think some of their more enterprising officers are using other old school channels outside of the Daedalus System but they are so busy trying to stop things from descending into chaos and anarchy that it is of little concern to us.”

“Well, we wouldn’t want them sitting around getting bored, would we?” Orbison mused, “Any sign of our errant Ms Grey by any chance?” he then asked.

“Not since she sneaked out of the tradesman’s entrance a couple of hours ago, no My Lord” O’Dell confirmed.

“Yes, that was rather embarrassing” Orbison admitted, “Ah well, can’t be helped.”

“Our soldiers continue to patrol the Westminster Secure Zone” O’Dell then continued, “We have not heard from Colonel Ings and his specialist detachment for a while but they are probably still on roving patrol outside the zone ready to neutralise any problems that may crop up, oh and apparently the stock market has crashed with the country liable to be declared bankrupt by the end of the night.”

“Oh dear, what a shame...” Orbison mockingly responded.

“Thank the Gods of Ixion for offshore banking” O’Dell then remarked with a knowing smile.

“Amen Brother” Orbison responded.

“Transport across central London is effectively crippled, all mobile networks are under surveillance, and, just for fun of course I just managed to scramble the MI5 mainframe despite it being isolated and running on their backup generator” O’Dell then added with a sense of pride.

“Oh, I like that...” Orbison responded, “What about MI6?”

“I thought they might enjoy some relaxing music” O’Dell deviously replied, “So in a few moments they are going to find every single one of their mobiles, computers and laptops will be blaring out Meatloaf’s greatest hits at full volume and they won’t be able to switch it off...”

“Genius...” Orbison was almost in fits of giggles at the merest thought of it.

-----

“Do you get the feeling we are being volunteered for something?” Brent asked as she and Pointer headed back into the main operations room.

“Ah, there you are” Tracy called as she showed them into seats around the large table, “We’ve got a job for you two.”

“Told you...” Brent quietly remarked aside to Pointer who discreetly nodded in response.

“We need to find the device that is the master connection into the system which Orbison and his minions have hacked in to” Fuller began to explain “And you two have been volunteered.”

“Right, where do we start looking?” Pointer asked.

“Aldwych Underground Station” Fuller confirmed.

“I know I am not Transport Division but even I know that there isn’t an Underground Station in Aldwych” Brent pointed out.



“Technically you are correct” Fuller responded “There used to be one though and it is where part of the system is hidden” he proceeded to unroll a paper map with the plans of the lower levels onto the table in front of them.

“Looks like a rabbit warren” Pointer commented.

“There are tunnels all over the place” Fuller confirmed, “Unfortunately only a few really know the place intimately and that knowledge doesn’t include the extra side tunnels containing the servers and equipment that are not on any plans.”

“Jack is otherwise engaged at the moment unfortunately” Tracy added.

“What are we looking for?” Brent then asked.

“Probably some sort of box attached to the mainframe” Fuller explained  
“Unfortunately I am unable to tell you exactly what it looks like but if you start pulling any wires out, it may interrupt the control they have over the system and restore our access to it.”

“Timing is critical” Tracy emphasised, “With the control they now have over pretty much everything, we have maybe an hour or two before the country’s economy gets flushed down the proverbial U-Bend and we may never get it back.”

“In which case we have no time to waste” Brent enthusiastically declared as she and Pointer duly stood up.

“A couple of things though” Fuller then warned, “There are no comms down there, radios and mobiles won’t work and if O’Dell deserves even one tenth the reputation he has, I would expect booby traps on the device.”

“Sounds like we are in for fun evening darling” Brent then remarked to Pointer.

“If we survive, I’ll buy you dinner” Pointer then responded.

At that moment, Commander Monroe popped his head around the door and caught Tracy’s attention.

“I thought you would like to know Ma’am” he called, “Your package is about to be delivered.”

“Good” Tracy responded, “Let’s get this situation sorted once and for all” she then declared, checking her firearm with obvious determination.

-----

“The sky is falling in, Mos” Jack sadly remarked to his Deputy as they stood alongside his patrol car and watched as a heavy lift military aircraft came slowly towards them having just landed at London City Airport.

“Yes boss, yes, it is” Easley reluctantly agreed.

At that point, the aircraft turned so that it was facing away from them and then stopped whereupon its four mighty engines duly shut down.

“So, what is this little party all about then, boss?” Eislely asked, nodding towards the rear of the aircraft as the loading ramp began to lower.

“Reinforcements” Jack vaguely explained as the loading ramp reached the ground revealing the interior of the huge aircraft and the large contingent of military personnel, vehicles and equipment that immediately began to deploy out onto the tarmac.

“Huh?” Eislely responded, looking on with some confusion. “Don't we have enough military goons running about the city already?”

“These are the good guys” Jack reassured him, “I think...” he then added.

The two officers looked on as a senior military man approached.

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent?” the tall military man called, a broad Scottish accent emitting from behind the impressive and neatly trimmed red beard and moustache.

“In living colour Sir” Jack confirmed, “This is my second in command, Deputy Divisional Commander Mos Eislely” he then introduced him.

“Brigadier William Hendy” the military man confirmed, firmly shaking hands “First Battalion, Scottish Highland Fusiliers, here at the kind invitation of your Chief Superintendent Caverner to help you out with your little local problem.”

“Yes, we seem to have something of a rodent infestation” Jack admitted.

“The trouble is, said rodents are heavily armed and led by a chief rat, a disgraced former Army guy by the name of James Ings” Eislely added.

“Ah, that evil conniving little git” Brigadier Hendy retorted.

“Oh, you know him?” Jack responded.

“We have had a few run ins in the past” Brigadier Hendy confirmed “Let me reassure you, he is no friend of mine” he reassured.

As they chatted, the platoon of two hundred men unloaded their vehicles and equipment.

“So, gentlemen” Brigadier Hendy then called, “Where do you want us?” he asked.

“The main concentration of problems is in the central London area, centred on Westminster” Jack explained, “Since The Committee got unceremoniously dealt with by Orbison and his band of loons, they have mostly fallen back to their central base of

operations, effectively sealing off their own personal enclave, with New Scotland Yard, Thames House and Downing Street in the middle.”

“Brigadier!” one of the military officers called with obvious concern whereupon they all turned to look at the direction he was indicating.

“Uh oh...” Jack responded “It looks like our secret is out...”

Rapidly approaching was a military Land Rover with a group of Colonel Ings men, weapons ready and about to open fire.

“Corporal Rainham” the Brigadier called in a very business-like manner, “Deal with that!”

With ruthless efficiency, a group of Hendy's men moved forward, opened fire on the approaching Land Rover and quickly neutralised the threat.

“Nice...” Jack responded in admiration.

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“We have a saying in MI5” Pointer remarked as he and Brent made their way down the spiral staircase of the old Aldwych Station, “Never volunteer for anything.”

“I am inclined to agree” Brent responded as, with the only light coming from the hand torches they were carrying, they reached the old platform level at the bottom.

“Right” Pointer then declared as he took out the paper plan of the lower levels that Fuller had given them and held it open as Brent shone her torch on it, “Where the hell are we?”

“Erm, scrabbling around in the dark?” Brent wryly remarked.

“Quite” Pointer agreed, “I think it's this way” he then indicated down a passageway off to their right by beaming his torch in that direction.

“After you...” Brent confirmed with a wry smile.

“Whatever happened to ladies first?” Pointer asked as he led the way ahead.

“It's called being chivalrous darling” Brent reminded him.

They proceeded carefully down the dark corridors, only pausing when Pointer stubbed his toe on something on the floor which shattered the silence down there.

“Are you afraid of spiders?” Pointer then asked.

“No” Brent confidently confirmed.

“Good, because I am...” Pointer then sheepishly admitted but then stopped and turned

when Brent never responded, instead she had vanished.

“Esme?” Pointer called, his voice echoing down the dark and seemingly empty corridor.

Suddenly there was a sound that caused Pointer to swivel back around which was when he became aware of someone approaching, the footsteps of hard soled military like boots approaching but, with the sound echoing throughout the myriad of tunnels, it was impossible to pinpoint exactly where it was coming from.

“Oi!” came a whisper which was when Brent reappeared from a side tunnel and grabbed Pointer, pulling him out of sight of anyone approaching.

“Wha...” Pointer began but quickly found his hand covered.

“Sssshhh!” Brent whispered before slowly removing her hand again, “We have company...” she whispered.

The sound of the hard soled military boots was growing louder as whoever it was seemed to be getting closer to their hiding place.

“Do you ever get the feeling someone doesn't like us?” Brent then very quietly commented to which Pointer regretfully nodded in agreement.

Whoever the group where who were approaching, they did not speak at all, instead taking instructions silently from the leader as they made their way through the maze of tunnels. Their intent was clear however, someone had told them about the potential of visitors, and they were looking for them.

Brent peered around the corner and looked down the corridor as the sound of the boot steps grew increasingly louder, accompanied by the clink of metallic equipment and weaponry they were carrying.

“Oh no, not him again...” Brent whispered as she ducked back down.

They both hunkered further down in the dark as the group of half a dozen military men passed them by led by Colonel Ings, before heading off away down the corridor, around a corner and out of sight.

“A detachment of Ings’ thugs and the main man himself” Pointer confirmed, “That obnoxious little weasel gets everywhere.”

“Come on, let's move” Brent then encouraged as they emerged from their hiding place and headed off down the corridor in the opposite direction from where the armed men had disappeared a few moments earlier.

They picked up the pace and made their way through the complex of dark corridors until they reached a point where there was a small reflective marker attached to edge of one of the curved metal tunnel reinforcement rings.

“Here we go...” Pointer shone his torch on the marker and then back to the paper plan in his hand, “Down here” he then indicated a small side passage off to the right, which they then headed down.

A few moments later as the pair went around a curve; Ings briefly appeared from the shadows and looked around the corner before smirking knowingly...

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The telephones in the King William Street Operations Room were ringing with far more intensity over the last half an hour and it was one call in particular that Tracy had been waiting for which got her attention when it finally arrived.

“Simon!” Tracy called as she hung up the telephone, “Wheels are in motion, and we need some transport.”

“Divisional Commander Matthews has managed to rustle up several van loads of reinforcements from the suburb areas and is gathering them at holding areas around the inner ring road ready to move in just as soon as we tell him where we want them” Fuller confirmed.

“Good” Tracy responded, “What are the Transport Division boys up to?”

“Still trying to untangle the mess caused by a couple of hundred trains being stuck in a power cut” Fuller responded, “Jack and Eisley are over at London City Airport collecting your package.”

“We will need some sort of mobile control room” Tracy then urged.

“All ours are trapped in the basement at Scotland Yard unfortunately” Commander Monroe confirmed.

“We could borrow the Transport Division's one” Fuller suggested, “That one is parked up in the old Tram Subway in Holborn, if you can get it started that is.”

