



John M Upton

The Episodes of the Security Novels Series:

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Bank

"This is a hell of a large load for one shipment" the loading supervisor remarked with concern as the final large wooden crate was hoisted aboard the large white unmarked articulated lorry alongside three other equally heavy identical crates all of which bore no indication whatsoever on the outside as to their contents.

"The boss says put four crates on" the fork lift operator remarked casually as he withdrew the forks from beneath the crate and pulled back "Then four crates is exactly what he gets. You don't argue with that kind of authority."

"No, I suppose not" the loading supervisor agreed as he drew across the curtain side of the lorry trailer and then secured the clips.

With the load now safely on board, the supervisor ticked off the details on his clipboard before walking to the front of the truck where he opened the drivers cab door.

"All right mate" the supervisor called to the driver and the Security Guard who was also sat in the cab "she is all aboard, secured and ready to roll" he confirmed as he handed the clipboard over.

"Lovely stuff" the jolly driver responded with a cheery smile and a thumbs up before the supervisor closed the cab door and turned to a Security Service officer stood near a marked patrol motorcycle and also gave him a thumbs up.

"Lima Echo X-Ray control from Three Zero One" the officer called into his radio as he mounted his motorbike.

"Control receiving, pass your message" came the swift businesslike response.

"Consignment secured, ready for roll out" the officer confirmed as he looked around.

"Convoy Alpha from Control" the radio replied "You may proceed to location number one when ready."

"Roger Control" the officer responded as he started the engine of his motorcycle, this being the cue for the three other Security Service motorcycle officers to start their own machines which filled the loading area of the warehouse with the sound of revving engines to which was added the truck starting up as well.

"Ok lads" the leading officer declared over the radio "Let's get this party started."

The loading supervisor duly went over to the large roller shutter doors and pressed the control panel buttons which saw the huge door lift upwards, letting in a large shaft of daylight into the otherwise rather murkier interior of the building.

The commanding officer of the escort for the truck led the way out of the building where out in the yard he signalled to an unmarked Security Service car with four officers of the Specialist Armed Response Division who followed in line to the rear of

the convoy as it left the site through the heavily guarded gate, the only means of exit from the site through a very secure twenty feet high security fence.

The convoy duly proceeded silently through the near deserted roads of the industrial estate until it emerged out onto the dual carriageway of the main road which unusually for this time on a Tuesday morning was noticeably quiet.

This was a regular job for the crew of the lorry, one of three shipments that they made along a constantly varied route every week, a route known only to the driver of the lorry and the supervising officer of the escort.

Light traffic on the main road through Debden on the outer north eastern edge of Greater London meant that the convoy made an uninhibited and swift progress on its journey north to a specialist facility in Bedfordshire.

Today however was a little different for as the truck with its escort passed around a roundabout, they were joined by a distinctive red painted and marked Security Service patrol car which entered the flow of traffic behind them and followed discreetly for a couple of miles.

As the usual run of endless housing estates thinned out and the main road now passed through open countryside, the patrol car proceeded to overtake the truck and then raced on ahead until it pulled into the lane ahead of them and continued to match the convoy's speed some one hundred metres in front of them.

"Ere Garry" the truck driver called to his mate "Did control mention anything about any extra escorts from the fuzz?"

"No one mentioned it in the office" Dave confirmed "Maybe this guy was in the area and thought he would tag along."

The convoy carried on with the patrol car maintaining its distance ahead of them for a couple more miles until just as it began to rain and the traffic reduced to such a level that they were able to push the boundaries of the speed limit, the patrol car suddenly slammed on its brakes.

"What the hell...?" the truck's driver exclaimed as he was forced to slam on the brakes himself in order to avoid a collision which caused the articulated trailer section to jack knife alarmingly, knocking down one of the motorcycle outriders in the process.

The truck with its trailer now almost at right angles to it blocking the width of the carriageway shuddered to a halt as four men in Security Service uniforms emerged from the patrol cars, brandishing semi-automatic weapons which they had no reluctance about firing up into the air indiscriminately.

The officers on the motorcycles instinctively reacted as did the Armed Response Unit team by drawing their own weapons but as they were about to open fire in defence, a large van pulled up to the rear of the stationary convoy.

From the roller shutter door at the back of the van emerged a further half dozen armed men who in a matter of moments amid a hail of gunfire, disabled the officers.

"Oh hell, we are in trouble now" the truck driver remarked alongside to his mate as with the sound of gunfire dieing down the obvious leader of the armed raiders turned his attention towards them, approaching the cab of the lorry with a deliberately implied menace.

"Out!" he barked, pointing his gun at the two men through the windscreen with clear insistence.

"Yeah, all right mate" the driver nervously agreed "take it easy, we are coming out."

Apprehensively, and with their hands up, the crew of the lorry got out of their vehicle, climbing down the cab steps where as soon as their feet reached the road surface, they were swiftly bundled to the ground face down before being searched and then restrained using plastic bindings.

"All right" the leader called, "let's get this wrapped up" he declared.

With that command, the men duly began to carry the injured Security Service officers into the back of the van whilst others removed the wrecked motorbike from the scene.

"Ere' boss!" one of the men called over "This fella is still alive" he indicated the badly injured Security Service officer who had been knocked off his motorbike in the initial incident, now lying up against his motorbike by the side of the carriageway."

"Sorry mate" the leader marked as he casually drew his gun and fired a single shot, finishing off the officer before he returned to the lorry crew.

"Look mate" the driver tried to reason with the leader of the gang, especially in light of what had just occurred "We are just a couple of ordinary guys earning a crust."

"Don't panic lads" the leader reassured them "Our Guvnor was insistent on no civilian casualties" he explained as he indicated to two of his men to take the lorry crew away.

With the debris and bodies removed from the carriageway, the leader and one of his men got in the lorry cab and started the powerful engine whilst the rest of the gang returned to their vehicles or got on the motorcycles and into the ARU's unit car before the convoy set off once more leaving behind an empty road as if nothing had ever happened.

As the last man to leave the scene on a seized Security Service motorcycle was about to depart at the tail end of the convoy however, he tossed down onto the road a Security Service warrant card and uniform epaulette that he had removed from his pocket before accelerating away.

"My Lord's, Ladies and Gentlemen" boomed the official announcer at the entrance to the main ballroom of Buckingham Palace "Sir Edward Regent GC, MBE, Administrator General of the National Security & Police Service and his wife Divisional Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner of the Metropolitan Division of the Security Service."

"I feel like a penguin" the Commander muttered aside to Tracy as arm in arm they entered the ballroom dressed in full dress uniform.

"You look fine love" Tracy reassured her husband "Just keep smiling, the entire establishment is watching."

"Anyone I have arrested by any chance?" the Commander wryly asked.

"Is it me" Jack, Tracy and the Commander's adopted thirteen year old son asked generally as he watched his parents enter the ballroom, the Commander looking far from comfortable "or is he looking decidedly out of place?"

"Definitely a fish out of water" Sir Richard Crowthorne agreed "Usually when those two are in the same building as some of this lot" he gestured around at the hordes of politicians, celebrities and members of the establishment that were filling the room "They are usually trying to arrest them."

"Should make for an interesting afternoon" Jack admitted.

"Hey up lad, you are up" Sir Richard prompted Jack.

"Oh don't tell me I am going to have to go through this as well?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so" Sir Richard confirmed "You are the one receiving the medal you know."

"Come on" Megan, Jack's girlfriend assured him as she took his arm and duly led the way.

"Mr Jack Regent and Miss Megan Thorpe" the announcement declared as they entered the ballroom.

"And I thought you looked uncomfortable" Tracy remarked aside to the Commander as Sir Richard joined them.

"Aren't you going to be formally introduced then?" the Commander asked him.

"In my line of work it pays not to advertise" Sir Richard admitted "especially with new developments on the horizon."

"How's the new place coming along?" the Commander asked as they watched across the ballroom the sight of Jack with Megan being greeted by Her Majesty the Queen.

"Well I have got the decorators booked and picked out the carpet for the office" Sir Richard wryly confirmed.

"Don't forget a big logo in marble in the front hallway floor" the Commander joked aside."

"Being installed Tuesday" Sir Richard confirmed with a grin.

"Well here comes the man of the moment" Tracy declared as Jack, with a rather embarrassed look on his face came over and joined them.

"So how do you like the lime light then lad?" the Commander asked.

"Well being presented to the Queen is fine" Jack admitted "I just wish I did not have to do it in this daft tuxedo."

"Doesn't your school have a dress uniform?" Sir Richard amusingly asked.

"In Leytonstone?" Megan responded "The poshest we get is a tie that usually falls apart after three days."

"Reminds me of when I was at school" the Commander admitted "Although I was the only pupil there to have a blazer written off by armed robbers."

"And it was downhill from there if I recall" Sir Richard added.

"Uh-oh" Tracy motioned over to far side of the room "Here comes trouble."

"I thought both of us were already here" the Commander winked at Jack with a wry grin.

"Ah, Prime Minister" Sir Richard responded as they were joined by the tall looking, distinguished if constantly worried looking man "You are looking well" he lied convincingly.

"And you Sir Richard are still very good at lying" the Prime Minister admitted ruefully.

"It's a knack I have developed over the years" Sir Richard admitted.

"Commander, Ms Caverner, Jack" the Prime Minister greeted the others "and you must be Megan."

"Prime Minister" the young girl responded with a curtsy, something she had been practising ever since Jack had informed her of this event a few days earlier and was now using it at every opportunity.

"I was wondering if you and I could have a word" the Prime Minister addressed the Commander "A couple of weeks ago I mentioned we would need to be talking again and I fear now is the time."

"Is there any possibility we could delay this until later" the Commander responded "I was hoping to spend some time with the family."

"Now there is something I thought I would never hear from you" Sir Richard remarked aside.

"Just five minutes of your time Commander?" the Prime Minister offered a compromise.

"All right" the Commander reluctantly agreed "You guys going to be all right."

"No problem Sir" Megan enthusiastically responded "Come on Jack" she declared, taking his hand in hers "Lets go and investigate the buffet, I fancy a vol-u-vent or three."

"What's a vol-u-vent when it is at home?" the Commander and Jack both responded seriously in unison causing the others all to laugh.

"Five minutes, no more" Tracy insisted to her husband.

"Five minutes" the Commander confirmed before he and the Prime Minister departed, making their way over to a side room.

"After you" the Prime Minister insisted as he opened the door and allowed the Commander inside before entering himself and closing the door quietly behind him, shutting out the background sound of the gathering out in the ballroom.

"Is this the point where I should be checking whether my life insurance is fully paid up?" the Commander asked jokingly.

"I am sure all will be fine" the Prime Minister tried to reassure him but it was clear from his demeanour that there was serious concern apparent in his voice.

"Something has been bothering you ever since we put Bordon safely away in his nice padded little room the other week" the Commander remarked "Believe me I can usually tell when someone is trying desperately not to bring up another awkward subject."

"Tomorrow morning" the Prime Minister began "There is to be a meeting of the Joint Treasury Chief's, the Director General of the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and myself and I need you to be there."

"And the reason for my participation?" the Commander asked "Only I tend to be more of a kick doors in and ask questions kind of chap, rooms full of money men and financial types are not exactly my forte, well unless they are helping me with my inquiries that is."

"You are the main guest of honour" the Prime Minister explained "We have a problem, a very serious one and it is felt within this inner circle that you are the man to help us solve it."

"Go on..." the Commander responded, suitably intrigued.

"Someone is attempting to destabilise the economy" the Prime Minister explained "apparently from within or at least with some internal co-operation or coercion."

"Do you have any specific accusations or is this one of those mythical speculative theories dreamt up by some Civil Service junior locked in a basement office in the depths of Westminster?" the Commander asked.

"I'll say no more for now" the Prime Minister responded "Only to say that already certain wheels are in motion."

"What do I tell Tracy?" the Commander asked.

"Nothing for the moment" the Prime Minister strongly advised "She will be involved in other investigations that could indirectly have a bearing on this situation."

"Look, Prime Minister" the Commander responded "I may be National Administrator General now but its still me, the office is still the same albeit currently filled with decorators but when push comes to shove I am a front line man, I don't do very well at cloak and dagger type operations, that is more Sir Richard's speciality."

"Unfortunately Sir Richard's Section Fourteen operation has yet to get going" the Prime Minister regrettably responded "Besides that is one particular ace up our sleeves I want to save for a particularly rainy day."

"More like a monsoon season" the Commander remarked.

"Bank of England" the Prime Minister informed the Commander "Main entrance, nine thirty sharp and bring a pen."

"I'll bring a calculator as well" the Commander wryly replied.

"You know, these are rather good" Jack admitted as he quickly munched his way through his third vol-u-vent in as many minutes from the buffet table.

"I'll give you this" Megan admitted as they looked around the impressive ballroom of Buckingham Palace and its even more impressive guests "You sure know how to show a girl a good time."

"Not bad for an orphan from Leytonstone" Jack admitted.

"Just think" Tracy mused "Play your cards right and in twenty years time you too could be like my husband" as he reappeared from the side room where he was seen to bid farewell to the Prime Minister before joining them.

"Err right..." Jack responded with some uncertainty "I have been shot at once in my life, which is quite enough thank you very much."

"You get used to it after a while" the Commander admitted as he rejoined them although Tracy could easily tell he was lying about it.

"Anything exciting?" Tracy asked taking his arm back in hers and curious as to what the clandestine meeting was all about.

"In a word" the Commander thought for a moment as he attempted to summarise the short meeting without giving anything away "no, not really."

"Ah would you believe it" Tracy remarked as her pager started bleeping and she reached for it beneath her dress uniform tunic "Interesting" she commented as soon as she read the message.

"That will be Commander Housewell of the Eastern Division" Sir Richard casually commented "He will be asking to see you at your earliest opportunity."

"How the hell did you know that?" Tracy asked.

"In my business, knowing these little things is all part of the job description" Sir Richard calmly responded as he helped himself to a selection of snacks from the buffet before carefully wrapping them up in a napkin and placing them in his pocket. "Until later my friends" he declared before tugging his forelock with a knowing wink and departing.

"You ever get the feeling someone knows an awful lot more about what is going on than they are letting on?" Jack asked his parents.

"All the time mate" the Commander confirmed "All the time."

"What do you mean by vanished exactly?" Commander Graham Housewell asked as he entered the East London area control room of the Security Service based in Stratford.