“Call Holborn and tell them to warm it up” Tracy instructed “Pull some random members of the public off the street to give it a push start if you have to and tell them we will be there in twenty minutes.”

“On it Ma'am” Fuller confirmed.

“Right, we need a rendezvous point” Tracy then remarked as she looked at a large map of central London on the wall, “Somewhere spacious, close to the Westminster secure zone and where we can see the bad guys coming from a long way off.”

“Hmm...” Monroe mused as came over and also looked at the map, “What about Trafalgar Square?” he then suggested.

“A few painful memories of that place...” Tracy recalled “but it will do I reckon.”

“I’ll notify the troops” Monroe confirmed, “It’s time to get rolling...”

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“So, what’s the plan Divisional Commander?” Brigadier Hendy then asked as the final loading of his men and equipment was completed and they were ready to move.

“Start as we mean to go on” Jack confirmed “If you and your men would care to follow me, I will escort you to central London and we can get cracking.”

“Sounds like a plan” Brigadier Hendy confirmed before indicating to his men to proceed whereupon those not already on board, loaded up into their trucks.

“Do you want to ride up the front?” Jack then indicated to his car.

“Sounds like an excellent idea” Brigadier Henry readily agreed before getting in the front passenger seat whereupon Jack returned to the driver’s seat and started the car.

“Lima Tango One to all units” Jack then called over the radio “Convoy Alpha is rolling.”

On that order, Jack duly led the way, his patrol car being at the front and the military vehicles filing into line behind him before Eisley brought up the rear with his own patrol car.

The convoy quickly left the airport, being allowed out onto the public highway through a gate in the airport perimeter where further Security Service patrol cars and motorcycles from outlying parts of Greater London joined them, swelling the numbers considerably.

“Lima Tango One to Lima Tango Two” Jack then called over the radio, “Mos, how are you doing back there?”

“We have picked up a few extra friends along the way” Eisley confirmed “I think everyone in the Service wants a piece of the action.”

“The more the merrier” Jack responded.

With over a dozen Security Service patrol cars now escorting the military vehicles at high speed through the streets, their progress was swift and thanks to the sirens, exceptionally loud.

“Oh shit!” Jack suddenly exclaimed as he rounded the corner and slammed on the brakes upon seeing the route ahead blocked by a mobile military checkpoint.

“Ah...” Brigadier Henry responded as all around them, the rest of the convoy screeched to a halt as well.

“All units from Lima Tango One” Jack urgently called over the radio “Sit tight everyone, we have a little problem.”

“I’ll take care of this” Brigadier Henry then confirmed, getting out of the car as a number of military men approached from the checkpoint.

“This is an official checkpoint!” came the order from a loudhailer being used, “Everyone out of your vehicles, drop any weapons and take two steps back. Have your identification and papers ready for inspection.”

“Sergeant” Brigadier Henry called back to his second in command stood just behind and to his right “If you would be so kind.”

“Stop!” the Sergeant called assertively; the weapons of his team pointed directly ahead at the approaching checkpoint men.

“You have no authority here!” the checkpoint officer with the loudhailer responded, a Corporal in rank as denoted by his insignia, “We are in charge!”

“Oh, that old cliché” the Brigadier dismissively responded as he strolled confidently forward towards the Corporal, “If there is one thing I absolutely cannot stand it is over enthusiastic amateurs!”

“Did you not hear me?” the Corporal called, “Are you deaf or something?”

“I can hear perfectly fine you little twerp” the Brigadier replied “Pity for you, you can’t...”

At that point, the Brigadier's men who had been using the ongoing conversation as cover suddenly appeared from the shadows all around and surrounded the checkpoint soldiers.

“Surprise...” the Brigadier called with a satisfied smirk whilst the checkpoint guards were quickly overcome, restrained on the ground and swiftly disarmed.

“Nice work” Jack remarked as he joined the Brigadier and watched as the process of taking the men away continued.

“Like I said to the young man just a few moments ago” the Brigadier confirmed “A nasty case of over enthusiastic amateurs.”

“So, what these Soldiers of Ixion don't have in experience they make up for in enthusiasm?” Jack concluded.

“With the exception of the special team led by that thug Ings, yes” the Brigadier confirmed, “If we can find and neutralise Ings and his crew then the rest of these amateurish bozos should not be too much of a problem.”

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“All Aboard!” Tracy called as she led the way onto the Transport Division’s Mobile Operations Unit, a converted red London single deck bus that was looking a bit dusty

and had seen better days.

Fuller was quick to take his seat at the main computer console located in the rear section of the interior where he proceeded to set up his laptop and associated equipment in preparation for when or if he managed to regain control of the Damocles System.

Three Security Service personnel transport buses pulled up alongside at that point whereupon Tracy stood in the front doorway and looked across.

“Good afternoon, Ma’am” the driver of the lead bus called across “We come with the compliments of Croydon Division Borough Commander Conway, where do you want us?”

“Welcome to the party” Tracy responded with obvious gratitude, “Follow us” she then instructed.

At her instruction, Tarbett duly started the engine and then proceeded to drive off, leading a growing convoy of over a dozen Security Service vehicles from various parts of Greater London and beyond.

The convoy proceeded down High Holborn towards The Aldwych before swinging right, around into Fleet Street which was when they met another convoy joining them from the left.

“Ere, that’s my bus!” Jack called out on seeing his own Division’s Mobile Operations Unit pull out into Fleet Street a short distance ahead of him.

“Lima Tango One form Angel One” Tracy was then heard to call over the radio, “Don’t worry, I am only borrowing it for the evening” she reassured him.

“Ah well, with a bit of luck it will get wrecked, and we can claim on the Metropolitan Division’s insurance for a nice shiny new one” Jack remarked to the Brigadier with a wry smirk, “That is what we call inter jurisdictional cooperation you know...”

“I like your thinking...” the Brigadier complimented him.

A couple of minutes later the numerous Security Service and military vehicles were pouring into the Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square area as the sun was setting and darkness descended across the city.

“There's the boss” Jack indicated Tracy who was standing on the front step of the Mobile Operations Unit, “Come on Brigadier, let me introduce you.”

Tracy looked on as Jack and the Brigadier approached, the military man towering over the young Divisional Commander.

“Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent” Jack did the introductions, “This is Brigadier William Hendy.”



“First Battalion, Scottish Highland Fusiliers, a pleasure to meet you at last” the Brigadier responded as they shook hands.

“Welcome to the party” Tracy responded, “Join us” she then indicated inside the Mobile Operations Unit whereupon they duly followed her.

“Room for a small one?” Dent asked as he knocked on the door and looked inside.

“By all means” Tracy confirmed, “I thought you would be over at Thames House?” she then commented.

“Not much point” Dent admitted, “No power, the backup generator is struggling and then to cap it all, some comedian decided to scramble the mainframe which means all we have is one working coffee machine and have been forced to resort to candles, pen and paper.”

“One sympathises...” Fuller remarked as he glanced at his mostly blank screens, “O'Dell has cut us off completely. If it weren't for some ingenuity by the Transport and Metropolitan Divisions firing up the old school radio systems, we would be deaf as well as blind.”

“Right then” Tracy studied various maps and plans on the table around which everyone had now gathered “We know that Orbison, Lord Chaos, whatever he wants to call himself...”

“Fruit Loop General?” Jack wryly suggested to amused smiles from the others.

“If the cap fits...” Tracy readily agreed, “Anyway, he and his minions are holed up here” she indicated the map, “The old Houses of Parliament.”

“The place is effectively derelict” Dent remarked, “It has been falling apart since the former Prime Minister abandoned the restoration project four years ago, I wonder if Orbison has redecorated yet?”

“Despite the derelict nature of the building, it is still secure and has a formidable perimeter” Tracy continued, “We have Soldiers of Ixion patrolling the surrounding area inside the Westminster Secure Zone and probably more inside the building itself.”

“Along with an unknown number of Followers, Facilitators and associated, nutters, loons and hangers on I expect” Fuller pointed out.

“Well, the Ixion Soldiers around the perimeter will be easy enough to deal with” the Brigadier confirmed, “Like I was saying to young Jack here earlier, they are enthusiastic but not experienced, overwhelm them with superior forces and we could potentially take the Secure Zone without firing a shot.”

“Suits me” Tracy agreed, “We have got Ings locked up but what about his specialist band of thugs?” she asked.

“They will need a somewhat less gentle approach” the Brigadier confirmed, “Trouble is, they could be anywhere.”

“Hello?” called a familiar voice whereupon they all turned to see Bob appear in the doorway, dressed in his full specialist armed response unit equipment.

“Bob!” Tracy called, gesturing him in, “Come and join the party.”

“Thank you Ma'am” Bob responded as he came in and joined the others around the table.

“We need a way into the old Houses of Parliament” Tracy then continued.

“Hang on a minute” Jack then realised, “There is an underground entrance to and from the lower levels of the Tube Station.”

“Tradesman’s entrance?” Bob looked at the plans on the table, “Good idea...”

“It's where Grey came out when she managed to give Orbison and his cretins the slip” Jack explained.

“That gives us a potential way into the building which will hopefully see us able to creep up and surround them before they realise we are there” Bob commented.

“I am happy to go in and take the Secure Zone, that should be fairly straight forward” the Brigadier confirmed, “With a bit of luck and some subtlety, we should be able to secure it in fifteen or twenty minutes?”

“That leaves the nest” Bob confirmed, “My teams can go in via the basement, filter through the various passageways and corridors and close them down.”

“I am going in first” Tracy declared.

“Erm, is that wise?” Dent asked.

“Orbison is in there and I want to slap the cuffs on him personally” Tracy confirmed with sincere determination, “Nobody argues with me on this or they will end badly...”

“All right...” Bob reluctantly agreed before turning towards the door, “Gary, get in here, I’ve got a job for you.”

“Sir?” Long responded as he appeared in the doorway.

“I am entrusting you with guarding the most valuable asset this Service has” Bob explained before indicating Tracy.

“Me?” Tracy replied with a look of genuine disbelief, “Valuable?”

“The Chief Superintendent has declared she is going with us into the nest of the enemy and will be leading from the front” Bob continued to explain, “and as the

chances of talking her out of it are absolutely nil, you are hereby appointed to be her escort.”

“Err, yes Sir” Long confirmed, still a little overwhelmed with the responsibility he was having thrust so unexpectedly upon him.

“You do not let her out of your sight, where she goes, you go until this operation is concluded” Bob continued to firmly instruct, “Is that understood Lieutenant?”

“Yes Sir” Long responded.

“Good, that is taken care of” Bob then concluded.

“May I ask something?” Long then ventured.

“Yeah, sure” Tracy responded, “We are all on the same side here.”

“Where is Lieutenant Brent?” Long asked, “I was wondering what has happened to her.”

“She and Gareth Pointer are running a little errand for me” Tracy confirmed, “Actually, quite a big errand really.”