"Well the exact words used were 'deviation from plan' Sir" the despatch officer on duty responded passing her superior office the report she had just taken down.

"This escort job, it's a regular thing isn't it?" Housewell asked.

"Three times a week, varied routing each time with four motorcycle officers and an unmarked ARU unit Sir" the dispatcher confirmed.

"And there is no sign of any of them or the lorry anywhere?" Housewell inquired.

"They are over an hour late at their delivery point and none of them have checked in since six this morning when they left the depot" the dispatcher passed Housewell the report for him to look at.

"Who is the head of the ARU Unit assigned?" Housewell asked.

"Lieutenant Commander Terry Green Sir" the dispatcher checked and confirmed from her screen.

"Call him again" Housewell requested.

"Lima Mike X-Ray Three One Five from Control" the dispatcher called over her radio headset "Come in please."

Both officers plus the rest of the room watched and waited with apprehension for a few moments as there was nothing but static silence in response.

"Lima Mike X-Ray Three One Five" the dispatcher repeated "Come in please."

"Keep trying" Housewell requested "and get me the details of that convoy escort job up to my office."

"Yes Sir" the dispatcher confirmed as she returned to her headset and continued to try and raise the missing officers.

With a worried look on his face, Commander Housewell left the control room and headed up the stairs to his office on the third floor. His twenty plus years in the Security Service, ten of them as head of operations for the East London section of the Service told him that something was far from right here.

As he entered his office, the telephone on the desk was already ringing with a message from the Control Room two floors below.

"Hello" Housewell answered as he sat down behind his aged and battered desk.

"The file you asked for is in your electronic inbox Sir" the dispatcher confirmed from downstairs.

"Thank you" Housewell responded as he called up the details he had requested on the computer on the desk. He spent a few minutes carefully reading through what were pretty sketchy details about the regular convoy escort job before reaching across for the telephone again and speed dialling a number he rarely used but knew off by heart.

"New Scotland Yard switchboard" came the response to his call "How may I direct your call?"

"Secure line to Divisional Commander Caverner please" Housewell requested "This is Area Commander Housewell."

"One moment please" the switchboard operator confirmed.

There were a few moments of waiting for Housewell which he used to review the file still further but found no further information of any real interest that either confirmed or allayed his suspicions.

"Caverner" came Tracy's voice over the telephone from her mobile telephone as she took the call outside the main gate of Buckingham Palace "I got your message on my pager twenty minutes ago, it would appear you have something on your mind" she remarked.

"Pager message?" Housewell responded confused "I am not sure I understand Maam" he replied.

"Graham, I got a message saying you wanted to talk to me best part of half an hour ago" she explained.

"I never sent it" Housewell responded "I only called the Yard just now as we appear to have a problem that I fear is a tad over my pay scale."

"Anything I need to know about?" Tracy asked, sensing clearly the concern being expressed in Housewell's voice.

"We have a regular job which involves an escort being supplied to some Government supply lorry three times a week" Housewell explained "The trouble is since they set off at six this morning, no one has seen or heard anything of the lorry, the ARU unit or the four motorcycle officers escorting it since."

"Radio calls?" Tracy asked.

"I have my best Dispatch Officer burning the air between us and them as we speak but thus far all we have got is static" Housewell confirmed "I am not usually one for worrying hunches but something tells me something is very wrong."

"What is the operation code name?" Tracy asked.

"Err Operation Eagle" Housewell read from the file on the computer screen in front of him.

"Hang on a second mate" Tracy called before turning to her husband standing alongside her "Do you know anything about an Operation Eagle?"

"Doesn't mean anything to me" the Commander confirmed "but I am willing to bet Sir Richard probably does judging by the weird mood he has been in today."

"That's a blank at this end" Tracy confirmed as she went back onto the telephone "Even my husband just shrugged his shoulders at me."

"Not a good sign Maam" Housewell remarked "Look I don't like to impose and I know it is supposed to be your day off with Jack getting his honour and all but is there any chance you and the Chief could meet me before I wind up stepping in 'owt."

"Stepping in where angels fear to tread is our speciality" Tracy admitted "We've got to drop off Jack's girl back home which is just up the road from your office so we will be there in an hour" she confirmed.

"I'll put the kettle on" Housewell confirmed.

The black cab pulled into the side of the street outside the entrance to the fairly anonymous looking office block in Horseferry Road in central London and from the back emerged Sir Richard Crowthorne who after paying the cabbie with a twenty pound note for his eight pound fare and telling him to keep the change, proceeded inside the building.

The receptionist behind the desk acknowledged Sir Richard as he entered through the main entrance to which he responded with his custom gentlemanly tug of the forelock before proceeding to the elevator located around the corner in a side corridor.

Once inside the lift car and with the doors closed, Sir Richard produced a key attached to a chain which he used to unlock a panel which when lifted up revealed four buttons. It was the one marked with the number three that he pressed to activate the lift and send it on its decent into the basement levels.

A few moments later Sir Richard emerged into the highly secret accommodation of his new office, the Internal Organised Crime & Political Security Bureau or as it had already been christened by the Prime Minister, one of its key instigators and one of only a small number of individuals who knew of its existence 'Section 14'.

It was an organisation still in its infancy being just a couple of weeks since the Prime Minister had implemented it and placed Sir Richard in charge with the job of getting it up and running. For now all he had at his disposal was a staff of just three people, two floors of empty space that were still in the process of being fitted out and an office that he had at least managed to furnish with some home comforts.

As he entered his office and made for the decanter on the sideboard, the intercom on the desk buzzed into life with a message from one of his currently small band of staff.

"This had better be good" Sir Richard declared as he took the call whilst sitting down behind the desk.

"Our boy has confirmed to have made the grab" the voice on the other end confirmed.

"Where we predicted?" Sir Richard asked sensing the importance of this information.

"Exactly on target" the caller confirmed "Our guy on the scene has left the calling card so all we need is for someone we trust to find it."

"What do our friends in the Security Service know of this?" Sir Richard inquired.

"The area Commander is wondering where his convoy has got to, not to mention his missing officers" the caller responded "Apparently the call has gone into our usual friends and they are on their way over to Stratford right now."

"All right" Sir Richard confirmed "Get me a direct secure line to the Justice Minister and the Prime Minister so I can bring them up to speed then have a company cab outside for me in five minutes."

"Sorry Jack" the Commander apologised "I'll make it up to you."

"I'll be all right" Jack confirmed "Besides" he indicated towards Megan as she stood on her front doorstep with her parents "It gives me a chance to meet the in laws."

"I am sure this won't take long" Tracy reassured him "We'll pick you up on the way back."

"Take your time" Jack confirmed "I'll be here."

With a friendly wave Tracy and the Commander got back in the patrol car before setting off down the road.

"You know we really ought to consider better planning our time now we have responsibilities" Tracy remarked with regret as she looked in the rear view mirror at Jack as the Commander drove them down the road.

"Something that has been playing on my mind as well" the Commander was forced to admit "Trouble is we live in such crazy times with such a crazy occupation that events always seem to overtake the best laid plans."

"Gun toting lunatics have absolutely no consideration for people's social schedules" Tracy mused "Perhaps we should take a holiday somewhere?" she suggested.

"The last time we had a proper holiday it was our honeymoon two years ago" the Commander reminded her "and we spent half of it chasing armed robbers across Paris."

"Oh yes" Tracy responded as she remembered "I forgot."

"So what about Commander Housewell and his missing lorry or whatever it is" the Commander asked "Flash in the pan or something more sinister?"

"They probably stopped off at an all night café on the way there for a greasy breakfast and forgot the time" Tracy mused "Happened to a security convoy last year over in Bedfordshire if I remember."

"What is it with Stratford and road works?" the Commander asked as they came to halt amid traffic stuck amongst what seemed to be an endless stretch of engineering works with much of the carriageway being dug up for what seemed like miles.

"All part of the Olympic dream for 2012" Tracy wryly responded "Five years of pain for two weeks of fun, bit like a General Election really."

"Ah here we go" the Commander remarked as a patrol officer in the middle of the road works who was desperately trying to get some order into the traffic chaos recognised the Security Service car in amongst the queue of vehicles and managed to wave them through.

"Thanks mate" the Commander called from the driver's side window "What's the best way to you offices."

"Take the next left and then head across the car park Sir" the officer confirmed indicating the way ahead.

"Much obliged" the Commander responded before setting off in the direction indicated.

Thanks to the officer's directions, they managed to find a way around the intense traffic and were soon pulling in to the rather dreary rear car park of the Stratford area Security & Police Service office where Commander Housewell, already advised by his officer of their impending arrival was waiting for them.

"Glad you could make it Maam, Sir" Housewell greeted them as the two officers got out of the car.

"Any word from our missing officers yet?" Tracy asked.

"Not a whisper" Housewell confirmed "It is as if they have vanished off the face of the planet, and then I decided to pull the duty sheet for the job. I think you should take a look at this" he showed them the hastily removed piece of paper which showed the duty over which the mystery had arisen and in particular a reference number with the prefix 'SPN' in small print along the bottom.

"Ah..." the Commander remarked as he instantly recognised the prefix code for a special operational conditions operation "that rather throws a spanner in the works."

"It means I cannot launch a full blown search operation or even mention it on an open telephone line" Housewell agreed "which doesn't help my eight missing officers or the crew of the lorry one iota."

"Do we have a starting point for this convoy?" Tracy asked as she too studied the duty document.

"A seemingly non-descript industrial estate in Debden, not far from the Underground station" Housewell confirmed.

"Bit of an odd place for a special operations convoy to be travelling from" the Commander remarked "Do we know what is there?" he asked.

"A few industrial units, factories, a couple of car dealerships, nothing really out of the ordinary as far as I know Sir" Housewell responded.

"Is your helicopter available?" Tracy asked.

"Oh no..." the Commander remarked to himself as he hated flying and the thought of getting into a helicopter merely filled him with dread as he would be spending most of the time they were off the ground with his eyes shut and holding Tracy's hand as tight as possible.

"It's up on the helipad on the roof" Housewell confirmed pointing upwards to the top of the building.

"Don't panic love" Tracy reassured the Commander "I have a plan."

"As long as it involves me staying firmly on the ground I'll go with it" the Commander readily agreed.

"Commander Housewell" Tracy instructed "I want you to nail an airtight lid on this business. Whoever knows about it, give them the rest of the day off and tell them to keep schtum and then get me a list of those officers who were assigned and anything you have on them."

"Consider it done Maam" Housewell agreed.

"Darling" Tracy turned to the Commander "If you would be so kind, can you retrace the convoy route in the car whilst I follow you overhead in the chopper" she confirmed "With a bit of luck I might be able to see something that we would otherwise miss just being on the ground."

"I think I can manage that" the Commander readily agreed, more than grateful that he was not going to have to go up in the helicopter.

"In which case let's get going" Tracy declared "You head for this industrial estate in Debden and I'll catch you up as soon as I have checked the personnel records of those assigned officers."

"See you later love" the Commander confirmed as he kissed her before leaving, getting back in the car, starting the engine and having quickly consulted an A to Z map, driving off.

"Let's see what we have got on these officers" Tracy suggested as she and Housewell headed inside.

"Follow me" Housewell led the way but paused on his way past the Control Room and popped his head around the doorframe.

"Ruth" he called to the dispatcher who was still trying in vain to raise any of the convoy escort officers "Any joy yet?" he asked.

"Nothing" the dispatcher confirmed with regret "Something is seriously screwy here Sir" she admitted.

"Well let's just say things have taken an interesting twist" Housewell responded as he entered the Control Room and stood alongside the dispatcher "Do yourself a favour and have the rest of the day off and forget everything that has happened."

"Err right Sir" the dispatcher replied as she saw Tracy standing in the doorway and recognising her realised that things had escalated to somewhere well above her pay grade which meant it was best not to ask questions.

"Have a nice evening" Housewell confirmed before leaving the Control Room with a more than apprehensive look on his face whereupon he escorted Tracy up to his office.

"Can she be relied on?" Tracy asked mostly for her own reassurance as she was well aware how seemingly simple yet unusual situations like this could get out of control and really ugly really quickly.

"Oh yes" Housewell confirmed "She has been in this division seemingly since the dawn of time, knows it better than me in fact."

"Good enough for me" Tracy agreed "Now about these officers?"

"Oh yes" Housewell confirmed as he sat down at his desk and logged onto the computer "Let me see, the ARU unit was under the command of Lieutenant Commander Terry Green which means his Alpha team would have been with him. That's two Lieutenants, Brandon and Dursley plus his new junior officer in training, a Lieutenant Davies."

"And the four motorcycle escorts?" Tracy asked "were they all from here."

"No" Housewell responded "We only have two on our books and one of those is on holiday so we usually use some of Essex Division's lads on loan whenever we need them. I should have their details here somewhere" he confirmed as he looked through some files in his desk drawer "Ah here we go" he declared as he found the file and passed it across to Tracy.

"When were these guys transferred over?" Tracy asked as she opened the file and began to read its contents.

"We always borrow them for a twelve hour shift at three days notice" Housewell confirmed "We get whoever they can spare who fancies doing the overtime apparently."

"Motorcycle Officers Maunsell, Billington, Bullied and..." Tracy tailed off as she read the name of the fourth motorcycle officer assigned.

"Something wrong Maam?" Housewell asked, clearly sensing Tracy's concern and shock at the name she had just read.

"Commander James Caverner" Tracy responded "My brother."

"In which case, may I suggest Maam that you should get yourself in the air as quickly as possible" Housewell advised.

"Absolutely" Tracy agreed.

"Well this is a charming little backwater" the Commander remarked with sarcasm as he parked the car outside the front entrance of Debden Underground Station and looked around.

It was mid afternoon and despite being a week day, the station and its surrounding environs seemed almost completely deserted. Even an eight car train of 1992 type Tube Stock on a passing northbound Central Line service stopped and then departed again in quick succession with no one either boarding or alighting from it.

The Commander decided to leave the car in the car park and walk back down the entrance way to the main road before turning left, proceeding beneath the railway bridge just as a southbound Central Line service rattled across overhead, towards the entrance into the industrial estate from where the missing convoy had begun its fateful journey several hours earlier.

Much as he had expected, the Commander found little more than a large car dealership and row upon row of seemingly bland mid 1980's vintage industrial units, some occupied but others vacant and out of use.

It was as the Commander began to walk up the quiet dusty road that led into the industrial estate that he suddenly stopped having just passed a sign, took two steps back and did a double take at something that was written upon it.

"It pays to advertise I guess" the Commander remarked with a raised eyebrow as he re-read the sign again but said nothing further as he thought back to his earlier clandestine conversation with the Prime Minister.

Instead, moving on, the Commander continued past the sign once more until a familiar voice suddenly was heard.

"I can't decide" Sir Richard Crowthorne remarked as he got out of one of the cars for sale on the front of the dealership forecourt "shadow silver or midnight black?"

"Midnight black" the Commander answered, turning around "put some pin stripe lines in red and grey and you have British Railways mixed traffic livery."

"Maybe you are right" Sir Richard agreed as he joined the Commander on the pavement.

"Why am I not in the least bit surprised to see you here?" the Commander responded.

"Years of experience perhaps?" Sir Richard replied. "I see you have been following a particularly interesting yellow brick road."

"Is my mind playing tricks or is this" the Commander indicated above him the sign "not a coincidence in light of a conversation I had with a certain prominent politician earlier today?"

"You may very well think that" Sir Richard looked up at the sign with a knowing smirk "I have no further comment to make on the subject."

"You see I have this missing lorry about which no one seems to know anything" the Commander remarked "and eight missing officers who were supposed to be escorting it. Now not only has that lorry and its officers vanished into thin air along with its mystery cargo, when I arrive at this charming little backwater from whence the convoy set off not only do I find this little revelation" he gestured up at the sign "but also by some strange coincidence there you are lurking around."

"Can't a guy pick himself out a new motor without someone crying conspiracy theory?" Sir Richard wryly asked.

"If it is the new head of Section Fourteen then probably not" the Commander concluded.

"So this little convoy you seem to have lost" Sir Richard speculated "What is likely to be your next move?"

"Follow where it went until we find it" the Commander confirmed "Speaking of which, here comes the missus" he remarked as the sound of a helicopter approaching began to fill the air.

"You've let Tracy loose with a helicopter?" Sir Richard asked with a worried look upwards as the blue and red Security Service helicopter came in low overhead.

"I am sure she is not piloting it" the Commander remarked as he too looked up "I hope..."

"Lima Mike Zero One to Lima Alpha Zero One" Tracy's voice came over the radio "Is that who I think it is down there?" she asked looking out of the side window.

"He says he isn't here" the Commander replied "Usual story then."

"I've got the routing of the convoy" Tracy confirmed deciding to withhold for the moment the fact about her brother being one of the missing officers "If you would like to jump in the motor, we can get cracking."

"On the way" the Commander confirmed as he began to head back to the car.

"May I leave you with this one thought for today" Sir Richard called "Not all closed roads are necessarily closed."

"I will bear it in mind" the Commander confirmed as he departed leaving Sir Richard to cross the road and get into the black cab that was waiting for him.

"All right then love" the Commander declared over the radio as he got back in the patrol car and started the engine "Point me in the right direction."

"Take the dual carriageway northbound" Tracy instructed as she looked down from the helicopter at the roof of the red patrol car as the Commander set off crossing the dual carriageway and turning north.

"When you get to the Epping road, take the first left" Tracy continued to instruct her husband as he drove along whilst she traced the route on a large road atlas laid upon her lap.

"What was the destination of this convoy?" the Commander asked.

"Some sort of works on the Berkshire Hampshire border apparently" Tracy confirmed.

"So why did they not just take the southbound route down to the Dartford Tunnel and the around the M25?" the Commander asked as he turned off onto the main road from Epping and began to head west.

"They varied the route each time" Tracy explained "rotating it through one of about forty different combinations to keep the visitors away I presume."

"Which makes it sound suspiciously like whoever is behind the disappearance of this mystery cargo had inside help" the Commander remarked.

"Exactly what I was thinking love" Tracy agreed with a distinct tone of regret.

"Now what the hell is this?" the Commander exclaimed as he came across a section of the motorway festooned with traffic cones "Is it open season for roadworks or something?"

"New bypass under construction according to this" Tracy confirmed as she consulted the map again which showed a blue dotted line where the new road went through "Still closed off apparently."

"Not all closed roads are necessarily closed" the Commander recalled Sir Richard's strange remark from earlier.

"What was that love?" Tracy asked.

"Something old Jedi Master Crowthorne said" the Commander explained "Can you see anything from up there along the closed bit?" he asked.

"Nothing but blank black tarmac and what appears to be the national traffic cone collection" Tracy confirmed as she looked on ahead from her high vantage point down the length of new unopened road that stretched off into the distance.

"I am going to play one of my hunches" the Commander confirmed as he pulled into the side of the road and got out of the car where he proceeded to remove the cones which guarded the entrance to the new road.

"Uh oh..." Tracy responded to the news of one of her husband's hunches before looking down at the scene below to see the Commander's patrol car set off down the brand new empty carriageway.

"Don't let him out of our sights" Tracy instructed the pilot.

"Yes Maam" the pilot confirmed as he duly flew ahead slowly keeping the patrol car just in front as Tracy looked out of the side window down to the ground searching for some clue that may help to solve the mystery.

For over three miles of unmarked black carriageway the Commander drove, all the time as he progressed thinking more and more that this was a dead end.

"Slow down a bit love" Tracy's voice was heard to call as she noticed something possibly of relevance up ahead.

"What have you got?" the Commander responded as he duly slowed down.

"Heavy skid marks in the road" Tracy confirmed as she looked ahead through binoculars "About four hundred yards ahead of where you are now and they look like lorry tracks to me, certainly something large."

"Looks like someone stopped in one hell of a hurry" the Commander agreed as he brought the car to a stop just short of where it could be clearly seen that something had come to an abrupt halt there, witnessed by the heavy tyre skid marks that contrasted with the newly laid tarmac.

"Could be something" Tracy remarked as she observed the Commander get out of the patrol car and look around the area until his eyes alighted on a couple of small objects in the road ahead.

"What the hell is that?" the Commander remarked to himself as he stepped over to the small objects just lying in the road and stooped down to examine them more closely before reaching for his radio.

"Tracy" the Commander called up to Tracy "Land that hovering lawn mower somewhere, I think you need to take a look at this" he indicated the objects he had found.

"Land this thing" Tracy called across to the pilot who immediately set the helicopter down on an open area of the unused carriageway whereupon she got out almost before

it had touched the ground and walked quickly over to her husband who merely responded by showing her the items he had found.

"This name ring any bells love?" he asked with a concerned look as he handed her the distinctive Security Service warrant card to her to look at.

"Commander James Caverner" Tracy read from the warrant card even though deep down she already knew the answer "My brother."

"What the hell was he doing here mixed up in this mess?" the Commander asked as he looked around the deserted carriageway before noticing something in the adjacent hedgerow which Tracy also spotted over, prompting them to go over and look in amongst the shrubbery.

"That doesn't look too promising" Tracy remarked as she and the Commander saw the partially hidden remains of a badly wrecked Security Service motorbike, the crest of the Service still just about visible on what was left of the side pannier in amongst the debris.

"Interesting isn't it?" Sir Richard Crowthorne declared causing them both to spin around, startled by his sudden appearance.

"I do wish you would stop doing that" the Commander responded.

"Comes with the job" Sir Richard admitted "a little melodramatics takes the monotony out of the tasks I have to deal with."

"So come on then" Tracy prompted Sir Richard "What happened here, what do you know about this little mystery of ours and most importantly of all where the hell is my brother?"

"Official line?" Sir Richard responded with a raised eyebrow "Nothing has happened at all, the convoy and its cargo never existed which means it could not have been stolen, disappeared, spirited away, choose your cliché of choice here as there was nothing to steal here in the first place."

"And presumably we are not here, this conversation is not taking place and my wife's brother is safe and sound drinking tea somewhere?" the Commander concluded.

"Something like that" Sir Richard confirmed "Much will be explained tomorrow when you go to the Bank."

"Now how did you know about that?" the Commander asked "I haven't even told Tracy about it."

"Walls have ears as they say" Sir Richard.

"So as we are not here, officially" Tracy asked "What would be the unofficial explanation for this mystery assuming that there is one of course."

"Money makes the world go round so the old song says" Sir Richard continued "Trouble is there are certain people who feel it is not going around in the right direction or indeed fast enough for them so they add a little into the system to speed things up a bit."

"But what does that have to do with the lorry and my missing officers?" Tracy demanded to know.

"Your brother is fine" Sir Richard reassured Tracy "He is working for me at the moment, I had him seconded onto this detail at short notice when evidence came to light as to what was going to occur here today. The original brief for those who spirited away our missing truck was that there was to be no evidence it ever occurred but I instructed James to leave behind his warrant card and a few other subtle clues so that it would get your attention."

"Consider my attention well and truly got" Tracy confirmed "What was in this truck that doesn't apparently exist?" she asked.

"Commander" Sir Richard addressed the Commander "You were looking at that sign back in Debden, for the benefit of the audience it said?"

"Bank of England Printing Works" the Commander confirmed before suddenly realising what might have been on the lorry "The penny drops."

"Try the twenty pound note" Sir Richard responded "well the raw material for them at any rate."

"All this is over a truck load of paper?" Tracy asked.

"Now I never said that" Sir Richard responded "That is for you to draw your own conclusions."

"And this meeting I have at the Bank of England tomorrow" the Commander asked "Needless to say there has to be a connection somewhere along the line?"

"Correct" Sir Richard agreed "Now if you will excuse me, I have another urgent appointment and I don't want to be late" he confirmed as he headed back to his waiting black cab "Be seeing you" he called before getting into the cab and then departing the scene.

"I don't doubt it" the Commander remarked as he and Tracy watched him being driven away.

"I don't like this" Tracy commented as they headed back to the patrol car "This smells of political black bags."

"It smells of something love" the Commander readily agreed "but it looks like we have nothing to investigate unless your brother pops up on the grid somewhere and lets us know what the hell is going on."

"Come on, let's get back" Tracy declared as she put her brother's warrant card and epaulette in her tunic pocket "There is nothing much more we can do here I think now that Sir Richard has nailed one of his air tight lids on it."

"You can't have an air tight lid on something that officially doesn't exist" the Commander remarked "that gives me a licence to go poking in some dark places and see who squeaks."

"This is usually the point at which most of the Home Office start cowering under their desks and screaming for their lawyers" Tracy mused as they headed back to the patrol car before she reached for her radio "Ok mate" she called to the helicopter pilot "You can head home now, I think we are done for today."

"What do you want me to tell the Guvnor?" the pilot asked.

"Tell him we didn't *officially* find anything" Tracy confirmed.

"Message received and understood" the Pilot responded as he started up the helicopter before lifting off and heading away leaving Tracy and the Commander to return to civilisation in the patrol car.

"How do we keep getting into these scrapes?" Tracy asked casually as with the Commander driving, they rejoined the main road and headed back in towards central London.

"Luck of the draw?" the Commander responded "Still, it makes life interesting and I can't wait to see what political hyperbole I am going to be drowned in tomorrow morning which should be fun."

"As long as nothing happens to my brother" Tracy replied with clear concern.

"He's been in the Security Service as long as you or I" the Commander reassured her "and with Sir Richard watching his back as well I am sure he will be fine. You Caverner's are a tough crowd."

"That is a fact" Tracy agreed.

"VIP Protection Division" Divisional Commander Jennifer Caverner, Tracy's identical twin sister declared as she answered the telephone in the near deserted duty office.

"Who, where and when please" she asked of the caller as she reached across the desk for the duty sheets to note the details of the request which she then repeated out loud to ensure accuracy "Prime Minister, Justice Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Governor General of the Bank of England and the Administrator General. Blimey, that promises to be one hell of a party."

"New Scotland Yard to the Bank of England via Downing Street for nine thirty tomorrow morning?" Jennifer confirmed "Is this to be a regular duty or strictly on the QT like the last one?"

"Oh, even more hush-hush than that?" Jennifer responded with a surprised look "I'll handle it myself Sir" she confirmed "Good night."

"Got a job on Maam?" Jennifer's deputy Commander Sandhurst asked as he entered the duty office at the end of the call.

"In the words of a certain Mr Crowthorne would you like the official or the unofficial version?" Jennifer wryly asked.

"Oh one of *those* types of job" Sandhurst replied "That's ominous."

"It is indeed" Jennifer agreed "Anyway I'll drive them myself, not that officially I am driving anyone anywhere tomorrow morning you understand."

"No I don't understand at all" Sandhurst admitted, by now thoroughly confused.

"Good" Jennifer grinned sarcastically "Keep it that way and you will go far in this business."

"Err yes Maam" Sandhurst responded.

"I am off home" Jennifer declared "and that is officially by the way."

"Good night Maam" Sandhurst declared as his Commanding Officer grabbed her coat and keys before leaving the office.

Outside in the street as soon as she had left the main entrance of Cardinal Place where her VIP Protection Division had its offices, she got onto her mobile telephone and tried to call her husband Commander Simon Fuller who she had been trying to reach all day without success.

"Oh come on where are you?" Jennifer remarked to herself as once again she was put through to Fuller's voicemail which was most unusual for him. He was expected to be unavailable until very early that morning but had promised to call her as soon as he was back from whatever he was working on which was to have been no later than eight o'clock but yet she had heard absolutely nothing.

Getting into the ministerial escort car parked by the side of the street, Jennifer decided to try calling him again, this time using his office number at New Scotland Yard but yet again no response.

"Something is wrong" Jennifer remarked to herself as she hung up, started the car and proceeded to pull out into the busy traffic of Victoria Street where she drove to New Scotland Yard about three quarters of a mile distant.

As she turned left into Broadway and approached the main entrance to New Scotland Yard, Jennifer sounded the horn as she saw her identical twin sister Tracy just coming out onto the pavement.

"Hello Sis" Tracy called as she went up to the drivers side window and greeted her sister "You look worried, it must be something in the air today."

"I don't suppose you have seen Simon about at all have you?" Jennifer asked "Only I haven't been able to get hold of him all day."

"I tried to call him earlier" Tracy admitted "I was hoping he could pull some traffic CCTV footage for me but he doesn't seem to be answering his telephone."

"Do you mind coming up with me while I go and check his office?" Jennifer asked as she stopped the car and got out.

"No problem" Tracy readily agreed "The two men in my life have been sent shopping for the family groceries so I am not expecting those two renegades back anytime soon."

"Men and shopping just do not mix" Jennifer agreed as she and Tracy headed inside New Scotland Yard's main entrance before taking the lift up to the eighth floor.