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“This must be the place” Brent commented as they reached the end of a passageway where a modern security gate was set into the end wall, clean and contrasting vividly with the centuries old, neglected surroundings.

“Let's hope this code works” Pointer remarked as he began to enter the number he had been given by Fuller earlier until the red light on the panel turned green, a buzzing sound began and the gate was released.

Passing through an inner door revealed a further chamber beyond where a large number of computer servers were buzzing away in a space that was difficult to estimate the size due to the large amount of equipment in there.

“Open the pod bay doors please HAL...” Brent commented with a wry smile as she and Pointer looked around the clean and brightly lit room, a stark contrast to the dusty dark tunnels they had passed through to reach it.

“Okay, we have about thirty minutes before the country finally grinds to a halt” Pointer checked his watch, “Let's find this thingamabob” he then declared.

“Thingamabob?” Brent looked at Pointer with a slightly bemused look.

“Technical term...” Pointer sheepishly replied, “Come on, let's split up, you go down that side, I'll take this side.”

“What are we looking for?” Brent then asked.

“Something that doesn't look right, out of place” Pointer responded, “I guess we will know it when we see it...”

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“So, we have a plan” Dent concluded, “But surely, we can't just walk up to the front gate of the Westminster Secure Zone and knock, can we?” he then asked.

“Leave that to us” the Brigadier confirmed, “We have ways of opening doors...” he smiled knowingly.

“Meanwhile we need to get to Westminster somehow, preferably undetected” Tracy then remarked.

“I have got an idea about that” Jack responded thoughtfully, “Give me a minute” he then declared before stepping outside to use his radio. “Lima Tango Two from Lima Tango One, you there Mos?” he then called.

“Receiving you loud and clear Guv” Eisley responded a few moments later.

“Got a job on” Jack then explained, “By any chance are the units used to clear the lines still at Charing Cross?” he then inquired.

“I believe they are Guv” Eisley confirmed, “But surely with no power, they won't go anywhere, will they?”

“On the contrary my dear Mos” Jack responded, “They will.”

“Err, right” Eisley replied, clearly confused and showing his relative lack of experience in the technicalities of the London Underground system compared with that of his superior officer, “What's the plan?” he then asked.

“Get down there with some supplies of coffee and cakes for the crews and tell them to get their steeds warmed up” Jack instructed, “We will be along shortly.”

“Understood Sir” Eisley confirmed, “Lima Tango Two, out.”

“Right, that's the transport taken care of” Jack declared as he returned to the interior of the Mobile Operations Room, “I do hope you all brought your Oyster Cards...” he then jokingly added.

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“You got anything over there?” Brent called as she squeezed along a narrow passageway between one set of computer servers and the curved tunnel wall.

“It all looks the same to me” Pointer admitted from the opposite side where he was having the same problem within the tight confines.

“Ouch...” Brent then exclaimed as she caught her uniform tunic on a protruding part of racking and ripped it.

“Are you okay?” Pointer called over with obvious concern.

“Just ruining my uniform” Brent confirmed as she untangled herself from the metal which was when Pointer came over and joined her.

“Hang on, I got it” Pointer then reassured her as he helped, “Take your jacket off, it will be easier to then” he instructed.

“Ah, any excuse to get my clothes off...” Brent remarked with a giggle as she carefully slid out of her tunic, leaving it still hanging off the racking where the protruding metal part had pierced the fabric across the left shoulder.

“Hang about...” Pointer then remarked as he took out his torch and shone it beyond the tunic into that section of server racking, “There is something in there.”

“Where?” Brent responded as she knelt down and looked for herself.

“There is some sort of box attached just in there” Pointer shone his torch directly on it, revealing a black box with a couple of small green lights on it that were flashing rapidly.

“How can you be sure that it shouldn't be in there?” Brent asked.

“It just doesn't fit, stands out as something different to the rest of the equipment” Pointer explained, “and anyway, the more damage we do, the more chance we have of shutting this thing down.”

“I thought the idea was to simply disconnect the bad guys from the system, not shut it down altogether” Brent responded.

“At the moment, I think we have reached the point of any port in a storm” Pointer admitted, “So...” he then reached forward to grab the box.

“Wait!” Brent suddenly called which caused Pointer to stop just before he was about to touch the object.

“Look under there” she then indicated something underneath the device, only just in view of her torch light beam.

“Oh...” Pointer responded as he stooped down and looked at what Brent had noticed, “Booby trap?”

“Booby trap” Brent agreed, “There seems to be some wires or something coming out and heading off that way, and they don't look like ones for a computer to me.”

“Hang on, pass me the torch” Pointer called before lying down on the floor and looking underneath, “Oh, nasty...”

“What is it?” Brent responded.

“It looks like there is some sort of explosive, possible plastic” Pointer explained, “Shaped charge, just enough to blow the hands off whoever messes with it without actually damaging the surrounding equipment critically.”

“What about accessing it from the other side?” Brent then suggested.

“A very good suggestion, come on love” Pointer got up and they went all around the section of equipment until they reached the opposite side.

“Down here I think” Brent then indicated but suddenly there was a noise from beyond the door into the chamber and then a small cylinder was tossed towards them from outside.

“Run!” Pointer immediately called out, grabbing Brent and pushing her ahead of him towards the rear of the chamber, which was when the cylinder exploded, sending out a bright green flash that knocked them both over whilst the door into the chamber was slammed shut and locked from the other side.

Both of them lay on the floor, somewhat disorientated for a couple of minutes before, with some coughing and rubbing of her eyes, Brent managed to recover sufficiently to sit up and then look across at Pointer who was still dazed and confused.

“Are you all right?” Brent asked, helping Pointer to sit up himself.

“Can I get back to you on that?” Pointer groggily responded.

“What the hell was that?” Brent then asked.

“Some sort of stun grenade I think” Pointer confirmed.

“Hello in there!” came a voice through the door, “I do hope you two are not suffering a headache?”

“Ings...” Brent correctly concluded under her breath as she instantly recognised the voice despite the sealed door between them, “Why don’t you come on in and I will show you what a real headache feels like?” she then called.

“Err, no thanks” Ings responded menacingly, “You two can just stay in there, just don’t touch anything though, the country is already on the brink of complete collapse into chaos and, well you never know what damage you could do, either way.”

“When I get out of here, I am going to nick you so fast you will think you fell into a God damm time warp” Brent called back.

“Really?” Ings dismissively replied with a hearty laugh, “Good luck with that one!”

“You really hate this guy, don’t you?” Pointer remarked to her.

“Does it show?” Brent asked with a wry smirk.

“Just a tad...” Pointer confirmed.

“Well, I have got to go now” Ings then called, “People to see, chaos to do; you know how it is so I shall see you around sometime, in the next life” he declared, “Cheerio!”

Brent and Pointer could do nothing except listen to Ing’s heckling laughter as it grew quieter with his departure.

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“Right, is everyone clear on the plan?” Tracy then went around the group one more time to be certain.

“Army guys kick the front door in and crack some heads whilst we go in around the back and nick the bastards?” Jack summarised.

“Yeah, that is pretty much it” Tracy agreed, “As soon as the Brigadier here gives the all clear, I want New Scotland Yard back online as soon as possible and mobile operations command moved forward to Parliament Square” she then added, “Simon, get me helicopters, lots of them.”

“I have already managed to get calls into our own India Nine Nine plus Kent & Sussex and Essex are sending theirs over as soon as we give the word” Fuller confirmed, “I also have alerted Thames River Division just in case anyone winds up in the drink, the river is after all right next door to the target location and someone may get their feet wet.”

“I’ll have my Transport Division lads and lasses secure Westminster and Lambeth Bridges as soon as we are on site” Jack then added.

“What about medical support?” Tracy then asked.

“Both HEMS helicopters primed and on standby over at St Georges’s and Guy’s Hospitals plus the London Ambulance Service are putting paramedic crews in key places ready to move in if and when we need them” Dent confirmed.

“Any word yet from Lieutenant Brent?” Tracy then asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“Still nothing” Fuller replied, “and we are still locked out of Damocles so they haven’t managed to disconnect the bad guys yet it seems.”

“Well, we can’t wait any longer” Tracy then consulted her watch briefly, “The country is on the brink of financial collapse and it’s getting dark out there which with no electricity supplies means people will be getting cold and scared.”

“Scimitar One to all Teams” the Brigadier called into his field radio set, “All units to

move to position two and standby, the balloon is about to go up.”

“Why is it always a balloon going up?” Jack asked out of curiosity.

“To be honest young man, I don’t have a clue” the Brigadier honestly admitted.

“Mind if I join in the fun?” Sir Richard then called as he arrived on the scene.

“I am surprised to see you here” Tracy commented, “I thought you would be drowning your sorrows over at your club.”

“The bar is shut on account of the power being off” Sir Richard admitted, “So I thought I might as well come down here and see the action.”

“Any word on where Taylor went?” Jack asked.

“It is like he vanished into thin air” Sir Richard confirmed.

“A pity that” Dent remarked, “Just before the Ixion mob scrambled our mainframe and turned out all the lights, we made a bit of a breakthrough.”

“Do tell” Sir Richard prompted.

“We got a match on Taylor’s face and details” Dent went on to explain, “You remember Interpol have been trying to identify a Kenyan based arms dealer for the last ten or fifteen years without success, a Charles Cooper?”

“The guy who has a long list of clients in the criminal and terrorist trades to whom he has supplied a lot of top of the range weapons and explosives, including the Ixion Brotherhood and The Hand?” Tracy recalled.

“That’s the one” Dent confirmed, “Well, Taylor and Cooper are in fact one and the same man. Neat huh?”

“That explains a lot...” Jack concluded.

“It does rather, doesn’t it?” Dent agreed.

“And we’ve lost him...” Sir Richard added with clear regret.

“Don’t worry, I am sure he will surface somewhere one day” Dent reassured him, but it was clear that Sir Richard, despite his many years of experience was not at all convinced.

“Okay, we should get going ourselves” Tracy then called, “Bob, you and your team are with me and Jack, you are in charge of transport.”

“In which case ladies and gentlemen, follow me” Jack called, heading off across Trafalgar Square towards the entrance of Charing Cross Underground Station nearby with Tracy, Long, Bob and his team in close formation.



Over the secure radio frequency that he had managed to secure for the operation, Fuller's voice could now be heard.

"All units from Silver Command" Fuller called, "Eyes down for a full house, the dice are rolling."

Jack led the team down the steps into the ticket hall of Charing Cross Underground Station which had been evacuated and closed not long after the power had been shut down.

Emergency lighting, both installed in the ceilings above them plus portable battery lights illuminated their journey down the stationary escalators until they reached an anonymous looking double door set into a wall that stretched right across the tunnel width in front of them.

"Ladies and gentlemen" Jack then declared as he proceeded to unlock the doors before throwing them open which revealed another set of stationary escalators beyond, leading further down, "Welcome to the old Jubilee Line."