"Well I gave them a list but knowing them it will have turned into fish fingers and chips by the time I get back" she admitted as the lift headed upwards before opening on the eighth floor which was as normal for that time of the evening fairly quiet with only a few officers and other personnel about.

The twin sisters headed through the corridors until they reached the door of Fuller's office upon which Jennifer politely knocked before trying the door handle only to find it firmly locked.

"Looks like no one is home" Jennifer remarked puzzled as she tried the door handle again.

"I think this is my department" Tracy confirmed as she extracted her lock picking kit and got to work on the door lock.

"You're the Divisional Commander" Jennifer asked "Don't you have a master key for the whole Yard?"

"You would have thought so" Tracy admitted "not even my husband has a master key let alone little old me."

"Any joy?" Jennifer asked seeing that her sister was unusually having some difficulty trying to get the lock unpicked.

"Something is very wrong here" Tracy declared puzzled as she got back to her feet "It looks like someone has either broken off something inside the lock or deliberately jammed it."

"I don't like this" Jennifer remarked.

"Looks like I well have to resort to the original master key after all" Tracy admitted as she took a step back before applying her boot to the door and kicking it in.

"That made a hole" Jennifer remarked as the door gave way under her sister's assault.

"Good grief, what the hell has happened here?" Tracy asked as she switched on the light inside the office which illuminated a scene of complete and utter chaos with computers and files strewn all over the place along with open filing cabinet drawers.

"Well I appreciate my husband is not known for his housekeeping skills but this mess is even beyond his usual standard" Jennifer confirmed as she too inspected the damage.

"This place has been well and truly trashed by someone" Tracy confirmed "They must have been looking for something specific."

"And where the hell is Simon?" Jennifer asked.

"Don't touch anything" Tracy advised her sister "This needs the specialists in."

"I thoroughly agree" Jennifer confirmed as Tracy took out her mobile telephone and speed dialled a number.

"But the milk chocolate ones have a far less harsher taste than the plain chocolate ones" Jack pointed out as he and his adopted father continued their deep discussion on the merits of different types of chocolate digestive biscuits.

"And I agree lad" the Commander confirmed "but unfortunately your mother prefers the dark chocolate ones which means that is what we had better get otherwise neither of us will hear the end of it."

"Custard creams?" Jack suggested pointing over to the next shelf in the aisle.

"I like your thinking" the Commander agreed with a broad smile "Make it two packets, I need some for the office."

"Your phone is ringing dad" Jack informed the Commander as they continued the shopping with the Commander trying to decipher the mysterious scribbles on his list of items they were supposed to be getting.

"Oh right" the Commander responded, passing Jack the list "See what you can do with that while I take this."

"I'll try" Jack confirmed as he took up the challenge of trying to make sense of his adopted father's haphazard handwriting.

"The biscuit hotline" the Commander answered with an amused tone seeing it was Tracy's mobile number that was calling "How may I direct your call?"

"Dark chocolate" Tracy reminded him in quick response which made Jennifer look up with a slightly surprised expression, unaware of this little in joke.

"Thus endeth the debate lad" the Commander remarked aside to Jack who merely nodded in agreement.

"Dumb question time love" Tracy declared.

"There is no such thing as dumb questions my dear, only dumb answers" the Commander responded.

"You haven't seen or spoken to Simon Fuller at anytime in the last twenty four hours by any chance have you?" Tracy asked.

"Nope" the Commander confirmed "Not seen him since Tuesday now I come think of it. Hang on a second love" he turned back to Jack "You haven't seen Simon around have you?"

"No" Jack responded "He was supposed to be helping me with my maths homework but never showed up yesterday."

"That's two negatives here" the Commander confirmed returning to the telephone "Why may I ask my dear?"

"Because it would seem he has disappeared" Tracy explained "Jennifer has not seen hide nor hair of him since yesterday and when we checked his office just now, it looks like someone has gone through it with a very large tooth comb. It's a mess."

"By mess I assume more than the usual unkempt disaster area it usually is?" the Commander asked with concern.

"Affirmative" Tracy confirmed as she looked once more through the wrecked door into the interior of the trashed office.

"Stay there" the Commander responded "I'll get the shopping finished then I am coming over to take a look for myself, just make sure no one goes in there."

"Already being taken care of love" Tracy agreed as behind her, Jennifer was applying tape to the doorway to seal it off from unwanted visitors who may disturb or destroy any potential evidence of what appeared to be a crime scene yet with no obvious crime as yet.

"Well I was going to suggest ringing around Simon's relatives and friends but we are they aren't we?" the Commander asked.

"Indeed" Tracy confirmed "However I do have an undying urge to get Sir Richard Crowthorne down here and put him under a glow lamp for an hour to see if he knows anything."

"Sounds like a good idea" the Commander agreed "but it will have to wait until tomorrow. I should be there in about twenty minutes."

"See you" Tracy responded before hanging up.

"What was all that about?" Jack asked as he helped push the trolley towards the checkout.

"It would appear we have another mystery to solve" the Commander admitted.

On the twentieth floor of a disused office block situated somewhere in East Croydon, Simon Fuller looked at his watch as it momentarily beeped and smiled just a little.

"Now lets just hope they know where to send the cavalry" he remarked with not much hope as he pulled at the restraints that were binding his wrists to the chair, his only hope being the indication from his watch that someone had broken into his office back at New Scotland Yard and hopefully would now be aware of his enforced disappearance.

The question however was would they be able to find him in time before those that were holding him had no further use for his talents. Only time would tell and he knew it was going to seem an awful long time before he found out the answer.

"Now that is what I call a mess" Jack remarked as he took the opportunity to have a quick peek through the tape barrier that was stretched across the doorway into Fuller's badly trashed office.

"Jack, you are the technical genius in the family" the Commander asked "Do you think you could get into Simon's computer and find out what he was working on and when he was last here?"

"I'll give it a try" Jack agreed as Tracy passed him some rubber gloves so that Jack could work in the office without disturbing potential evidence although realistically anyone who had possessed the talent to break into and go through an office in the heart of New Scotland Yard was probably far too professional to leave any trace of who they were.

"Where's Jennifer?" the Commander asked seeing that Tracy's twin sister was not around.

"In my office upstairs making some calls" Tracy confirmed "There is just the possibility someone else may have seen him somewhere."

"Whoever went through this lot were definitely none too fussy about how they searched the place" Jack remarked as he managed to find the main computer console on the desk after carefully removing some of the debris from on top of it before switching it on.

"Is the computer operable amidst all this?" Tracy asked as the Commander looked on.

"Well I can log in all right" Jack confirmed "Simon gave me a log on for the system although this isn't right" he remarked as he looked at the screen.

"What's wrong?" the Commander asked.

"I should only have basic level access on account of I occasionally use his computer to do my homework" Jack explained "but it looks like from this that my account has been upped to administrator level by someone, I've got access to pretty much everything it would appear."

"When was the last time Simon logged on?" Tracy asked.

"20:45 yesterday evening" Jack confirmed as he read from the user log.

"I appreciate it that my technological knowledge is not exactly up to scratch" the Commander commented "but would I be right in thinking that was the last time his username was used as opposed to being definitely the owner of it?"

"If someone else knew his username and password then well yes I suppose it is possible that it was whoever was responsible for this mess logging on rather than Simon himself" Jack agreed.

At that point the Commander remembered something that Sir Richard had said to him in regards to Fuller just over a year ago, the expression being quickly picked up on by Tracy.

"Ten pence for them" Tracy prompted.

"I've just had an idea love" the Commander explained.

"Everyone duck now" Jack commented aside with a wry smile.

"Look it's getting late" the Commander continued "You head off home, take Jack, get some tea, there is something I have to check out."

"Is this the point where I get the bullet proof vest out of mothballs love?" Tracy asked wryly.

"Let's just say it is time I checked out one of my infamous theories" the Commander explained as he kissed her "I'll see you in an hour or so" he confirmed before leaving, still clearly full of thought.

"What was that all about?" Jack asked.

"A very good question son" Tracy responded "A very good question indeed."

Fuller had just managed to work loose one of the bindings that held him to the chair but it had taken him the best part of three hours to manage it. He was contemplating whether it was even worth bothering with the other one or just letting fate decide what was to happen to him when a door behind him opened and someone walked in.

"Not too enthusiastic about the room service here I must say" Fuller called to the unseen person who had just entered.

"Yeah, sorry about all this" the voice of the person who had entered the room apologised which took Fuller a bit by surprise, it contrasting rather severely with the rough and sudden nature in which he had been abducted off the street twenty four hours earlier.

"I know you don't I?" Fuller commented seeing the man come into view for the first time and seeing his face even though the light in the room was limited to a desk lamp a short distance away across the room and what city light filtered in through the windows.

"I should hope so" the man responded as he loosened the binds, allowing Fuller to retrieve his hands and rub his wrists for some relief "After all I am your brother in law."

"Jim?" Fuller squinted to get a better look at the man "What the hell are you doing here?"

"Saving your backside" James Caverner explained "It's a long story but lets just say for the moment I am here at the behest of a certain Mr Crowthorne."

"Still doesn't explain what the hell is going on" Fuller remarked.

"Someone is planning a rather large party which could cause some serious problems" James explained "Sir Richard got wind of it through his Section Fourteen contacts and got me to infiltrate this charming little knitting circle."

"So where do I fit in?" Fuller asked.

"You are wanted for your amazing skills with a computer apparently" James responded.

"All I did, at the wrong end of a gun I might add was pull out some insignificant file about a lorry in Essex" Fuller confirmed.

"Well lets just say there was a lot more to that than met the eye" James confirmed "A hell of a lot more. Here drink this" he proffered a bottle of water which Fuller gratefully took and quickly consumed.

"Thanks" Fuller responded "So if they have got what they wanted, why am I still around here?"

"They haven't finished calling upon your considerable talents yet" James explained "What has occurred so far is merely the opening gambit in a far bigger operation."

"Can you get a message through to my wife?" Fuller requested "Let her know I am all right, only she will be worrying something chronic by now."

"No problem" James confirmed as the sound of voices approaching down the corridor outside the room began to get louder "I have a dead drop arrangement which I am using to send and receive messages so I will see what I can do. For the moment, keep hanging in there."

"Looks like I am going nowhere for now anyway" Fuller admitted as James regrettably had to reattach the bindings although he left them a little bit looser than they were before for Fuller's benefit.

"Keep your chin up and I will see you soon" James confirmed with a knowing wink before leaving the room and closing the door which left Fuller alone to his thoughts once more.

"I think it is time you told me exactly what is going on" the Commander's voice called down the empty corridor of the Section Fourteen offices towards the open office door at the far end where Sir Richard Crowthorne was stood in the doorway almost expecting the Commander's arrival.

"Things have moved on a little faster than I had anticipated" Sir Richard reluctantly admitted "Take a seat and let me fill you in on what I know" he indicated the seat in front of his desk as the Commander came into the office looking far from impressed.

"I've got eight missing officers, one of which happens to be my brother in law" the Commander stated clearly as if for the record in some way "Now Simon Fuller has disappeared and judging by the way his office had been very professionally trashed I would say his absence was not entirely voluntary either."

"Indeed" Sir Richard confirmed as he proffered a drink from the decanter which the Commander respectfully declined before pouring one for himself. "I take it you hope that the constant watch my colleagues from MI5 have on Simon may throw up some answers?"

"It would be nice to think that the Secret Service does its job when we are not looking" the Commander admitted.

"This is what I have on Fuller's disappearance" Sir Richard declared as he picked up a remote control and pointed it at a painting on the office wall which raised itself up to reveal a large flat screen television underneath "Excuse the theatrics, I just could not resist having such a classic cliché installed" he added.

"Flashy" the Commander agreed "Can it pick up BBC2?" he asked.

"Oh something far more interesting" Sir Richard confirmed as he also used the remote control to lower the lighting level in the room "As soon as this happened, one of my Section Fourteen guys along with my alter ego over at MI5 realised its significance which is why we pulled it from every CCTV archive in the city."

"Where is this?" the Commander asked as the video began on the screen and he donned his small half lens reading glasses to get a better view.

"Just around the corner from Cardinal Place" Sir Richard confirmed "Six thirty last night to be precise."

"There is Simon" the Commander remarked as he recognised the familiar slightly shuffling tall figure appear at the left hand side of the screen.

"And here come the party crashers" Sir Richard declared as a blue van appeared in the picture and with swift efficiency before he knew what was happening, Fuller was swept up and gathered inside whereupon the van door was closed and it drove off at high speed.

"Do we have a name attached to that van?" the Commander asked.

"Registered to a dummy finance company running out of Birmingham" Sir Richard confirmed "Trouble is, the name is something that had already come to our attention in connection with another enquiry which is why this footage was pulled and a 'D Notice' slapped on the whole thing within minutes."

"The CCTV operator who monitored this as it happened?" the Commander inquired.

"She was the lucky receiver of a free all expenses paid hiking holiday in the Cairngorms" Sir Richard confirmed "Paid for by us I may add, she won't be back anytime soon."

"And the incident with Fuller's office?" the Commander asked "Only somehow someone managed to wreck the place without anyone in the whole of New Scotland Yard even noticing."

"Bit of a lapse that one" Sir Richard admitted sheepishly "Although having said that, if we had known about it in advance I would still have had to let it happen otherwise we would never have been able to find out what they are up to."

"What who are up to?" the Commander asked.

"And therein lies the problem" Sir Richard confirmed "All I have is a few otherwise unconnected names, mostly thugs for hire into which I managed to secrete James Caverner, his skills as a Motorcycle Officer being particularly useful, whilst I can only assume that they needed Fuller's computer skills to access the details of the convoy so they could boost it in transit."

"Strictly between you and me" the Commander remarked "What exactly was on that lorry."

"Paper" Sir Richard confirmed "About forty thousand sheets of it, each measuring roughly four foot square but not any ordinary paper, oh no" he continued as he opened his desk drawer and extracted a clear plastic folder which he passed across to the Commander "This was special security paper, used for everything from banknotes to cheque books, postal orders and international bearers bonds."

"Someone must be planning quite a party" the Commander commented "They could make millions."

"Literally" Sir Richard agreed "Indeed they already are. The number of forged banknotes in circulation, mostly twenties has shot up alarmingly in the last four weeks, which is why certain financial big wigs are getting nervous."

"And also presumably why I am invited to tea and biccies at the Bank of England tomorrow morning I assume?" the Commander ventured.

"Correct" Sir Richard confirmed. "Of course you do realise you have already seen this paper before don't you?" he asked.

"Every time I open my wallet I assume" the Commander responded.

"Not this type" Sir Richard indicated the clear plastic envelope "This is a fake twenty pound note that was recovered from a small industrial printing press in a disused factory to the north of Haychester two weeks ago, one of the ones Lieutenant Barrett had the good sense to shove in her pocket before someone spirited all the evidence away into the night."

"The only name we were able to link to that was Bordon" the Commander confirmed "and he is safely locked up at the company funny farm."

"Yes, but we both know who was pulling Bordon's strings don't we?" Sir Richard asked.

"Franklin Rogers" the Commander confirmed "but surely this is out of his league even for someone as well connected as him?"

"Oh that is beyond doubt" Sir Richard agreed "There are far more important and highly placed players involved in this particularly dangerous game."

"Which is why you are sniffing around" the Commander concluded.

"Section Fourteen's mandate is to watch over the financial, political and civil service sectors to make sure no one gets up to owt or is caught trying to dip their fingers in the till" Sir Richard confirmed "This office may only be a matter of days old, the paint is still fresh and I have yet to find the staff I require but it looks like the first problem may have already landed on my desk so to speak" he remarked as his pager beeped causing him to take it out of his jacket pocket and look at the message on it.

"Something inspiring?" the Commander asked.

"A certain brother in law of your acquaintance" Sir Richard confirmed "Apparently Simon is safe and well but still being held by whoever is organising this little party."

"Which means they have not finished with his skills yet" the Commander remarked "That means this is the opening moves of something that has much further to run."

"So it would appear" Sir Richard agreed "There goes my overtime budget if I had one."

"It will be interesting to see what the money men have to say in the morning" the Commander commented.

"Absolutely, very interesting indeed" Sir Richard agreed with an amused smirk.

"Have you found either of them?" Jennifer asked almost before the Commander had got in his own front door.

"Don't panic" the Commander confirmed as he entered the front living room where both Tracy and Jennifer were looking on nervously "Both of them are apparently fine at least for now."

"What the hell is going on?" Tracy asked.

"It would appear that we collectively have got ourselves mixed up in someone else's big plan to make a lot of money by somewhat less than legal methods" the Commander confirmed "I still haven't got it clear in my mind yet either."

"Do you still want the car to take you to the Bank of England in the morning Sir or are you going to take the tube as usual?" Jennifer asked as she put her jacket on and was about to leave.

"Travel on the Underground or face being in the back of the car with a bunch of politicians for three quarters of an hour" the Commander pondered "No contest really is it?"

"If you hear anything about Simon, call me immediately ok?" Jennifer requested.

"First thing I will do" the Commander readily agreed.

"All right" Jennifer reluctantly responded "Good night" she declared as she duly left.

"Where's Jack?" the Commander asked as soon as he and Tracy were alone once more.

"In bed" Tracy confirmed "Probably eating biscuits and watching the telly mind. I tried to help him with his homework earlier but got totally bamboozled."

"Is that even a word?" the Commander remarked.

"It is now" Tracy declared "Tracy's rule number three, I am always right."

"I think I will look in on him" the Commander remarked as he got up and headed out of the living room with Tracy to look in on Jack who to no great surprise he discovered was wide awake exactly as he predicted.

"Hey lad" the Commander called softly "It's gone eleven, you are supposed to be asleep, you have school in the morning."

"Couldn't sleep" Jack admitted honestly whilst at the same time hiding the packet of biscuits he had been working his way through.

"This father son thing?" the Commander asked Tracy "Am I supposed to read bedtime stories or something."

"Well what did your dad do when you were young?" Tracy asked.

"Mostly filled me in on who was fencing what and where the next poker game was being held" the Commander wryly recalled "also which Post Office to avoid going to as it was booked to be raided the next morning."

"You never really did have much of a proper childhood did you?" Tracy remarked.

"Never a dull moment mind" the Commander admitted with a wry grin.

"And it has been like that ever since" Tracy confirmed with a smile.

"Try and get some sleep" the Commander advised Jack.

"All right" Jack agreed as he put the biscuits away "Good night" he called.

"Sleep tight" Tracy called before he and the Commander closed the door.

"You know the more I think about it" the Commander remarked as he and Tracy arm in arm went through in to the kitchen "the more an idea of a family holiday sounds like a good plan."

"Let's get everyone back home safely, this little crisis or whatever it is sorted out and then we can talk about it" Tracy agreed with a smile "Speaking of which, where are you sneaking off to in the morning, the Bank of England?"

"Indeed" the Commander confirmed "only you didn't hear that from me" he added with sincerity.

"Ah...I see." Tracy remarked " Anyway, you are the National Administrator General now, head of all Police and Security in the country, why the hell are you taking the tube?"

"The Mayor of London travels on the train on his own" the Commander remarked "Saw him get on a service down to Brighton at Victoria just the other day so if its good enough for him..."

"Fair enough" Tracy agreed.

"Mind you he didn't notice the half dozen MI5 Political Section officers who slunk onto the back coach of that train while he wasn't looking" the Commander added with an amused smile. "In this business you are never truly alone."

With his bindings sufficiently loose, Fuller was able to manoeuvre around in the chair to which he was tied a bit and managed to shuffle over to the window to look outside across the city skyline as he attempted to make out anything that was familiar.

"Well we are certainly not in Kansas anymore" he remarked to himself as he failed to recognise anything in the darkness outside except his own reflection in the window glass. What he could see of the outside world told him little except there were other tall buildings in the area, he was at least ten or more storeys up and there was a main railway line running past the building that snaked off into the distance but with the trains only appearing as dots of light moving along from the carriage windows he could not even see what type they were.

"Doing a little sightseeing are we Mr Fuller?" a voice called from behind him causing Fuller to shuffle in his chair back around.

"Just admiring the view" Fuller weakly admitted as the man came into the room, at this point only identifiable as being of fairly tall in stature from the silhouette that he could see in the doorway.

"My clients are in need of your services once more" the man declared openly "I do apologise for the rather poor standard of accommodation though. We only had a very short amount of time to find a place to operate from as our senior client upped the schedule somewhat."

"Supposing I refuse your polite request?" Fuller responded with a nice undertone of defiance.

"Given the extensive and well connected nature of my powerful clients who are bankrolling this little operation" the man's voice echoed all around the empty room

emphasising the menace within "that would be most unwise given that we can have certain people extinguished from history in the blink of an eye."

"At which point I would cease to be of any use and then become another disposable asset to be got rid of?" Fuller asked.

"Something like that yes" the man confirmed.

"I figured as much" Fuller responded "Let's just say I have run into people and little cliques like you and yours before and they have all ended really badly."

"Well for the moment at least" the man continued his cool defiant and commanding stance "we or rather my employer holds the upper hand here so if you wish to see daylight again as a free man, not to mention you wife then co-operation really is your only viable option."

"What do you want me to do?" Fuller asked, giving in to the inevitable.

"That's the spirit" the voice confirmed as two of his associates came in and took Fuller by the arms, releasing his bindings and pulling him to his feet before escorting him out of the room "I am so glad we had this chance for a little chat, makes things so much clearer don't you think?"

"I am so glad you think so" Fuller responded as he was shown out of the room before the man followed, carefully closing the door behind him.

"This is a District Line service to Tower Hill" the irritating automated announcement system declared as the recently refurbished six car train of 'D' type sub-surface Underground stock accelerated away from St James' Park station.

Amongst the train's few passengers in this, the immediate post peak lull before the throngs of tourists hit central London was the Commander who was reading that morning's Metro free newspaper which seemed to contain little of interest that day other than a fortuitous horoscope which mentioned that he may have trouble with money and those who control it today.

He remained semi interested in the paper for the next couple of stops as the train passed through Westminster and then Embankment but for the final part of this leg of the journey the Commander chose to take his warrant card out of his tunic pocket and upon opening it, looked at his picture of a smiling Tracy along with Jack taken a couple of weeks earlier in front of the famous three sided revolving sign outside New Scotland Yard.

The Commander thought about his new responsibilities, not those of National Administrator General but the far more daunting ones of now being a parent. Running the entire Security Service and dealing with some of the most devious evil people in the country was easy but as for what he was supposed to do as a father albeit

to an adopted son, he really was completely stumped beyond calling upon his recollections of his own childhood which was not exactly orthodox by any means.

So engrossed in his thoughts was the Commander that he was slightly startled when the automated announcer on the train declared that they were approaching Monument, his stop and he hurried to his feet before making his way over to the doors to alight as the train came into the station.

It was a further five minute walk through the lower levels of the Monument and Bank station complex before he reached ground level, emerging from the Bank Station entrance on the corner of Threadneedle Street in the shadow of the impressive columned edifice of the Bank of England itself.

A discreetly dressed security guard greeted the Commander at the main entrance as he was expected and was shown inside where he was met by Sir David Godwin, the Director General of the Bank of England.

"Thank you for coming Commander" Sir David thankfully declared as he shook the Commander's hand.

"Gets me out of the office" the Commander admitted although he quickly noted that the diminutive man in his late fifties with heavily receding silver grey hair was clearly uncomfortable or apprehensive about something.

"This way please" Sir David led the way up the ornate staircase to the offices upstairs "The others have just arrived."

"Which probably means all the biscuits are gone already" the Commander wryly commented.

"I am sure we can find some more" Sir David admitted "This is after all one of the largest depositories of gold bullion and other financial sources in the world."

"I don't doubt it" the Commander responded as he looked down from the staircase at the display case in the centre of the main entrance which held a small pile of genuine solid gold bars, a public display of just a fraction of the gold upon which the country's economy is based upon, encased behind bullet proof glass.

"You know I saw some diamonds displayed like that once" the Commander remarked "You might want to beef up your security a bit just in case the same thing happens again."

"Most of our security is very subtle" Sir David admitted "besides we have far bigger problems to deal with than the chance of a few bars of gold going walkabout."

"Really?" the Commander responded intrigued as to where this conversation was leading him and what connection it may have to the previous day's events.

"This way please Commander" Sir David opened a door and showed him the way into what revealed itself to be a kind of display room, cabinets all along the walls showing hundreds of different types of banknotes.

In the middle of the room looking through a couple of albums containing more of the notes were the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer along with a couple of other men who the Commander vaguely recognised as being from the Treasury.

"This is our funny money collection" Sir David explained gesturing around at the display cases and the albums on the centre table "the Bank of England keeps an example of every single batch of forged banknote ever recovered dating back to the late 1700's."

"Impressive" the Commander admitted before leaning forward to look more closely at one of the display cases which contained a number of forged twenty pound notes from the late 1960's, one of which in particular caught his attention.

"Ah the 'Bank of England' issue" Sir David noticed the note that had attracted the Commander's attention "An excellent forgery apart from that spelling blunder.

"I've got one of these" the Commander explained "Old school friend had a dyslexic brother in law who was a very good engraver but as you can see did occasionally slip up spectacularly. He will be well chuffed to find out one of his notes made it in here."

"Gentlemen" Sir David declared as they approached the table "I believe we all know each other so let's get this meeting under way."

"I am going to take a guess here gentlemen" the Commander began, choosing in his customary manner not to sit down with the others just yet but to continue to pace along thoughtfully "but this meeting taking place in the presence of so much forged money is probably not a coincidence?"

"Correct" the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed grimly before opening his briefcase and passing across to the Commander a clear plastic envelope containing two twenty pound notes of the new current issue that had only been in circulation a matter of weeks.

"Fake ones I presume?" the Commander asked.

"Yes" Sir David confirmed "and very good ones at that."

"What is most worrying about these" the Chancellor of the Exchequer remarked "is that these are extremely good copies of notes that have barely had time to appear in general circulation. They are so good that they are almost indistinguishable from the genuine article."

"Now we have always accepted that there will always be a certain amount of dodgy notes floating around, a few have continued in circulation for years undetected" Sir

David admitted "but in the last six weeks the quantity of forgeries appearing has escalated alarmingly."

"As you are no doubt aware" the Prime Minister interjected with a concerned frown "the UK economy is in a rather fragile state at the moment, incredibly delicately balanced which makes the sudden increase in forgeries even more worrying."

"One of the major weapons in our arsenal for, erm well I won't say controlling the economy, more guiding it in the right direction" Sir David explained "is controlling the amount of cash there is in actual circulation. I can pick up the telephone on my desk upstairs and request that a hundred million in twenties be released from our reserves or alternatively do the opposite and take cash out."

"But if someone outside our control starts bumping things along by dumping a vast quantity of their home made readies into circulation" the Commander concluded "then that could wreck the economy before anyone realises what has happened."

"Precisely" Sir David confirmed "Whilst in the past any forgeries were reasonably easy to spot, be they scanned printouts from a computer or traditional engraved print runs like the old style notes, these new forgeries are almost totally indistinguishable from the genuine article."

"What sort of resources would you need to set up and run a forgery operation of this scale and complexity?" the Commander asked.

"Specialised printing presses" Sir David confirmed "expertise, raw materials and ironically given the nature of the final product, money, lots of it."

"Then there is the paper" the Prime Minister reminded Sir David.

"Indeed" Sir David agreed "Banknotes and other financially valuable documents, even certain Government papers are all printed these days on specifically made security paper which is produced in just one high security facility, the paper comes with a highly complex series of almost irreproducible watermarks and the bank note version of course incorporates the metallic security strip."

"That sort of stuff doesn't just fall off the back of a lorry as my old dad used to say" the Commander remarked before adding with a knowing expression "unless of course the aforementioned lorry is one that recently vanished into thin air."

"Someone has been in conversation with a certain Mr Crowthorne by the sounds of things" the Prime Minister remarked, not in the least bit surprised.

"When a lorry and eight Security Officers vanish into thin air on my patch" the Commander remarked "included amongst which is my wife's brother, believe me gentlemen, I sit up and take notice."

"At some point yesterday" the Treasury Secretary passed across a top secret report from their own internal security bureau "someone with very high clearance managed to access the central secure database and extract from it the details of our thrice

weekly paper shipment. For a bonus point, they even managed to change the shipment order from one case to four."

"Enough to make at least fifty million in twenties plus countless knows what other high security documents or anything else you care to name" Sir David confirmed.

"For some months there had been a certain amount of oddments of paper and other materials effectively falling down the back of the proverbial sofa, off cuts from legitimate printing disappearing and so forth" the Treasury Secretary Sir William Applegate confirmed "the trouble was that if we alerted you and your agencies, then any leads we may have had which admittedly were not many would have shut up shop and moved to somewhere else."