"I had forgotten about this place" Tracy admitted as they continued on down into the now disused former Jubilee Line part of Charing Cross Station which had been closed to the public since the opening of the extension many years earlier that bypassed the station completely and took a different route east.

On the former westbound platform were Eisley and two armed specialist officers from the Transport Division who were stood by the train parked there.

"What the heck is that?" Bob asked as he saw the train, not the usual London Underground tube type passenger train but a pair of old maroon painted carriages of very old type stock which had on either end, a large yellow tube profile shaped locomotive.

"Work's train" Jack explained, "The locos work off batteries which means, with the power still off we can travel, largely undetected."

"All aboard" Eisley called as he indicated to one of the London Underground engineers in attendance who activated a rotary switch set into the body side and the old doors slid open.

Everyone duly filed aboard with Jack being the last who gave a raised hand as a signal to the driver at the leading cab of the front locomotive to proceed.

With a rather elderly sounding creaking and clanking, the doors slowly closed before, with a hum and a rumble, the two battery locomotives powered up, a hiss of air heralded the release of the brakes and the train slowly moved off into the running tunnel.

"What about other trains?" Tracy asked, having to raise her voice over the sound of the train's progress.

“That’s where we struck lucky” Jack explained, “This was stored in the overrun tunnel for some overnight engineering works and when the power went off, the only train in the section we are accessing is sufficiently far back that we can get clear of it.”

“At least something has gone our way for a change” Tracy remarked.

“Quite...” Jack agreed.

It was only a few minutes later, that after rattling across the junction where the extension route diverged off from the original alignment that they slowly arrived into the platform at Green Park.

One of the evacuated tube trains of the Jubilee Line stood partially in the platform where it had stopped when the power was cut off some hours earlier, completely empty, dark and silent, an atmosphere emphasised by the gloomy nature of the platform which was being illuminated only by emergency lighting.

“Just be a moment folks” came a call from the driver over the rather old PA system inside the two carriages, “Then we will be on our way.”

Tracy and the others watched as the driver, a cheery soul in amidst the doom and gloom of chaos that seemed to be enveloping everything, walked past on his way to the opposite end locomotive’s driving cab.

A few moments later the battery locomotives once more rumbled into life and with a shrill sound of the whistle, the train once again set off back the way they had just come but only as far as the junction where they veered off to the right onto the extension section.

The ride was not exactly comfortable, despite the relatively new nature of the track in the tunnels, the rolling stock was a pair of Underground tube carriages that dated back to the late 1930’s and were well past their best.

“Blimey, reminds me of the Northern Line when I was a lad” Bob remarked as his weaponry he was carrying clinked and rattled in response to the poor ride quality even at the quite low speed they were travelling.

“On batteries, maximum speed is fifteen miles an hour, supposedly” Jack explained.

A couple of minutes passed before they began to slow, and the platform tunnel of Westminster Underground Station appeared with the train coming to halt not far into the platform as there was another powerless train just in front of them with barely enough room to fit in.

“End of the line, all change” Jack then declared as the doors opened, and Tracy duly led the way out onto the platform where the protective platform edge doors of the extension stations had been wedged open to let them out.

“Remember your position lad” Jack reminded Long who was walking right behind and just to the left of Tracy as they headed down the platform towards the escalators.

“Of course, Sir” Long reconfirmed,

Despite having to climb the escalator steps themselves as they were non-operational because of the power supply being cut off, they soon reached the ticket hall near the top of the complex where a number of Transport Division officers were already present.

“How are we doing everyone?” Tracy asked as she joined the group.

“We still have Ixion Soldiers and associated nutters floating around outside Ma’am” one of the Transport Division officers confirmed, “Thus far that haven’t bothered sticking their noses down here for some reason.”

“Lucky for us” Jack remarked, “Like the Brigadier said earlier, enthusiastic but inexperienced.”

“Right, where is this entrance?” Tracy then asked.

“Down through here Ma’am” Easley led the way ahead.

“Okay, Jack you stay here and co-ordinate your guys” Tracy instructed, “Bob, Lieutenant Long and the rest of you with me.”

Jack watched slightly apprehensively as Tracy followed Easley and led the others off down the side corridor.

“And now, the fun begins...” he remarked quietly to himself.

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With no power, not even to streetlights, the headlights of the Brigadier's military vehicles were dazzling as they made their way through the streets that ran around the Westminster Secure Area, deploying to each of the six potential points of entry, the main one being at the north end of Whitehall near Horse Guards Parade.

“All teams from Scimitar One” the Brigadier called over his field radio as he dismounted from his command Land Rover “Report your status please” he then requested.

The various teams of his men now deployed around the perimeter of the Zone reported in and confirmed they were all ready to move.

“All right everyone” the Brigadier then confirmed, “time to ruin these guys evening, go on my command, not before and I want them taken as quickly as possible with as little force as necessary.”

“Control reports that we have a green light, we can go when ready” one of the

Brigadiers men confirmed.

“In which case, saddle up everyone and let's go” the Brigadier ordered whereupon he returned to the front seat of his command Land Rover and they headed off.

Moments later the Brigadier's men were taking the opportunity of the lack of lighting to move swiftly into position in the vicinity of the main gateway into the Westminster Secure Zone before two of the men snuck forwards and placed something on the ground at the very base of the gates and then withdrew as swiftly as they had arrived.

“Ready Sir” one of the two men then confirmed.

“Thank you, Corporal,” the Brigadier responded before returning to his field radio, “Knock, knock...” he then called.

On his word, the item that had been placed at the base of the gates detonated with a large explosion that demolished the gates and sent the Ixion Soldiers who were inside the perimeter into a mass panic.

“Go, go, go!” the Brigadier then swiftly called whereupon all around the Secure Zone perimeter, his men flooded in through the various entry points as well as across Westminster Bridge.

The Soldiers of Ixion reacted quickly but with a sense of panic, their enthusiasm saw them try and fend off the invaders, but their inexperience saw them quickly subdued and restrained.

“All right, let's go and join the party!” Jennifer Caverner called to the officers gathered with her in the Reception Area of New Scotland Yard as soon as they saw the chaotic scenes in the streets outside where the Brigadier's men were overpowering the Ixion Soldiers amid much shouting and the occasional gunshot.

Before they knew what was happening, the four Ixion Soldiers who had been on guard immediately outside the entrance of New Scotland Yard were also overwhelmed by Security Service officers as they poured out of the building.

“Good evening gentlemen” Jennifer called as she slammed one of the Ixion Soldiers face first into the bonnet of a parked car whilst the others were similarly unceremoniously brought down, “You are nicked!”

Orbison was still broadcasting to his followers worldwide when he became aware of the developments outside to which he merely smiled and turned towards the main camera.

“Well, my friends, it seems that the party is really getting into full swing” Orbison declared, “Time to send out the berserkers!!!”

“What the hell are berserkers?” Fuller asked to Dent and Sir Richard as they watched

the screen.

“I don't have a clue...” Dent responded.

“Corporal!” the Brigadier called as the chaotic scenes in the streets began to calm down with the swift overrunning of the Ixion Soldiers beginning to come to a conclusion, “Make sure all the side streets are double checked and I want a full guard on Downing Street.”

“Yes Sir” the Corporal responded before heading off with several soldiers.

Orbison was still pontificating when he suddenly pointed straight up whereupon the music stopped and the Followers in the chamber with him immediately fell silent.

“And now my friends” Orbison almost whispered, we have had some fun and games, some great words of wisdom and sent some poor unfortunate souls on into a parallel universe via The Wheel...”

“The Wheel...” the Followers in the Chamber responded in reverence.

“Oh, I do love it when that happens” Orbison remarked “and now it time to relax with cocktail hour...”

“He has finally flipped...” Fuller remarked as he and the others continued to watch on the television screen in the Mobile Operation Unit.

“Do you know what my favourite cocktail is my friends?” Orbison then asked, looking directly at the camera, his face filling the screens of everyone who was watching the broadcast, “Molotov...” he then declared with a big knowing smile.

“Oh hell...” Dent responded, “I think we had better get rolling, right now.”

“Sol!” Fuller called up to Baxter who was sat in the driving seat, “Floor the bastard!”

“Flooring the bastard, Sir!” Baxter responded, starting up the engine and, with the rest of the Security Service vehicles in attendance, speeding off.

Inside the Secure Zone, things were calming down with the Brigadier's men now securing most of the area and mopping up the last few Ixion Soldiers who were still hanging around.

“Silver Command from Scimitar One” the Brigadier called over the field radio, “The infestation has been dealt with, you can come on in.”

“We are already on the way” Fuller called urgently, the sound of rattling and banging in the background as the Mobile Operations Unit was travelling at some speed and the equipment inside it plus its passengers were being bounced around all over the place, “I think we are in trouble.”

“Repeat last message please” the Brigadier responded, clearly confused but his confusion was soon explained.

“CHAOS!!!!” came a sudden cry from the direction of the old Palace of Westminster.

“What the hell...?” the Brigadier responded as he turned and saw a large number of Ixion Followers appear, flooding out of various buildings and access points which was when the missiles and petrol bombs began to fly indiscriminately through the air.

“COVER!” the Brigadier called to his men as they dived for cover whilst all around Parliament Square and surrounding streets, petrol bombs began to explode and rocks, bricks and other missiles started to rain down all over the place.

“Jesus Christ!” Jennifer exclaimed as two petrol bombs crashed into the pavement immediately outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard forcing her and the other officers to scatter and take cover.

“Lima Papa One to any unit receiving” Jennifer called into her radio despite knowing it was probably compromised “We have got petrol bomb toting nutters attacking New Scotland Yard, Jesus!” she then screamed as several windows were smashed.

Fuller heard his wife's call for help as the Mobile Operations Unit which he was on board came through the still smouldering remains of the main gate into the Secure Zone accompanied by many other Security Service vehicles.

“Sol, to The Yard, quick!” Fuller ordered.

“You got it Sir!” Baxter agreed, “Unit’s three and seven with us please” he then called over the radio to the drivers of two of the personnel carrier minibuses with them.

Overhead, the Security Service helicopter, call sign India Nine Nine arrived and with its powerful searchlight trained down on the ground, began feeding back live video footage of the ongoing events on the ground.

“Looks like the majority of the action is centred on Parliament Square and Embankment from Portcullis House up to The Yard” Dent remarked as he quickly analysed the video feeds on the screens in front of them.

“Whoa!” Baxter called out as he was forced to swerve on approach to New Scotland Yard when a scaffolding board flew past, only narrowly missing them.

“This is getting bloody dangerous!” Sir Richard remarked as the sound of small missiles bouncing off the roof of the vehicle began to be heard.

In the main Reception area of New Scotland Yard, Jennifer was on the front line with the officers from inside the building and making a good effort keeping them away from the doors and windows despite odd missile managing to make it through overhead.

“Looks like they ran out of petrol bombs pretty quick” Jennifer remarked as she helped a couple of officers unceremoniously restrain one of the Ixion Brotherhood rioters on the floor, “Oh, you are nicked by the way” she then informed him.

“Given how much petrol costs these days, I am astounded they can afford it” Janice the Receptionist remarked as she waded in and helped out with restraining some of the detainees.

“CHAOS! CHAOS! CHAOS!” the chanting intensified which caused Jennifer to look out towards the entrance with a slightly apprehensive look.

“Now what?!?” she then exclaimed.

“Looks like the cavalry is here” Divisional Commander Matthews confirmed as he joined her in the Reception Area.

Outside, the officers in the two personnel carriers led by Fuller had deployed and made a quick start of dealing with the mob, some hand-to-hand fighting being required to subdue them.

“Oh...” Fuller remarked just as he thought that he managed to get through the chaos only to be confronted by another smirking Ixion Brotherhood Follower, holding a lit petrol bomb.

“To Life Immortal...” the Follower then called and was about to throw the petrol bomb straight at Fuller and the other officers when he was suddenly struck across the back of the head and fell to the ground whereupon Jennifer quickly grabbed the bottle before it hit the ground and swiftly handed it across to an arriving Fire Brigade officer who quickly and safely dealt with it.

“...and you are nicked and all!” she then declared.

“Nice work my dear” Fuller complimented her.

“It’s quite fun to be in on the action for a change rather than being one of Her Majesty’s glorified taxi drivers” she then admitted.

“Is everything all right here?” Fuller then asked, looking around.

“Just mopping up the last of the loonies now” Jennifer admitted, “Can’t offer you a cup of tea though, the leccy is still off and we are going to need a job lot of new windows in the morning.”

“Commander Fuller!” Dent then called from the Mobile Operations Unit still parked nearby, “I think we had better move.”

“You go on, we’ve got this covered” Jennifer reassured him.

“You sure?” Fuller responded.

“Go” Jennifer reiterated “I’ll catch up with you when this is all over.”

By now the efforts of the Brigadier’s men and the Security Service officers meant that the majority of the fighting had now been pushed back and confined mostly to Parliament Square area in the shadow of the former Houses of Parliament.

“You four get over there and help out those guys, the rest of you with me, we need to cover Westminster Bridge” Jack ordered, having to raise his voice over the intense noise of fighting, the occasional small explosion and the helicopters hovering overhead.

Quickly the Transport Division officers deployed from the main entrances of Westminster Underground Station, taking some of the rioters by surprise.

“Don’t even think about it pal!” Jack then exclaimed as he used his telescopic baton to swiftly bring down one attacker who was about to strike him, but instead found himself on the ground in agony with a probable broken leg.

“Now stay there, unless you want the other one broken that is” Jack confirmed.

Directly below Jack’s feet, Tracy and the others with her were making their way slowly and carefully through the maze of old passageways and tunnels that are to be found beneath the old Houses of Parliament.

“Sounds like quite a party upstairs” she remarked as they could just hear the sounds of the ongoing battle outside echoing down the passageways.

“I am sure they have it all under control Ma’am” Bob reassured her.

“Indeed” Tracy readily agreed before stopping at the junction of two passageways and then by the light of a torch, consulting a roughly drawn plan that Grey had managed to put together for her from memory earlier.

“Where to Ma’am?” Long asked.

“Down here and then left I think” Tracy indicated off to her right.

“We’ll take a look” Bob called, “Stay here” he then added before he and his team headed off to check the route ahead.

“May I ask a question Ma’am?” Long requested as he and Tracy stood alone.

“Of course” Tracy confirmed.

“Do I get any overtime for this?” Long then jokingly asked.

“I’ll see what I can do...” Tracy confirmed with a wry smile.



“Thank you, Ma’am,” Long replied.

“There is one thing” Tracy then added, “I know you have been assigned to stay by my side throughout this operation however there may come a point during this evening’s proceedings where I must continue on alone, if and when that moment comes, I need you to step aside and allow me to carry on, no questions asked. Is that understood?”

“Yes Ma’am” Long confirmed.

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” Tracy replied which was when Long was about to ask something else when they were interrupted by Bob and his team returning.

“All right, show time” he then declared.

“We found them?” Tracy asked, sensing the time was approaching for the final confrontation.

“It looks like most of the Followers headed outside to cause mayhem for our guys up there on the ground” Bob explained, “I reckon there is about a couple of dozen left in the main chamber, plus a few stragglers dotted about the place.”

“Sounds good” Tracy agreed.

“We can probably make our way to the upper levels without being detected and then we will have the higher ground” Bob continued “But it’s risky.”

“Everything is risky” Tracy reminded him, “If we don’t do anything, the country will be reduced to a bankrupt pile of ashes at the hands of Orbison and his band of lunatics.”

“In which case, let’s get going” Bob suggested, “Alpha Team, you take these two staircases here” he indicated on the plan “Get us eyes down on the main chamber and cover them.”

“You got it boss” the leader of the Alpha Team confirmed before they duly headed off.

“Bravo Team” Bob then continued, “We are going to do a sweep of all these ancillary rooms, find this O’Dell character if we can.”

“We need him alive” Tracy emphasised, “If Brent and Pointer are unable to shut down the Damocles connection then O’Dell is our only hope of getting back full control.”

“I can’t guarantee he may not get a bit damaged in the process, but we will give it a shot, or not as the case maybe” Bob confirmed.

“And I am just going to walk in the front door” Tracy then confirmed.

“Huh?!” Bob responded.

“Well, someone has to confront Orbison face to face” Tracy explained, “He and I have unfinished personal business.

“I know from years of experience that talking you out of this will be a waste of my breath” Bob concluded.

“Very wise words” Tracy all but complimented him.

“Lieutenant Long” Bob then addressed the young officer directly, “Remember what I said.”

“Yes Sir” Long confirmed.

“All right everyone, good luck” Tracy then called before the group duly split up with Tracy heading off as Long remained in close attendance just behind and to her left.

“And remember what I said too Lieutenant” Tracy then reminded him.

“Yes, Ma’am Long responded.

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“Lima Tango One to anyone still listening” Jack called over his radio as he stood in the centre of Westminster Bridge where his officers had just finished securing it and dealing with the last of the rioters who had been fighting on it.

“Silver Commander receiving” came Fuller’s voice over the radio.

“We have got the Embankment and Westminster Bridge area largely cleared barring stragglers” Jack confirmed, “The Brigadier and his men seem to have Parliament Square largely under control too.”

“Yeah Jack, that is how we read it from here” Fuller confirmed, “We are just moving forward to scoop up the detainees now and the Fire Service are about to start dealing with the wreckage.”

“Any word on when the lights are coming back on?” Jack then asked as he looked around the dark city surrounding him, just the light from vehicles, some fires that were still burning and the two helicopter spotlights being trained down on the scene providing any real illumination.

“No, nothing” Fuller confirmed with regret, “I reckon something has happened to them.

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Brent and Pointer were still trapped in the Damocles System server chamber deep in the lowest levels of the former Aldwych Underground Station.

“Here Gareth, take a look at this” Brent called whereupon Pointer struggled to his feet and joined her.

“Looks like some sort of status screen” Pointer concluded on seeing the screen that Brent had just discovered, “How did you find it?”

“I was bored and started pushing buttons” Brent admitted, “Most of them just lit up a little sign saying do not press this button again but this one activated this screen.”

“This is the live feed from one of the Metropolitan Division’s helicopters I think” Pointer concluded, “That looks like Parliament Square.”

“Looks like there is quite a punch up going on down or rather up there” Brent remarked.

“And there is not damm thing we can do to help” Pointer added, somewhat dejected.

Brent looked around for inspiration and then noticed something off to one side in the shadows of the curved tunnel wall.

“We are not out of this game yet my love” Brent then commented, “I have an idea...”

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“And so my friends, the country burns, my Followers sacrifice themselves to the Greater Good, the cause, the rallying call of chaos!” Orbison continued almost with a sense of pride at the events that were unfolding outside “and here in our Citadel of Chaos, we salute them!” he then gestured all around.

“Oh, I do wish he would shut up...” Tracy quietly remarked as she and Long continued to make their way discreetly through the maze of corridors and passageways on the ground level of the building, only pausing when they had needed to duck out of sight of any wandering Followers of Facilitators who were outside of the main Chamber.

“He does like the sound of his own voice, doesn’t he Ma’am?” Long commented.

“Not half...” Tracy readily agreed.

Suddenly she stopped walking which caused Long to stop himself immediately behind her.

“This is where I must continue on alone, Lieutenant” Tracy then confirmed, glancing back with sincerity.

“Understood Ma’am” Long slightly reluctantly agreed.

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” Tracy then called “Feel free to hang about though” she then added before taking a deep breath, straightening her uniform tunic and then continuing on, leaving Long to look on as she disappeared into the shadows ahead.

Turning a corner in the near darkness, something attracted her attention in a room off to her left which made Tracy take a closer look.

“Well, there it is...” Tracy then remarked to herself as she entered the room and saw in among a number of items on display, three ceremonial swords, one of which was her own, “I was wondering where you had got to” she then declared as she took her sword off its display stand and looked at it.

“Come on, we have work to do” she then declared, putting the sword in its scabbard back in its rightful place on her uniform belt and then heading back out of the room.

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“Let us look, my friends at the state of play” Orbison then announced as the festivities in the Chamber continued, “With just ten minutes to go, our Kingdom of Chaos is almost complete” he declared, in a state of euphoria, “and then we will reign supreme.”

At that moment the double doors at the far end ahead of Orbison were thrown open and the two Ixion Guards on either side suddenly found themselves on the receiving end of a piece of timber which was swiftly smacked around their heads sending them crashing to the floor.

“Surprise!” Tracy called as she stood in the doorway, the piece of timber brandished in her hand.

“Ah...” Orbison responded, “To what do we owe the displeasure?” he then asked.

“You personally are under arrest for the theft of my sword” Tracy casually responded, indicating it on her uniform belt and casually chucking the piece of timber aside, “and the rest of you are nicked for trespass, breaking and entering, inciting a riot, affray, arson, perverting the course of justice, murder, manslaughter, membership of a banned organisation and I am sure I could probably work double parking and cattle rustling into the list of charges with a bit of work.”

“You and whose army?” Orbison remarked, distinctly unimpressed.

Tracy sounded a shrill whistle which was when the specialist armed officers appeared all around them in the old viewing galleries above, their weapons pointed directly down upon Orbison and his Followers.

“Now” Tracy then paced up and down a bit either side of the Chamber, “We can do this the easy way or the hard way.”

“I and my Followers have a Public Immunity from Prosecution Certificate, remember?” Orbison confidently reminded her.

“Oh yes, that” Tracy replied as she proceeded to take a piece of paper out from her inside uniform tunic pocket, “You mean this?” she then indicated the document, “I

have a message for you from the Prime Minister and the Attorney General regarding this” she then proceeded to casually tear the document up into little pieces and toss them in the air.