"I guess then that someone decided yesterday to go into the wholesale business" the Commander concluded.

"A massive security breach" Sir David confirmed "The initial quality forgeries we have discovered so far in circulation could be just the tip of the iceberg."

"And the only major lead we have are these notes" Applegate, the Treasury Secretary indicated the two banknotes in the clear plastic bag on the table "printed on our secure paper and found by a Lieutenant Barrett amongst a small scale printing press in a disused factory two weeks ago."

"Which throws in the possibility of a forest of insiders involved" the Commander confirmed "If it wasn't for Lieutenant Barrett's quick thinking in grabbing a sheet of those off the printer when she found it, no one would have been any the wiser as somewhere between that disused factory and the Haychester office, all the evidence mysteriously vanished. Something that seems to have become somewhat of a recurring theme around here lately."

"Of course the biggest danger is the threat of economic blackmail" the Prime Minister chipped in "Someone could easily threaten to off load millions into the system and before you know it all economic hell will break loose."

"What we need you to do Commander" Sir David explained with clear worry "is to find out who is behind this and put a stop to them before they can flood the country with forgeries."

"And presumably not tell anyone else what I am doing?" the Commander asked.

"Precisely" Sir David confirmed "We cannot allow even the possibility of what is occurring to appear in the press, the wild speculation of worse case scenarios alone would be enough to do serious damage to this country."

"I will need to bring a few people into the loop" the Commander responded "my wife for a starter, one or two others but I can keep it a strictly small off the record closed investigation unless whoever we are trying to stop decides to make it more public after which I can then resort to all guns blazing, hopefully not in the literal sense."

"This is all we have on those who had access to the convoy details" Applegate passed across a folder to the Commander who upon opening it found just a few small sheets of paper inside.

"Not much to go on" the Commander remarked "The way I see it I have three leads to follow. First there is whoever had access to that information and who they may be connected with, being blackmailed by, whatever. Secondly there is the initial finance for this little operation, who fronted up the legitimate cash to kick start it as it must have come from somewhere and I kind of doubt this is being done using a credit card, then there is the third angle, equipment and supplies. What do you need to print convincing looking bank notes?"

"Only one company makes the printing machinery that is used by us" Sir David confirmed "A company in Germany who operate under the tightest security both there and from their UK plant in Deptford."

"I think I will pop in and say hello" the Commander remarked "See who has been buying stuff off them for cash lately."

"They are not cheap" the Treasury Secretary remarked "The one that your Lieutenant Barrett discovered was at most a small scale example probably not more than ten feet in length?"

"Sounds about right" the Commander confirmed "I only saw it briefly though."

"Well for anything like the sort of bulk production that the large consignment of stolen paper would seem to indicate they are aiming for" Sir David did a few manual calculations on the back of a piece of paper "You are looking for a printing press about forty to fifty feet in length, weighing in at about a hundred and twenty tons with a dedicated three phase power supply, we have to use special railway vans to move our stuff about."

"That gives me an idea of where to start" the Commander confirmed "Just one question remains, if I find whoever is behind this, what would you like me to do with them and indeed with the funny money now I come to think of it?"

"Make sure that they disappear never to be seen ever again" the Prime Minister confirmed "If you want an executive order in writing to that effect I can let you have it by this afternoon."

"In which case gentlemen" the Commander declared as he rose from his seat and gathered the files together before putting them in his briefcase "I had best get on with some good old fashioned leg work."

"It has been confirmed Sir" one of the men called across the office to his superior who was looking at the latest artwork for the new run of banknotes "They have called the Commander in and he is in a meeting with them at the Bank right now."

"Thank you" the leader, an experienced fixer and master forger by the name of Ian Renault responded calmly "Could you get me the chief please" he requested, barely taking his eyes off the artwork which he was examining closely in microscopic detail through a powerful magnifying glass.

A minute later Renault was passed the telephone which he took but paused for a deep breath mixed with some apprehension before putting it to his ear.

"Sir" Renault declared "Everything is going exactly as you predicted" he confirmed to the unknown person at the other end but anyone who was watching would have easily guessed correctly that it was someone of extreme importance if Renault's slightly nervous posture and tone of voice was anything to go by.

"Understood Sir" Renault confirmed "We do have the matter of a dead body in cold storage" he responded "Perhaps a diversion may be in order?" he suggested.

There was another pause as the person on the other end of the line considered Renault's suggestion before issuing a further instruction whereupon the very formal and for the caller, unsettling conversation came to an end.

"Well then" Renault declared as he hung up the telephone "I guess if the boss wants a diversion for our Security Service friends, we had better give them one."

As the Commander stepped out of the main entrance of the Bank of England onto the pavement in Threadneedle Street, he became aware of a familiar sounding motorbike approaching from his right that as it came into view revealed it to be a fully marked Security Service example with the familiar sight of Tracy riding it.

"Fancy meeting you here love" the Commander remarked, happy to see her.

"Just passing through" Tracy admitted "I was heading over this way when the call came through about a major RTA on the Euston Road. It's chaos apparently."

"Well it is the Euston Road" the Commander commented with a wry smile.

"Fancy a lift?" Tracy asked indicating the back of the bike.

"I think I'll take the bus" the Commander admitted "Besides I need to find a quiet corner of the world and get some serious thinking done."

"Interesting meeting I take it?" Tracy asked.

"I'll fill you in later my love" the Commander confirmed "I still haven't quite worked it out myself just yet."

"Well I best get going" Tracy admitted as she restarted the motorbike's engine "You can tell me over lunch."

"It's a date" the Commander readily agreed.

"See you later" Tracy confirmed with a beaming smile before departing, accelerating away at speed up the road with sirens and lights in full cry.

Five minutes later Tracy was winding her motorbike through the stationary traffic that was completely jamming up the Euston Road in both directions in the area around St Pancras International station. It was a road that was extremely busy and often being affected by road works at the quietest times but with this accident, it had descended into total gridlock which was now having a knock on effect on connecting and feeder roads for miles around.

"What the hell happened here?" Tracy asked as soon as she reached the centre of the scene where several vehicles had come together at the main junction resulting in a large heap of mangled metal that until twenty minutes ago were at least a dozen separate vehicles.

"Morning Maam" the Site Incident Officer for the Fire & Rescue Service greeted Tracy as she got off her motorbike, removed her helmet and joined the massed ranks of the emergency services attending the incident "Welcome to the chaos."

"What numbers of casualties are we looking at here?" Tracy asked as she looked across the smoking remains.

"Fortunately most of the vehicles that hit this mess were slow speed impacts, mostly cuts, bruises, walking wounded" the Site Incident Officer confirmed "Our main problem is the grey Mercedes jammed underneath that lorry trailer" he indicated ahead to part of the scene where a number of Fire & Rescue Service personnel plus a couple of paramedics were working to free trapped occupants "There is at least three people trapped in that car and possibly something odd in the boot."

"Sir!!" came the urgent sounding call from one of the Fire Service officers "We have a problem here!"

"What's up lad?" the Site Incident officer asked as he and Tracy went over to where the black Mercedes could be seen badly crushed beneath the trailer of the lorry which is when they saw the trapped driver was trying to reach for a gun lying near to him.

Tracy immediately reacted to what she saw by drawing her gun and pointing it directly at the trapped driver.

"Don't!" she strongly suggested, a move that had the effect of causing the driver to reconsider and gave one of the Fire Service officers the chance to kick the gun out of reach.

"It's just not your day is it sunshine" one of the Fire Service officers joked in his strong cockney accent as he returned to the task of extricating the trapped.

"Lima Mike One to Control" Tracy called into her radio "Can I have an ARU unit or at least some armed support to the site of the Euston Road RTA as soon as possible please."

"I think we can get in the boot" the Site Incident Officer confirmed.

"Do it" Tracy agreed whereupon on this confirmation two Fire Service officers duly wrenched the boot lid of the car open.

"Dear God!" they suddenly called out as the boot lid was released and a body dressed in the battered and blood stained remains of a Security Service uniform fell out.

"Get them out of the car as soon as possible" Tracy called, seething at the sight of the dead officer but keeping a lid on her anger "I am not too bothered how damaged they are, just as long as there is enough remaining for me to have a nice in depth chat with."

"Good morning Sir" the Receptionist behind the desk in the entrance hall of the Transport Division offices in High Holborn called as the Commander entered and waved cheerily.

"Morning" he responded as he approached the desk "Is Divisional Commander Robertson in?"

"Yes Sir" the Receptionist confirmed "Although I think he has someone in with him at the moment. Would you like me to page him?"

"I think I will just drop in and say hello" the Commander confirmed with a wry smile "Don't worry, I know the way."

"If you say so Sir" the Receptionist agreed as the Commander duly headed off towards the staircase.

The Commander duly headed up to the sixth floor before making his way along to the Divisional Commander's office, once an office that was originally his a few years earlier when he too was the head of the Transport Division, much having happened since then.

Looking through the window alongside the office door, the Commander could see that there were two people inside, one sat at the desk was Commander Robertson, and the presence of the other did not in the least bit surprise him either.

"Well don't you turn up in the most amazing of places" the Commander remarked as he entered the office and tapped Sir Richard Crowthorne on the shoulder.

"Just looking up some old friends" Sir Richard casually responded "How was your meeting."

"Three weak leads" the Commander confirmed "That is all I have, however I was rather hoping you" he addressed Robertson "and your Transport Division boys could possibly lend me a hand."

"Always a pleasure to be of assistance Sir" Roberson readily agreed as he and the Commander shook hands in greeting "So what can I get you?"

"If I wanted to move something large, heavy and by rail" the Commander began.

"From somewhere like Deptford I presume?" Sir Richard interjected.

"Indeed" the Commander confirmed "but did not want anyone to know about it, how would I do it?"

"Ordinary run of the mill item or something a bit more specialist?" Robertson asked.

"Definitely specialised" the Commander confirmed "about forty feet in length and anything up to a hundred tons in weight."

"That would require movement by a specially built rail vehicle" Robertson remarked "Ordinary run of the mill vans, container flats and the like would not be able to handle loads such as that, also there is the security aspect."

"What makes you think there is a security aspect involved here?" the Commander asked.

"Oh that's easy Sir" Robertson explained "Two clues currently standing in this very office right before me. You two would not be going to all this effort with so much cloak and dagger for a VDA van full of cashew nuts."

"Can we get into the TOPS computer and trace any possible movements that could shed light on my little problem?" the Commander asked.

"Certainly" Robertson agreed.

"Err, what's the TOPS computer?" Sir Richard asked.

"That's what you get for spending the early 1970's working for MI5 instead of growing up with a model train set" the Commander remarked "Train Operations Processing System" he explained "In layman's terms it is a computer database that records and controls the movement of every single rail vehicle on the UK National Railway network from the latest Class 66 locomotive through the to humblest wagon sitting in a siding in Fort William. Just don't ask me how it works though; my technological knowledge is still not that good!"

"All right then" Robertson declared as he turned to the computer terminal on his desk "Starting point, where from would this consignment of whatever be commencing its journey."

"Deptford" both the Commander and Sir Richard responded in unison.

"Are you two working on the same case from opposite ends or something?" Robertson asked.

"Actually it's a three ended stick I think" the Commander admitted "My wife is on the third bit."

"What's she doing now?" Sir Richard asked aside.

"Sorting out a road traffic accident up on the Euston Road apparently" the Commander confirmed.

"I thought the traffic was starting to slow up a bit more than usual" Robertson remarked as he briefly looked out of the office window down into the street below where the usual busy traffic flows were now barely moving in any direction because of the knock on effects of the collision.

"Whatever we are looking for" the Commander confirmed "would probably have been transported from the factory in Deptford no later than eight weeks ago I would have thought."

"Well eliminating through traffic, passenger flows and engineers trains narrows things down considerably" Robertson confirmed as he continued his search on the computer screen "Very little freight traffic actually originates from that area these days."

"Two shipments" the Commander remarked as he looked at the screen, "and only one of them using anything other than standard wagon types."

"Let's see where this one was going" Robertson agreed as he moved to click on the train details only for the computer to suddenly start emitting an ear splitting beeping noise before the screen went blank.

"What the hell was that?" Sir Richard exclaimed, a thought shared equally by the other two.

"The damm computer just shut down on me" Robertson explained as he tried to get it back working, eventually resorting to hitting the side of the screen but to no effect.

"And my wife wonders why I never like computers" the Commander remarked.

"Looks like someone planted a file bomb of some kind" Sir Richard commented.

"In English if you would be so kind" the Commander requested, not having a clue what Sir Richard was talking about.

"In simple terminology, a little computer program that lays dormant until someone accesses or searches for something you don't want them to find" Sir Richard explained "whereupon it duly wakes up and blows you the proverbial big raspberry."

"That would take some pretty impressive computer skills to pull that kind of stunt off" Robertson remarked whereupon both the Commander and Sir Richard looked across at each other, both of them clearly coming to the same conclusion at the same time.

"Well it just so happens someone who is more than capable of something like that has gone missing" the Commander declared "Looks like it is time we did some good old fashioned asking around."

"I fully agree" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Looks like this one is dead too" the site incident officer confirmed as he double checked the two occupants trapped in the rear of the crushed car.

"Right, stuff the traffic, lets get this whole area sealed off and the scenes of crime lads down here" Tracy declared as she duly took charge "Whilst we are about it, let's see if we can get hold of a coroner as well."

"Here's the dead officer's ID Maam" one of the fire officers passed Tracy the warrant card from the body in the boot.

"Well I'll be dammed" Tracy remarked as she read the name within, the second time in twenty four hours she had seen it before reaching for her radio, "Lima Mike One to control" she called "Can someone call up my husband and ask him to meet me at King's Cross as soon as possible please?"

The Commander had no idea why he was travelling to King's Cross, only that he was originally on his way back to New Scotland Yard when a rather garbled message was relayed to him by the central Control Room asking him to go there as soon as possible.

"This is King's Cross St Pancras" the automated announcement declared as he got up from his seat and the Northern Line train of 1995 type Tube Stock began to pull into the platform before coming to halt and opening its doors.

As per most of the rest of the disembarking passengers, the Commander proceeded up through the subsurface levels of Kings Cross St Pancras Underground Station, parts of which resembled a building site until he reached the surface.