Orbison looked on, a sense of intense yet controlled anger on his face.

“So, are you going to come quietly?” Tracy then asked.

“CHAOS!!” Orbison shouted which was the cue for a massive fight to begin.

“I guess not then” Tracy concluded as a Facilitator tried to attack her only to be on the receiving end of her right fist which sent the attacker reeling into a pile of construction materials.

In the balconies above, the armed officers were fighting hand to hand with more Followers and Facilitators who charged at them whilst on the floor of the Chamber, Bob and his team arrived on the scene and found themselves similarly engaged.

“You!” Tracy called to Orbison, pointing directly at him through the mayhem that was occurring all around them.

Orbison casually strode over to the main camera and smiled into it.

“We’ll be back after the break...” he then calmly announced before the screens went blank.

Tracy had to fight her way through the Chamber to reach the other end, just in time to see Orbison disappear behind the location where the Commons Speaker's Chair used to be located.

“Alpha One to all Units” Tracy called over her radio, “Main chamber is currently a battlefield, we could use some backup.”

“Silver Control to Alpha One” Fuller responded, “Sending in everyone we can spare now” he confirmed.

As Tracy disappeared through the exit after Orbison, Long emerged from in amongst the mêlée, looked across at Bob who nodded in understanding and indicated to the young officer to follow.

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“Look, the way I see it we have no choice” Brent remarked as she remerged from the shadows carrying a fire axe.

“Err Esme what are going to do?” Pointer asked, sensing a potentially bad idea approaching.

“Something almost certainly unwise” Brent admitted as she brandished the axe, “If I don't make it, I wanted you to know, you're great!”

“Thanks...” Pointer responded.

“Geronimo!” Brent then shouted, swinging the axe over arm, and smashing it into the cable feeds that led towards the box they had found earlier.

As soon as the axe struck the cables there was an almighty electrical explosion that sent Brent flying across the chamber and impacting into the banks of equipment on the opposite side.

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Orbison was up on the roof of the former Houses of Parliament when all around him, the City began to spring back into life, power being restored and the lights in the streets and buildings all around coming on.

“Oh dear...” Tracy called which caused Orbison to look around.

“You just never give up, do you?” he then called.

“No, I don’t” Tracy called back, having to shout over the sound of the helicopters hovering overhead, “but you should, it’s over, you’ve lost!”

“Brother, what do you say?” Orbison then casually asked which was when Ings appeared from the shadows and charged straight at Tracy, knocking her down.

“Remember me?” Ings then scowled at her.

“Unfortunately, yes” Tracy confirmed as she tried to get up only for Ings to kick her in the ribs and send her back down again and then for swift measure, kick away her firearm as well which clattered off across the roof into the darkness.

“I am going to enjoy this!” Ings then declared as he took out a large military style serrated hunting knife and wielded it menacingly.

Suddenly three gunshots rang out, striking Ings in the chest who managed to turn just enough to see Long over on the other side of the roof, his firearm still firmly held to his shoulder and his aim continuing to concentrate on him.

Ings could still move and still posed a threat to Tracy who was on the ground just ahead of him so Long did not hesitate to open fire again, sending three more rounds into the target which saw him drop the knife and start to stagger backwards.

“Watch out for the...” Orbison began to call when Ings fell through a glass skylight and disappeared from sight, a loud crash from inside the building being heard a moment later as his body smashed into the floor of the Chamber below, “...never mind.”

With Long’s help, Tracy got back up on her feet before taking something that he had brought up with him on instructions from Bob a couple of minutes earlier.

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” she called to him, “Now it is time for you to leave.”

“Yes Ma’am” Long confirmed before discreetly leaving again.

“Never underestimate hidden talents!” Tracy

“You seem to be rapidly running out of friends” Tracy then casually remarked as the two of them faced each other alone on the roof, “Got any left?”.

“No...” Orbison admitted.

“You were complicit in the death of my beloved husband so this, here and now is personal” she then explained to Orbison, “Just you and me.”

“I have an unfair advantage” Orbison then remarked, indicating the firearm located in a shoulder holster beneath his jacket.

“In which case, why don’t we settle this the old-fashioned way?” Tracy then suggested, revealing that the item Long had given her a few moments earlier was one of the other ceremonial swords which she held up before throwing it over to Orbison who expertly caught it.

In response he initially just nodded, took out the firearm and threw it away before pulling the sword from the scabbard and holding it aloft.

“Let’s end this!” Tracy then challenged him, “Right here, right now.”

“Why not?” Orbison readily agreed.

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“Get on to The Yard and tell them we need at least three more prisoner transports down here” Divisional Commander Matthews called to one of his officers before heading across Parliament Square, weaving around burning debris and boarding the Mobile Operations Unit now parked not far from the main gates of the former Houses of Parliament.

As he reached it, he was joined by a battered, bruised but defiantly undefeated Brigadier.

“Please tell me this is good news?” Sir Richard prompted as the two men came aboard.

“Bar the odd straggler that has slipped off into the night” Matthews confirmed, “I think we have got them all.”

“Your lads and lasses are just rounding up the last ones now” the Brigadier then added, “and Bob’s teams are flushing out the remaining lunatics out of the building now.”

With the power back on and control restored to the Damocles System, Fuller was extremely busy working away on the computer terminal trying to undo as much of the damage as possible when he received a call.

“Go ahead India Nine Nine” he responded to the call from the Metropolitan Division’s helicopter.

“What?!?” he then exclaimed before transferring the video feed from the helicopter to one of the larger screens, “Yeah, I can see it now.”

“What’s occurring?” Dent asked as he and the others approached Fuller and then looked at the screen.

“India Nine Nine just found the Chief Superintendent” Fuller indicated the screen, “She is on the roof with Orbison.”

“What the hell is she doing?” Sir Richard asked, “Are they having a sword fight?”

“It looks like it” Fuller confirmed, “Maybe she forgot her light sabre?”

“Oh, very Errol Flynn” Sir Richard remarked.

“We had best get backup up there right away” Fuller reached for the radio handset on the desk in front of him only for Sir Richard to discreetly take it from him and replace it again.

“This is a battle that Tracy needs to fight by herself” Sir Richard remarked to which Fuller slowly nodded in agreement “Besides, I am sure she has backup of a more spiritual kind up there right now.”

Up on the roof of the old Houses of Parliament, there was a few seconds of silence between the two punctuated only by the gusty wind and the distant echoes of emergency service sirens in the streets below and the whirr of helicopters high above.

Their eyes met and then suddenly they both charged at each other, clashing in the middle with the sword blades striking with a loud metallic clang.

The final battle had begun...

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The clash of metal against metal as their sword blades struck each other and also deflected of surrounding stonework and scaffolding filled the air as Tracy and Orbison fought each other valiantly.

Neither of them took any notice of the helicopters hovering overhead as they both kept battling away, the first blood drawn going to Orbison who managed with a swift change of direction, to nick Tracy's upper left arm, cutting through her uniform tunic, drawing blood and causing her to grimace for a moment but failing to dampen her



determination to keep fighting.

“Is that the best you've got?” Tracy asked as they both paused fighting but still keeping each other at swords length apart.

“Where the hell did you learn to sword fight?” Orbison then asked, panting as both he and Tracy were becoming tired.

“High school under sixteen's fencing champion three years on the bounce” Tracy confirmed, “I am surprised your old buddy Taylor didn't have than in his file.”

“He probably did but neglected to tell me” Orbison admitted.

“I'll remember to mention it when I get my hands on him” Tracy confirmed with clear determination.

“Don't worry my dear” Orbison responded, “Assuming you get off this roof alive, you will be seeing him again, one day.”

“Come on then...” Tracy then taunted him.

“Very well, let's end this, Chief Superintendent” Orbison then declared, saluting her with the sword before returning the blade to point towards her.

“Absolutely, Lord Chaos” Tracy agreed “En Garde!”

“Arrrrgghhh!” Orbison shouted as he charged at Tracy only for her to quickly deflect his blade away with her own.

The fight went on, blow for blow across the roof as they gradually moved towards the east end of the building in the shadow of Big Ben, more helicopters hovering overhead, spotlights shining down on them and everyone watching via the live television feeds, holding their breath.

Sparks flew as their swords hit the surrounding stonework and both combatants began to tire by which time they were up against the balustrade and Orbison had his back to the wall.

With nowhere left to go, Orbison lunged straight at Tracy only for her to swiftly sidestep him and counter lunge, thrusting her sword deep into her opponent's chest before letting it go.

Orbison's sword fell from his hand and clattered to the ground before he stumbled backwards as Tracy watched on with determination.

“I, err...” Orbison stammered as he looked down at the bloody hole in his chest from which just the hilt of the sword was visible, blood now also all over his hands where he had tried to keep it inside of him “I'm supposed to be immortal.”

“I always find that things never quite match the picture on the packet” Tracy

remarked.

Orbison looked up and smirked as if in agreement before toppling backwards over the balustrade and falling from the roof towards the ground below.

Tracy calmly stepped forward and looked down over the balustrade where she could see Orbison's body where it had just crashed landed on the road surface at the north end of Westminster Bridge.

Down on the ground Orbison looked up, his face and body covered with blood which was also starting to flow across the tarmac surface of the road, the last few breaths of life passing when he became aware of footsteps as an individual with hard soled shoes approached.

“People who act like silly little children really shouldn’t play with knives” Jack remarked as he reached down and pulled the sword out before looking at the blood stained blade with disdain.

Orbison looked up and saw Jack's silhouette standing over him as light shone down from behind before his life drained away and he died.

Jack knelt down and checked for a pulse but found none; instead, he gently closed Orbison's eyelids with reverence before standing up again.

“To life, not so immortal” he then remarked before turning smartly on his heels and looking back towards the end of the bridge where a huge gathering of emergency and Security Service personnel, vehicles and equipment were gathered, the blue flashing lights almost blinding in their intensity.

“All right guys” Jack then called “Get him off of my bridge!”

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“Just been confirmed, Orbison is dead” Fuller called as he received reports over the radio from various sources.

“Considering he just fell over a hundred feet with a sword stuck right through him, that is hardly a scoop” Sir Richard remarked.

“They are scraping him up off the road now” Fuller confirmed.

“I had best get back to Thames House” Dent declared, “With the power back on, it will take a bit of time to sort out the mainframe and get everything back on an even keel.”

“There is going to be a lot of fall out over this” Fuller remarked.

“Yeah...” Sir Richard reluctantly agreed “but if they want an Inquiry Committee Chairman, they can look elsewhere, I am officially retiring.”

“Really?” Dent asked, semi-disbelieving.

“If anyone wants me, and I sincerely hope they don’t, I shall be somewhere where I can find a decent single malt” Sir Richard then declared as he got up and made for the door, “Goodnight!”

“He’ll be back...” Dent smirked in response as they watched on one of the camera feeds Sir Richard calmly walk away across the wreckage strewn lawn and disappear out of sight like a ghost.

“Did you know they are granting him a knighthood?” Fuller then asked.

“What for?” Dent asked, somewhat astonished, “Services to the distillery industry?”

-----

Bob and his team were making one final sweep of the building when he came across Long, still on standby adjacent to the roof access.

“She is still up there Sir” Long confirmed.

“All right Lieutenant, you can stand down now, go and freshen up and get a cuppa” Bob confirmed whereupon the young officer nodded and proceeded to leave.

“Well done” Bob then complimented Long who looked back.

“Thank you, Sir,” he replied.

“Sir” one of Bob's officers called as he received a message over her radio earpiece, “The Prime Minister has arrived.”

“Oh, seriously?” Bob responded, clearly unimpressed, “All right, come on then” he then urged.

“Erm, what about the Chief Superintendent boss?” the officer then asked, nodding towards the roof access.

“I think she needs some time alone” Bob admitted, “Come on, let’s go and escort the Prime Minister about before he gets damaged.”

Tracy was indeed alone, up on the roof of the former Houses of Parliament, sitting on a pile of abandoned scaffolding planks, watching the situation below in Parliament Square and beyond.

The situation had calmed down considerably in the last fifteen minutes with most of the detainees now taken away, the various small fires either out or reduced to mere smouldering smoke and the helicopters moved off.

On the northern approach to Westminster Bridge, Orbison's body was being taken

away by the Coroner's Office officials whilst the point where he had hit the ground was now taped off.

All around her, the lights were on across the city and beyond, life was finally returning to normal.

Looking down, she could see the Prime Minister's car arriving with a full Security Service motorcycle escort, carefully picking its way through the wreckage and debris from the fighting before coming to a stand adjacent to the Mobile Operations Unit.

“Well love, what do you think?” Tracy then asked her husband whose spirit she was always confident remained with her long after his death.

“Yeah, gunfights, swords, explosions, nutters” Tracy then concluded, “Just another day at the office really.”

Slowly she stood up and stretched her arms, stifling a yawn at the same time before curiosity got the better of her and she wandered over to the broken skylight and looked down.

Directly below lay the body of Ings where he had landed with some considerable force on the part of the Government front benches where, in days gone by the Prime Minister of the day and his or her senior ministers used to sit.

“Is he actually dead this time?” Tracy called down to the officers who were conducting the final searches.

“Very Ma'am” one of the officers confirmed, “If the bullets didn't kill him, hitting the seat back and shattering his spine almost certainly did.”

“Couldn't have happened to a more deserving fellow” Tracy responded, “Carry on” she then instructed.

“My, my, my” the Prime Minister remarked as he entered the old parliamentary chamber and saw the damage and neglect for himself, “What a mess...”

“Bit of paint and some new wiring, it will be fine” Tracy called which prompted the Prime Minister to look up.

“Good evening, Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister called up to her.

“Mind the body” Tracy quickly warned as she saw the Prime Minister was not watching where he was going.

“Oh!” the Prime Minister quickly stepped back which was when he saw the body for the first time, “Eurgh...” he then reacted in disgust.

“Prime Minister” Tracy called, “Meet the late Colonel Ings.”

“I suspect the pleasure is all mine I am sure...” the Prime Minister responded as he

carefully stepped around the body, “Where is that wacko Orbison?” he then asked.

“They are just scraping his mortal remnants up now” Tracy confirmed with more than a subtle hint of satisfaction.

“Then, it's over?” the Prime Minister tentatively suggested.

“Pretty much, yeah” Tracy agreed although deep down she knew things such as this were never truly over in reality, “Come on up, just you” she then gestured upwards.

“I'll be right up” the Prime Minister confirmed.

Bob and his escorting officers watched on as the Prime Minister disappeared from sight.

A couple of minutes later, he arrived on the roof and carefully made his way through the abandoned construction debris and sword damage to where Tracy had resumed her seat and was once again looking out across the city skyline.

“Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister called, “I err swung by Scotland Yard on the way over.”

“Is everyone okay over there?” Tracy asked with obvious concern.

“A little battle weary and battered” the Prime Minister confirmed “but all okay. Going to need the attentions of a good glazier in the morning though.”

“And you?” Tracy then asked directly.

“Me?” the Prime Minister as slightly taken aback by the question, “Well, I think I am all right, it has been such a rush the last few days that I haven't really had a moment to sit down and think about it.”

“Do you remember something called sleep?” Tracy then asked with a wry smile.

“I vaguely recall the concept” the Prime Minister ruefully replied, “So, what happened to Orbison?”

“He, or rather what was left of him left in the back of a company meat wagon, zipped up in a rubber bag a few minutes ago” Tracy confirmed, “and most of his immediate Followers and Facilitators are either unconscious, under arrest or both.”

“We are going to have a problem with sabotage for a while” the Prime Minister admitted.

“What's new?” Tracy responded, rolling her eyes.

“I thought you ought to know, as of midnight tonight, all the so-called State of Emergency legislation and restrictions are scrapped” the Prime Minister went on to confirm, “Full jurisdictional control over policing and law enforcement is restored to

the National Police & Security Service and the Westminster Secure Zone will be scrapped as soon as is practical and the area reopened to the public once more.”

“Almost back to normal” Tracy mused, “It’s weird, I am glad my husband did not live to see the collapse into chaos the country went through, the whole pandemic fiasco, the Committee riding roughshod over everything, but I would do anything to go back in time and save him.”

“I was there when it happened” the Prime Minister reminded her, “Having a brandy in the Cabinet Office Bar with the Foreign Secretary if I recall correctly when bang and all hell broke loose” he recalled, “there was nothing anyone could have done.”

“Yeah, I know...” Tracy sadly agreed.

“I had a brief chat with Jayne Grey before I set out” the Prime Minister then tentatively ventured, “She seems to have got the distinct impression that you might be thinking about quitting...”

“The thought has crossed my mind more than once I will admit” Tracy confirmed, “but I think with so much work to do, all the damage to repair, I shall stick around for a bit.”

“That’s a relief...” the Prime Minister let out a sigh of relief as he got up with Tracy following likewise.

“Besides, someone has to keep an eye on that young scamp down there” she looked down towards the front entrance of Westminster Underground Station with an obvious smile and look of pride.

“Huh?” the Prime Minister responded and then saw Jack down there, still giving orders and directing operations with expert efficiency and authority, “Oh!” he then realised.

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“Yeah, can you tell the London Underground guys that they can have Westminster Tube back in the morning” Jack called over his mobile, “It is going to take the rest of the night to clear this mess up I reckon.”

At that point Eisley called over to Jack to get his attention.

“Guv!” Eisley called loudly, “Someone to see you” he then indicated inside the station entrance.

“I’ll be right over” Jack responded before handing over control of the area to one of his other officers.

As he approached the entrance of the station, Megan appeared in her motorised wheelchair, stopped on the pavement and then surveyed the area.

“Hello love!” Jack called, delighted to see her whereupon they embraced and kissed.

“I had to come and see if you were all right” Megan explained, “It looked like hell on Earth on the television news coverage.”

“Just a bit of a mess” Jack admitted.

“Yeah, I can usually see where you have been...” Megan replied with a smirk.

“Still doesn’t quite beat that huge hole in Westminster Bridge that The Commander managed to blow that time” Bob confirmed as he passed by.

“Oh yes, I had forgotten about that one” Tracy recalled as she joined them along with the Prime Minister, “Wound up in the river if I recall.”

“Well, unless anyone has any objections, I am going to round up my guys and get back to some good old fashioned police work” Jack then declared.

“Sounds like a plan” Tracy agreed as they all walked together towards the Mobile Operations Unit parked nearby where the Brigadier and a couple of his men were waiting.

“Chief Superintendent” the Brigadier called as she approached, “I am delighted to report that the area is secure. With your permission I will leave a detachment of my people here to help with the clear up whilst I take the rest back to base for some much needed rest and refreshment.”

“By all means Brigadier” Tracy confirmed, “Thank you for everything” she then shook his hand.

“My pleasure” the Brigadier confirmed, “Good night, everyone” he then called before turning smartly on his feet and heading off.

“What the hell...?” came the exclamation of a familiar voice inside the Mobile Operations Unit which prompted them all to go inside where they found a rather confused looking Fuller, still sat at his computer terminal.

“Something wrong?” Tracy asked as she approached.

“I have managed to get everything as near as possible back online and moving again” Fuller confirmed “but now I seem to have this irritating beeping noise coming from somewhere.”

“That’s not random beeping, that’s Morse Code I think” the Prime Minister interjected to looks of surprise from the others, “I was in the Naval Cadets when I was young” he then explained.

“He’s right” Megan agreed, “I recall some of it from when I was a Girl Guide, got a badge and everything.”

“What is the message then?” Jack asked.

“Seems to be from someone called Esme I think” the Prime Minister, “Err, trapped in chamber or something like that.”

“Brent and Pointer, they must still be down in Aldwych” Tracy quickly concluded.

“My jurisdiction I reckon” Jack urgently confirmed as he got on his radio, “Lima Tango Two from One” he then called, “Mos, rustle up some transport, we got a job on.”

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“I spy with my little eye something beginning with R” Pointer remarked as he held the injured Brent in his arms.

“Rubble?” Brent responded.

“Very good” Pointer confirmed.

“Well, when you live with your mother and four siblings, Christmas Dinner means I am pretty good at party games” Brent admitted, “Are you doing anything on Christmas Day?” she then asked, “Only, assuming we get out of here alive, my Mum’s roast dinner is simply to die for.”

“We’ll get out of here, don’t you worry” Pointer reassured her.

“But when and in what state?” Brent pointed out.

“I am sure it will be soon” Pointer confirmed but Brent looked far less convinced.

“Do you think it is all over up there?” she then asked.

“Restoring control would have led to the power supplies coming back on which would have undermined the Ixion Brotherhood’s grip on the situation” Pointer summarised, “I reckon we can probably chalk up a victory for the good guys by now.”

“Fantastic” a clearly tired Brent replied, “In which case I am putting in for two weeks annual leave, starting twenty minutes ago...”

Both of them looked on, slightly startled when they suddenly heard a noise from somewhere.

“What’s that?” Brent then asked, “You don’t think the bad guys are back, do you?”

“I don’t think so...” Pointer reassured her even though he was far from certain himself.

They both became more apprehensive when it became clear someone was approaching the door from the other side and began to fiddle with the door handles.



“Ings and his thugs come back to finish off the job?” Brent asked.

“Too subtle for that clown” Pointer remarked as the sounds of the fiddling with the door suddenly stopped.

Suddenly they took cover when the sound of three gunshots rang out from the other side, the close chamber like nature of the underground tunnels accentuating the noise considerably and ominously.