He had not even exited the ticket hall and already the Commander could hear the commotion, traffic sounding horns and emergency service vehicle sirens echoing in from the scene outside.

"Good grief" the Commander exclaimed as he emerged out of one of the station entrances to street level and looked around at the chaotic scene before him.

"Ah good morning Sir" one patrol officer who was trying his level best to placate the confusion called over to the Commander "The Divisional Commander is over there"

he indicated towards the centre of the junction where amid the tangled metal of several crashed vehicles could be seen various members of the emergency services and a large white and blue inflatable tent that was now being erected at the centre of the scene in order to try and preserve any potential vital evidence.

"Thank you" the Commander responded, "I think I will go and join the party" he declared before the officer lifted the tape barrier allowing him to pass beneath whereupon he made for the centre of the scene.

"Is the lady of the household at home?" the Commander asked as he looked around the corner of the entrance into the inflatable tent to see the familiar and welcome sight of Tracy who was in the midst of directing operations in her usual efficient style."

"You got my message love?" Tracy responded, obviously glad to see him.

"Picked a funny old place to set up for a camping holiday" the Commander joked as he joined Tracy at the temporary desk from which she was co-ordinating things and put his arm around her to show his obviously needed support for her.

"Does this name ring any bells?" Tracy asked as she passed the recovered warrant card to the Commander who took it and looked at it.

"Lieutenant Oswald Dursley" the Commander "Interesting, one of our missing ARU officers from yesterday. I can see why you called me over here."

"About an hour or so ago" Tracy explained as she proceeded to show her husband around the scene "this lorry apparently jack knifed across the junction and in the process wiped out the Mercedes you can just make out beneath the trailer there."

"Ouch!" the Commander exclaimed as he knelt down to examine the mangled remains of the car.

"The late Lieutenant Dursley" Tracy explained.

"In more ways than one it would appear" the Commander added.

"He was stuffed in there" Tracy continued "and the Coroner reckons he has been dead at least twenty four to thirty six hours."

"Well that fits at least" the Commander confirmed "Who else was in the car when it crashed?" he asked.

"That is where the plot thickens my love" Tracy declared with a distinct air of mystery "Step this way" she announced as she led the way into a separate room within the tent where the Coroner was busy conducting an examination of one of the four bodies that had been recovered.

"Is this going to be icky?" the Commander asked slightly nervously upon seeing the bodies.

"I am afraid so" the Coroner confirmed "Sorry" he apologised knowing full well from past experience of the Commander's squeamish nature when it came to grisly scenes.

"All right, what have you got then" the Commander asked, taking a good firm hold of Tracy's hand for support.

"The driver of the car was alive when he was found him" the Coroner confirmed "the alarm bells began ringing big time however when this was found lying near him which he was attempting to reach."

"Nice bit of hardware" the Commander remarked as the Coroner passed him the recovered semi-automatic hand gun in its clear plastic evidence bag to him.

"The alleged owner of that is now in the high security unit at St Thomas hospital" Tracy confirmed "Condition is critical."

"So who do the other three stiffs belong to then?" the Commander asked.

"From the driving licences we found on them" the coroner explained as he passed across another evidence bag "they are called Marsh, Billington and Maunsell."

"All you need is a Bullied and a Missenden and you would have the set" the Commander remarked.

"Nope" Tracy was forced to admit after a few moments thought "You've lost me love" she duly confirmed.

"All names of Chief Engineers or Directors of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway or its immediate successors" the Commander explained "I would venture that someone is trying to get my attention."

"And for a bonus point" the Coroner continued "the three passengers all have injuries concurrent with being involved in a major car crash but that is not what killed them."

"So what did they die of then?" the Commander asked, clearly intrigued "assuming it wasn't old age that is."

"Sharp but professionally applied blow to the back of the head, about an hour before the crash I would say" the Coroner confirmed "Not easy to find either."

"So it would appear someone was getting rid of surplus personnel" Tracy commented "Anything else on them?" she asked.

"Mobile phones naturally" the Coroner confirmed "Usual story, pre-paid and unregistered but there was this" he passed across a small object.

"It's one of those stick things isn't it?" the Commander remarked as he looked at the object Tracy was holding up to the light to get a better look at it.

"I wonder..." Tracy contemplated thoughtfully for a moment.

"A message like last time?" the Commander asked her as he came to a similar conclusion as she was.

"I think we should get back to the office and find out" Tracy suggested.

"Indeed" the Commander agreed as he took one last look across the row of bodies before following his wife outside.

"Sir, everything is ready, all we need is for you to give the word" Renault declared over the mobile telephone in his hand.

There was a pause of tense anticipation from Renault and the others in the room as the response was re-laid, the tension being almost unbearable for some.

"Gentlemen" Renault declared as soon as he had received his answer and hung up the call "Start your engines."

With that the various men in the large industrial room tuned to their machines and began to start them up. Amongst these under heavy armed guard sat Fuller who looked on slightly apprehensively as Renault came over to him.

"I should point out as a registered law enforcement officer that by using these machines and material to create what you are creating is a criminal offence" Fuller remarked casually.

"Oh believe me Mr. Fuller" Renault declared as he sat down alongside him "We are just getting started when it comes to breaking rules around here."

"Well so far you have notched up kidnapping, theft, computer fraud and now I guess we can add forgery to the list of accolades" Fuller confirmed as he looked around at the extensive machinery that was now in full swing meaning that they had to raise their voices somewhat to make themselves heard.

"I like to keep busy" Renault admitted "and my boss is a very hard task master, he and his investors expect results."

"And who would these 'investors' be just by way of making casual dinner conversation?" Fuller inquired.

"Oh no, no, no" Renault wagged his finger casually "Client confidentiality is vitally important in my line of work, besides I wouldn't want to spoil any potential surprises."

"I have to admit I am not exactly a fan of surprises" Fuller admitted as at that point a chatter of excitement was heard from over the other side of the room which caused them to look around to see the first sheet of completed bank notes appear from the end

of the machine which was brought over to an eager looking Renault for him to inspect.

"Well, well, well" Fuller remarked "A genuine bona-fide licence to print money."

"What do you think?" Renault asked showing Fuller the sheet of notes.

"Very nice" Fuller agreed "Still very illegal though."

"The opinion over what is legal and illegal depends upon your point of view" Renault remarked, a comment that Fuller found puzzling but intriguing at the same time.

"Oh so someone is going around handing out free licences to print off your own money then, I see" Fuller joked.

"Well it's a little more complicated than that I will admit" Renault confirmed as he stroked his chin thoughtfully "but lets just say that your summary of the situation, amusing or not was just about on the money, no pun intended."

"So why am I still here?" Fuller asked "You've got the machinery, the raw materials and the muscle" he concluded "I got most of those for you and put a block on any traces you may have left behind, under duress I may add."

"Plenty more for you to do yet" Renault confirmed "Come with me" he indicated to two of his associates to lift Fuller out of the chair whereupon he led the way out of what had effectively become the factory floor to an office where a desk of computer terminals awaited him.

"Supposing I were to tell you where to shove it?" Fuller asked "Even at the point of a gun I just don't feel like co-operating anymore."

"I thought you might say that" Renault admitted "Take a seat" he gestured towards the chair into which the two men accompanying Fuller promptly placed him "I want to show you something."

"This would be the point where the leverage appears I take it?" Fuller asked, not feeling at all co-operative.

"We, well that is to say certain associates of mine did a bit of checking into your background" Renault explained as he took out a large brown envelope "As far as we could ascertain you have virtually no family to speak of, indeed all we could find was your wife" he took a couple of photographs out of the envelope and placed them on the desk.

"Congratulations" Fuller remarked "a couple of photographs of my wife standing in Downing Street. I'd fire your photographer if I were you though."

"Now I appreciate it that the lovely Jennifer is head of the VIP Protection Division and probably second only to her twin sister in the hard as nails category in this town" Renault confirmed "but we also have two other things which work to our advantage,

firstly she is your wife and secondly we have some very well placed colleagues who can ensure she is eliminated with just a telephone call."

"You know, I've met some pretty manipulative evil bastards in my time" Fuller admitted "and you are definitely up there in the big league of them."

"Flattery will get you nowhere" Renault responded "what will get you somewhere and also ensure the continued survival of your wife is your continued and unconditional co-operation."

"It would appear as if you and your dubious associates are holding all the aces" Fuller conceded "So what is it to be?" he reluctantly asked.

"As you can see" Renault declared as he gestured around generally "we have here an efficient multi-million pound operation with a quality product that is sure to create a demand."

"And you need to introduce it into circulation without its origin being traced back to its source I assume?" Fuller asked.

"You know your talents and intelligence are wasted in law enforcement" Renault remarked "What I need you to do is find out the schedules of all cash shipments across London and the South East for the next forty eight hours."

"I'll see what I can find" Fuller reluctantly agreed as he turned to the computer terminal and began working.

"Do you know what this is all about?" Jennifer Caverner asked as she and Sir Richard headed inside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard.

"I strongly suspect Tracy and the Commander are up to something, again" Sir Richard casually remarked as they entered the lift car whereupon he pressed the button for the top floor.

"By the way" Jennifer asked as they headed upwards "You haven't seen that errant husband of mine about anywhere have you?"

"Seen, err no" Sir Richard confirmed "However I am pretty certain he is alive and well."

"I thought you might know something about this" Jennifer remarked as the lift reached the top floor and the doors opened allowing them to exit before they headed down the corridor towards the senior command offices.

"Well you know me my dear" Sir Richard admitted as they reached the Commander's outer office where the Personal Assistant buzzed them straight in "Friends in low places, which explains the bad back I suppose."

"Come in" the Commander fairly enthusiastically gestured "Close the door."

"Where's the fire?" Sir Richard asked.

"More importantly" Jennifer added "Where is my husband?"

"We found this" Tracy held up the USB memory stick that had been recovered from the crash scene "There is a not insignificant possibility that it may have been sent rather indirectly by someone we know."

"What makes you think that?" Sir Richard asked.

"Same clever little trick that Bordon used that time" the Commander explained "with the added bonus that the names on the obviously phoney identification we found on the dead guys seem to have been chosen to attract my attention."

"Well, let's see what is on it then" Jennifer urged, clearly anxious for any possible scrap of news as to the whereabouts of her missing husband.

"I'll leave the technical bit to you my dear" the Commander prompted whereupon Tracy duly took the seat at the desk, logged onto the computer and once logged in, inserted the memory stick into the USB slot on the side of the monitor.

"Seems to have an auto run function" Tracy declared as a program opened on the computer in response to what it had found on the memory stick.

"Is this thing on?" the voice of Fuller was heard to ask, the beginning of a rather shaky at first computerised Video recording "Ah, helps if you take the lens cap off mate" he was then heard to say whereupon a picture appeared, a little crooked and fuzzy due to the impromptu nature of the video recording but Fuller was recognisable.

"Hi guys" Fuller declared as he waved at the camera "Sorry this is a bit rough and ready but it was the best I could manage with what was available and without alerting my genteel hosts."

"If you watching the message correctly then you are sat in the Commander's office with the computer logged on with Tracy's username" Fuller continued "I encoded the program so that it would only work on that specific combination, plus when I was asked to put together some fake ID's to dispose of some surplus personnel, I chose some names that would definitely get the Commander's attention."

"Where the hell have you been?" Jennifer asked.

"In response to the inevitable question my dear wife has probably just asked" Fuller instinctively continued "the last couple of days have been spent somewhere, I know not where as the unwilling guest of a bunch of very well funded and organised guys who seem to have entered the forgery business, in bulk."

"Ah ha..." the Commander remarked.

"The short and unpleasant version is..." Fuller then paused and looked around for a few moments to check to see if he was being observed before continuing "I got grabbed off of the street as my services were required. They claim that they have someone watching Jennifer's every move and if I do not co-operate then, well..."

"Have you noticed anyone following you around lately?" Tracy asked Jennifer aside.

"Not that I am aware of" Jennifer confirmed as she ran through events of the last few days in her mind but failed to identify anything that struck her as out of the ordinary.

"Anyway" Fuller continued "Thankfully I am not quite alone here as I seem to have bumped into a friend. Come on, introduce yourself" he then called to whoever it was behind the camera who then appeared.

"Hi guys!" James Caverner, older brother of the twin sisters declared "And hello boss if Sir Richard is lurking there as well."

"Yep, you Caverner's get everywhere" Fuller admitted.

"Sir Richard, explanation please" Tracy requested in a stern manner.

"I needed someone who could slip inside this little organization who could ride a motorcycle and was fully weapons trained" Sir Richard explained slightly reluctantly "and his name came to the top of the list."

"Apart from that" Fuller continued "I can't tell you much about these guys except they are very well organized, ruthless and well financed. The leader of this lot seems to be a guy called Renault if that means anything to anybody but he is clearly taking his marching orders from a higher authority."

"I'll get one of my people to cross reference that name" Sir Richard remarked as he reached for the telephone.

"One thing that does occur to me though is that they are printing cash and a hell of a lot of it" Fuller continued "They got me to locate the transit details for the mint paper as you are probably aware by now although for some reason that consignment they boosted was much larger than normal which surely cannot be a coincidence. Meanwhile they also seem to be interested in bank cash distribution routes if that gives you a lead. Got to go" he then declared "Be seeing you" he confirmed before the recording abruptly ended.

"With your permission" Sir Richard asked having now completed his telephone call "I would like to run this video by a couple of people I know, there may be some clues as to Simon's location on it."

"Fine by me" the Commander agreed.

"Sounds like whoever is running this show is now entering the production phase" Tracy remarked "and looking for ways to distribute it into circulation."

"In the good old days if you had a wallet of dud tenners" the Commander recalled "you got rid of them by just buying everyone a round down at the Dog and Whistle."

"Not possible with the quantities these guys seem to have I should think" Sir Richard commented "You just can't walk into a newsagents and buy a paper and then ask if the guy has change for five hundred grand."

"I am going to have another word with Sir David over at the Bank of England" the Commander declared as he got up from his seat.

"I had better get back to work too" Jennifer confirmed "Got to escort the Chief Secretary to the Treasury around town again."

"Watch your back Sis" Tracy warned as Jennifer turned to leave the office.

"Always" Jennifer confirmed "If you hear anymore about Simon..."

"We'll call you straight away" the Commander confirmed.

"Have you managed to work out where we are yet?" Fuller asked James Caverner as he came into the room where he was being held.