Brent scrambled for her firearm with her left hand, the right having been injured by the explosion when she had stuck the server cabling with the fire axe earlier and she roughly aimed it towards the door.

At that moment the doors were very unceremoniously kicked in and a torch light beam shone directly at them.

“There you are” Jack called as he entered the room, “We got your message.”

“That Morse Code thing actually worked?” Brent asked with surprise.

“Signs of a misspent you” Pointer admitted.

“So, did we win?” Brent then asked as Jack and Pointer helped her to get up.

“We won” Jack confirmed, “Thanks to you.”

“Someone else can tell my mum” Brent then declared, “Can I go home now?” she then asked.

“We all can” Jack nodded in firm agreement.

-----

Simon was showing the Prime Minister the setup inside the Mobile Operations Unit when Jennifer arrived.

“Is everyone all right?” Jennifer asked as she stepped inside.

“Looks like it” Tracy confirmed.

“Just got word from Jack” Fuller then called over, “Brent and Pointer have been found, bit battered and bruised but okay. They are on their way to St Hugh’s Hospital to be checked over as Brent took quite a battering from an electric shock apparently.”

“Those two have definitely earned a mention in dispatches” the Prime Minister remarked.

“I’ll second that” Tracy readily agreed.

It was then that something caught Fuller's eye on one of the screens off to one side.

"Hang on a minute everyone, I will be right back" he then suddenly announced before quickly scampering off.

"Where the hell is he going?" Jennifer asked.

"Search me" Tracy responded, equally bewildered.

Once outside, Fuller ran quickly through the throngs of personnel of various agencies and the debris, across Parliament Square until he was just within shouting distance of an individual who he had glimpsed passing on his screen moments earlier.

"Paul O'Dell!" Fuller then called which was when the individual he had noticed stopped in his tracks and reluctantly looked back over his shoulder.

"Err, hello..." O'Dell timidly responded before looking on when he realised something, "Simon Fuller, the Simon Fuller?" he then called, turning around to face him with his hands raised.

"That's me" Fuller confirmed, somewhat surprised.

"Well, this is awkward" O'Dell hesitantly continued, "It's an honour to meet you."

"Not the usual thing people say when they are arrested, I will admit" Fuller responded, "You do know there are at least a dozen international Cyber Crime agencies after you, don't you?"

"Not something I like to boast about" O'Dell confirmed, "I prefer to keep myself to myself you know?"

"I can understand that" Fuller agreed, "How about a deal?" he then offered.

"A, a, a deal?" O'Dell stammered.

"I am a great admirer of your work" Fuller explained.

"Like wise" O'Dell admitted in return.

"I reckon we could probably combine our talents together" Fuller then suggested, "Step into my office" he indicated the Mobile Operations Unit nearby, "Let's talk shop."

"Well, that's the last we will see of them for the next few hours" Jennifer concluded, "If there is one constant in the universe it is what happens when two techno geeks meet."

"BITCH!!!" came a sudden scream from behind them whereupon they all quickly turned to see Burgette lunging towards them with a sword brandished before her.

“Oh no, not you again...” Tracy responded but it was towards Jennifer that Burgette was surging towards.

“You are DEAD!” Burgette then screamed like a maniac as she brought the tip of the sword right up to Jennifer’s throat who in response, stood her ground firm.

“Wrong Sister...” Jennifer defiantly responded which caused Burgette to pause and look on, a little confused for a moment.

“Excuse me...” a voice politely called from behind her.

“WHAT?!?” Burgette swung around which was when she was suddenly knocked out cold by the impact of a large length of solid timber which saw her crash to the ground, the sword falling out of her hand and clattering harmlessly on the tarmac surface.

“An old friend of mine once told me that you can get a lot further with the careful application of a bit of four by two” Tracy casually admitted before tossing the length of timber aside onto the pile of debris nearby, “That’s twice tonight it has come in useful.”

A few moments later Burgette began to regain consciousness and she found herself being hauled to her feet with her hands now securely handcuffed behind her back.

“Oh hell, there really are two of you...” Burgette then slightly groggily remarked on seeing the twin sisters in front of her, the effect of their identicalness being further enhanced by them both wearing the same uniform following their earlier subterfuge.

“Miss Burgette” the Prime Minister then called with a rather happy smirk.

“Ms...” Burgette tried to remind him.

“Whatever...” the Prime Minister casually dismissed her response, “I wanted to be the first to congratulate you on winning tonight’s star prize.”

“Huh?” Burgette responded, still somewhat fuzzy headed.

“You are the lucky recipient of a first class, all expenses paid, one way ticket to the funny farm” the Prime Minister then announced, practically relishing the moment.

“I’LL SEE YOU IN HELL!!” Burgette immediately protested, “ALL OF YOU!!”

She continued to rant and rave as she was taken away to a waiting prisoner van which saw Tracy give a cheeky wave goodbye as she left.

“Do you know, I am going to miss her?” Tracy then sarcastically remarked.

“Draw up whatever detention orders you wish Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister then confirmed, “I will sign them blindfold.”

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*Six Weeks Later...*

“Hello stranger!” Brent called as she saw Pointer approach her on the north embankment of the River Thames not far from New Scotland Yard, two cups of takeaway coffee in hand, “Long time no see!”

“There you go love” Pointer handed over the coffee which she gratefully accepted, “It’s been ages, I haven’t seen you since breakfast!”

“Thanks” Brent responded, taking the coffee, “So, are you going to hang around for the big reopening of Whitehall?” she then asked.

“Wouldn't miss it for the world” Pointer confirmed, “Apparently this should be Sir Richard Crowthorne's last public appearance before he finally shuffles off the stage and into retirement.”

“Shall we?” Brent then suggested, proffering her arm to Pointer who willingly took it before they duly headed off towards Parliament Square.

Ahead of them, the old Houses of Parliament was a hive of activity as the restoration and rebuilding work had finally been resumed on the orders of the Prime Minister with the aim to return the Government to its rightful home for the first time in over six years.

As they rounded the corner into Whitehall, there was quite a scene before them; a large banner was stretched across the street with balloons, flags and decorations whilst the road was barriered with a ceremonial ribbon.

Gathered nearby were a significant number of invited dignitaries which included Jayne Grey, now the newly elected Mayor of London. With her was the Home Secretary, Prime Minister, Sir Richard Crowthorne and representatives from various agencies along with the Brigadier in his full dress uniform.

“She is coming, isn't she?” the Prime Minister asked, checking his watch.

“Here she comes now” Mayor Grey confirmed as Tracy appeared from the direction of New Scotland Yard on her Security Service motorbike that she drove neatly around in a perfect arc and parked it by the kerb.

“Morning everyone” Tracy called as she got off her motorbike.

“Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister respectfully replied with a nod.

“Ah, here comes young Jack” Sir Richard then nodded ahead where he could be seen getting out of a Transport Division patrol car nearby before coming over to join them.

“Blimey, you have pulled the family silver out for this photo opportunity, haven't you?” Jack remarked as he looked around.

“Oh yes” Sir Richard mused, “we have got balloons and everything.”

On the opposite side of the street, held back by a temporary fence barrier were the gathered members of the press and media, all eager to cover this significant event, one that finally marked the end of a turbulent time for country, city and its people alike.

“Well, you brush up nicely” Tracy remarked as she saw Jack had gone for the full best dress uniform complete with ceremonial sword which had finally been returned to its rightful place.

“I thought I would make an effort” Jack admitted, “More Megan's idea really, she said something about getting used to looking smart now for the wedding, whenever that winds up happening”.

“Ah, she has really got you twisted around her little finger, hasn't she?” Sir Richard remarked with a wry smirk.

“She's worth it” Jack then admitted with a very broad smile.

“Right then, I think everyone is here now” Mayor Grey called, “Shall we get this road reopened?”

“Good idea, the traffic is starting to back up” Jack confirmed.

At Tracy's indication, the barriers holding the press back were pulled aside and they were allowed to approach to record the momentous occasion.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” Mayor Grey then announced, “Today sees the last remnant of a truly terrible period finally come to an end. Prime Minister...”

“Thank you, Madam Mayor,” the Prime Minister responded, “This day has been a long time coming but it has come at a cost, there has been too much violence, too much pain...”

“Isn't that from a film?” Sir Richard asked Jack aside.

“Given the Westminster speech writers, quite probably” Jack quietly agreed.

“But we are not here to listen to speeches, it is time for action and so, without hesitation” the Prime Minister then declared as he was handed a big pair of ceremonial scissors and turned towards a large ribbon that had been stretched across the width of the road, “I formally declare Westminster officially reopen!”

At that point, the Prime Minister attempted to cut the ribbon, but it did not work.

“Here” Jack then called, drawing his ceremonial sword, and passing it across, “Try this.”

“Thanks...” the Prime Minister responded, slightly embarrassed.

With one swift swoosh of the sword, the ribbon was cut, and the waiting pedestrians and traffic were finally waved through.

“Thanks Jack” the Prime Minister then remarked, passing the sword back.

“Anytime Sir” Jack responded.

The dignitaries stood back and watched as for the first time in years, Westminster started to bustle with activity, signifying that normality was finally returning.

“You look like you are enjoying being Mayor” Tracy remarked.

“It is a lot less stressful than the top job” Mayor Grey admitted.

“Well, you are definitely a great improvement on your dubious nut job of a predecessor” Jack remarked.

“That wouldn't be too difficult” Tracy added.

“So, Chief Superintendent” the Prime Minister then addressed Tracy, “I know we discussed it before, but I was wondering, now that the crisis is over and you maybe have had time to think about it, what are your plans?” he asked.

“Oh, there is always a crisis somewhere” Sir Richard mused.

“Cynic...” Jack remarked aside.

“Years of experience, young man” Sir Richard explained.

“I have been thinking about that a lot since we defeated the Ixion Brotherhood” Tracy admitted “and I have to admit there is a certain bit of job satisfaction to the role so I think I will stay a while, besides someone has to keep an eye on you” she then looked towards Jack.

“Me?” Jack responded innocently.

“Guv!!” Easley then called over, “We've got a shout!”

“Never a dull moment” Jack remarked, “All right Mos, I'm on my way” he then called over.

“I had better get going myself” Tracy confirmed, “Work to do...”

“Isn't there always?” the Prime Minister remarked.

“Oh yes” Tracy agreed as she went over to her Security Service motorbike and got on it.

“Not for me though” Sir Richard then remarked “My official retirement begins as of

five o'clock this afternoon, I am officially out of here” he then announced.

“I’ll believe it when I see old friend” Tracy responded as she started the engine of her motorbike.

The others watched as, with the blue flashing lights and sirens in full cry, Tracy drove off with two Security Service patrol cars in close attendance as they led the convoy of traffic on into the newly reopened Whitehall.

“Well, I don't know about anyone else” Sir Richard then declared, “but as I am retiring, this calls for a drink, a large one.”

“A very good idea” the Prime Minister agreed, “I believe it's your round too...”

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