"Not yet" James confirmed "Being one of the 'new' lads on the team, they are keeping me pretty much in the dark. Just shut up, do as you are told and don't ask any questions if you know what I mean."

"If I could just get to a window and see outside properly, I may be able to locate exactly where we are from the landscape or something" Fuller remarked.

"You know you do look kind of ill" James remarked after a few moments thought.

"I fell fine" Fuller responded slightly mystified at first until a sense of realisation came over him when he saw what James was getting at "Ah, I see, well there is this nasty cough I seem to be catching" he added with a mock cough.

"What you will be needing is some fresh air" James suggested.

"You know, that is not a bad idea" Fuller agreed.

"I'll be right back" James confirmed "When I open the door, look terrible."

"I think I can manage that" Fuller confirmed as James left the room.

Fuller looked around the near empty and silent room, the decaying concrete walls of its early 1960's construction merely adding to the depressive and indeed oppressive nature of the place.

A few moments later, he heard voices and footsteps approaching on the other side of the door whereupon he instinctively slumped in the seat into which he was bound and pretended to be gasping for breath as if he was having some kind of fit or seizure.

"See, what did I tell you?" James called as he, Renault and a couple of the armed thugs came in to see what the fuss was all about.

"All right" Renault agreed after conducting a cursory examination of Fuller's condition although having little medical knowledge meant he did not really know what he was looking out "Let's get our guest outside for a little air."

The two armed thugs duly proceeded to release Fuller from his bonds and dragged him unceremoniously to his feet.

"Careful now" Renault advised "We don't want our star guest damaged, he has not ceased to be useful just yet."

James and Renault followed the two men carrying Fuller out of the door of the room and then down the corridor until they exited out into what was effectively the factory floor which was a scene of mass production as the huge printing press was in full flow.

"See that he gets some air" Renault instructed as his mobile telephone began to ring "I'll join you in a few minutes."

As Fuller was taken away with James in attendance, Renault looked at the caller's name on the telephone whereupon he raised an eyebrow before answering it.

"Hello Guv" Renault declared "You will pleased to hear that all is going to schedule. By midday tomorrow we will all be extremely rich."

As the mysterious caller responded, a look of surprised realisation came over Renault.

"Oh really?" Renault responded "How interesting. Yes, our star guest is co-operating although he just pulled the old fake illness trick to get him outside. Perhaps it is time for us to refocus his attention?" he suggested.

Further instructions were re-laid to Renault at this point to which he listened intently.

"Very well" Renault agreed "I will contact our friend and tell him to do the honours. I'll call you when I have more news" he confirmed before disconnecting the call.

He paused for a few moments thought before producing his handgun from inside his jacket and proceeding calmly towards the exit.

"Oh, that's better" Fuller exclaimed as he faked a recovery "Thanks guys."

"Lovely view" James unenthusiastically declared as he looked across the distant roof tops and into the distance but not being a Londoner himself, he failed to recognise the skyline in the distance in the same way that Fuller had.

"Feeling better I do hope?" Renault asked as he appeared from the roof access door and joined them.

"All things considered, not too bad" Fuller confirmed.

"Excellent" Renault agreed "I wouldn't want our valuable guest suddenly finding himself unable to exercise his not inconsiderable talents just when we need him the most."

"Remind me to send you the bill for my services when this is all over" Fuller remarked "Only I rather it wasn't paid in cash given what you lot are up to."

"Oh we've hardly even begun yet" Renault declared "although it would appear others have been busy haven't they, Mr Caverner" he calmly produced his gun from behind his back and put it to the side of James' head.

"Ah..." James responded calmly but with a strong hint of annoyance.

"I have to hand it to your superiors, nice work, truly nice work" Renault continued almost in sincere admiration "Pity our contacts found out about it."

"It would be unwise to kill a serving Security Service officer" James responded.

"Indeed it would" Renault agreed "You are far more valuable to us alive, even more so considering your family connections. Take them away" he instructed his men "I am sure these two have a lot of catching up to do."

As the two men were led away off the roof of the building, Renault stayed behind where he returned to his mobile telephone and speed dialled a number.

"Ok mate, bring her in" he simply declared before hanging up.

Emerging from the Threadneedle Street entrance of Bank Underground Station, Tracy and the Commander swiftly turned to their left and proceeded directly to the main entrance into the Bank of England.

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Tracy asked "only people generally don't just waltz in unannounced into the Bank of England expecting to see the Governor."

"Don't worry my love" the Commander reassured her "He'll see me; after all he was the one who put me onto this case in the first place."

"Ahh" Tracy realised "The penny drops, no pun intended."

"I would like to see Sir David Godwin please" the Commander confirmed to the receptionist.

"Just one moment please Sir" the Receptionist helpfully responded "I'll just see if he is available."

"Never been in here before" Tracy remarked as she took the opportunity to look around the opulent reception lobby area with its highly polished marble floor and high ceiling that seemed to lead up almost into infinity.

"He is on his way Sir" the Receptionist confirmed as she put the phone down.

"Thank you" the Commander responded.

"That must be him now" Tracy remarked as after a few moments they heard footsteps echoing through the building caused by hard soled shoes on the polished marble surface before Sir David appeared from the staircase and joined them.

"Hello" he called "This is a surprise, I wasn't expecting you."

"Well lets just say things have got a bit complicated" the Commander hesitantly explained "Oh I don't believe you've met my wife" he introduced Tracy.

"Until now known only known by reputation" Sir David confirmed as he and Tracy shook hands.

"Is there somewhere we can talk, in absolute private without any chance of being overheard or recorded?" the Commander asked with sincerity.

"That sounds ominous" Sir David responded.

"With my husband's reputation it usually is" Tracy admitted wryly.

"Well there really is only one place I can think of that is absolutely clear" Sir David responded after a few moments thought, "This way please" he then proceeded to lead the way off down a side corridor and then down a staircase that seemed to lead into the lower levels of the building.

"Where are we going?" Tracy asked as they passed through a large steel reinforced door which was guarded by two tall and heavily armed internal security guards.

"The most secure yet also the most isolated room in the country if not the world" Sir David declared "You will need your ID's by the way, the guys we have down in the depths here rarely see daylight and trust absolutely no one."

As they approached another large metal door at the end of a long dark almost claustrophobic corridor, a very tall security guard stepped forward to meet them.

"Identification please" he formally requested whilst at the same time discreetly placing his left hand on his gun in its belt mounted holster which was a standard precautionary procedure.

"David Godwin, Director General and Chief Treasurer" he declared passing his identification "Codeword is Pandora, routine security inspection on behalf of the National Security & Police Service."

"Edward Regent" the Commander declared once Sir David had been cleared and allowed to pass "National Administrator General, National Security, Police & Civil Defence Service" he confirmed producing his warrant card for inspection.

"All right" the security guard confirmed before Tracy stepped up.

"Divisional Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner, same bunch" she confirmed as she handed over her warrant card for inspection.

"Right" the security guard confirmed before handing back her card "Control from main door" he then spoke into a radio "Three cleared to enter main vault."

There was an anxious silent pause before the locks on the huge door in front of them were released with much formidable clunking before it slowly opened whereupon Sir David led the way inside.

"We have to wait here for a moment" Sir David confirmed once they had passed through the doors whereupon they closed firmly behind them. A few moments passed before the large vault door ahead then opened and Sir David duly showed his two distinguished guests inside.

"Good God" Tracy exclaimed as they looked around the vast interior of the huge vault which was filled almost to capacity with shelves on which were sat large numbers of secure metal boxes and most importantly of all hundreds if not thousands of bars of gold bullion.

"Welcome to the nation's personal piggy bank" Sir David declared with some justifiable pride.

"You would need one hell of a hammer to get into this lot" the Commander remarked.

"What's that noise?" Tracy asked as she listened intently to a sound in the background.

"A train most likely" the Commander remarked.

"Indeed" Sir David confirmed "The Central Line is just on the other side of that wall over there which is why it twists and turns on the approach to Bank as it has to negotiate its way around our vaults."

"Is it safe to talk?" the Commander asked "No pun intended."

"It is now" Sir David confirmed as the vault door closed and locked itself, sealing them in "No video surveillance down here and it would be impossible to plant any listening devices."

"Ok then" the Commander declared "here is the situation so far. Whoever these guys are, they are using under duress the not inconsiderable computer hacking skills of one of my officers to gain access to your delivery schedules."

"Which explains how they managed to find and take our paper truck" Sir David admitted as he sat down on a stack of gold bars.

"Well he managed to get a message to us" the Commander continued "and it would appear that there were four cases, not one case of mint paper on that truck."

"That is completely irregular" Sir David confirmed "All shipments are tightly restricted to one or two cases per truck and one truck per convoy shipment just in case they should go walkies."

"Who manages and authorises the paper transports?" Tracy asked, putting down the gold bar that she had not been able to resist picking up to have a look at.

"All that is organised through the office of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, William Applegate" Sir David confirmed, still absorbing the news that considerably more mint paper had been lost than at first had been feared.

"Sir William now" Tracy responded "He was knighted in the last Queen's Birthday honours list for services to financial security and integrity."

"So who gets to break the bad news to him then?" the Commander wryly remarked.

"This is extraordinary" Sir David remarked "a huge increase in the amount that we had feared had been lost. The possibilities of the damage, both financially and economically that they could do with that much doesn't even bear thinking about."

"I knew you wouldn't like it" the Commander responded "Fuller also mentioned that he thinks these guys are looking for ways to introduce their forged notes into circulation" he continued "Probably in bulk."

"How does the Bank go about distributing cash?" Tracy asked.

"Intensive secrecy and security of course" Sir David explained "It is shipped from a number of distribution warehouses located across the country to the depots of various banks and security firms from where it is then broken down into the required amounts for forwarding to banks, building societies, cash points etc."

"How many shipments in a typical day are we talking about?" the Commander asked.

"Twenty or thirty from our own main warehouses at least" Sir David confirmed "and all done in very anonymous unmarked vehicles at night."

"So in order to introduce any forged money in any significant amount" Tracy concluded "they would have to tap into your primary distribution system?"

"Or they could just put in an identical vehicle loaded with their funny money into the system" the Commander remarked "If their fresh fakes are as good as the ones we saw earlier then all it would take would be some clever manipulation of the paper work and no one would be any the wiser."

"Even if what you say is true" Sir David responded "I don't see how they could pull it off."

"Whoever is behind this is very well connected and supported" the Commander remarked "They had the nous to pull off the paper theft without leaving a trace, slipping a van full of cash into a system that relies on secrecy and subterfuge I would have thought would not present too much of a challenge to these guys."

"Security van" Tracy suddenly recalled.

"Sorry, what was that love?" the Commander asked.

"One of my guys I was talking to earlier said he dealt with a strange case late yesterday" she explained "Apparently someone stole a security van from outside a bank in Streatham."

"That's Streatham for you" Sir David remarked with a chuckle "How much was in it?" he asked.

"That's just it" Tracy responded "It was completely empty."

"Where is the nearest main cash distribution point to South London?" the Commander asked.

"Erm, Coulsdon I think" Sir David recalled "Yes, I remember now, the industrial estate next to what used to be the goods yard of the old Coulsdon North station."

"And would there be a delivery out of there overnight tonight by any chance?" Tracy asked.

"Definitely" Sir David confirmed "Tomorrow is the last Friday of the month when half the country has their pay day, usually it's the busiest time for cash withdrawals from banks."

"Which reminds me" the Commander commented "I owe Jack twenty quid."

"What we need is to find out how they intend to get their funny money into the system" Tracy remarked.

"Trouble is" Sir David commented "even if you are successful in finding the forgeries at their point of entry into the system, surely if you intercept them, they will know you are on to them, shut up shop and move on whereupon we have to start all over again."

"Exactly" the Commander agreed "but we need to see that money and anything connected with it if we are to have any chance at catching and stopping these guys."

"Life is full of small challenges" Sir David remarked with a degree of reluctant admission "At least that is what my wife is always telling me anyway."

"Understood" Sir William Applegate, Chief Secretary to the Treasury of the UK Government confirmed before terminating his mobile telephone call and proceeding to the front door of Number Eleven Downing Street where he was allowed through out into the street.

Waiting for him outside was Jennifer with an official black ministerial escort car, basically a high powered saloon car modified with bullet proof windows amongst other more discrete refinements.

"Good afternoon Sir" Jennifer cheerfully greeted Applegate as she opened the back door of the car.

"Actually my dear" Applegate asked "do you mind if I ride in the front today?" he asked apparently out of curiosity.

"Don't see why not" Jennifer readily agreed as she closed the rear door and proceeded to open the front passenger door instead "Much better view up front anyway."

"Thank you" Applegate responded as he got in before Jennifer closed the door and then went around to the driver's side and got in herself.

"So, where would you like to go?" Jennifer inquired as she started the car "You are booked to your club but as Commander in Chief of what must surely be the most expensive taxi service in the country, I can be flexible."

"Let's get out of Downing Street first and then play it by ear" Applegate suggested.

"A very good idea" Jennifer readily agreed as she set off.

As per standard procedure, the anti-vehicle ramp set into the road at the end of Downing Street was lowered allowing the car to pass over it before with a friendly acknowledgement from the officers on duty, they were allowed through the wrought iron gates and into Whitehall amidst the busy mid afternoon traffic.

"Ok, we are out" Jennifer declared as she drove towards Parliament Square "Where to?"

"Sorry about this" Applegate declared as in a swift move which took Jennifer totally by surprise, he produced a small hand gun from his briefcase and held the tip of the barrel against her sides.

"I thought today was going rather too well" Jennifer responded "You must be the person who has been keeping a close watch on me I take it?"

"One of them" Applegate confirmed "Just keep driving, head south" he instructed as he reached around her and took Jennifer's gun which after emptying it of its ammunition clip, he tossed onto the back seat.

Whilst Applegate was busy disarming her however, Jennifer discreetly pressed a small button set into the underside of the steering wheel.

"I don't suppose you could tell me what any of this is about by any chance?" Jennifer asked as she turned left at the end of Parliament Street and after crossing the corner of Parliament Square, headed towards Westminster Bridge.

"To quote one of my favourite authors" Applegate admitted almost apologetically, "it all circulates around the movement of small green pieces of paper."

"Presumably of the forged variety" Jennifer remarked.

"Oh, I see someone has been keeping up with events" Applegate remarked "I would however point out that not all the massive sums and the investments they represent are fake."

"The original question still applies though" Jennifer remarked "Where do you want to go?"

"Just keep heading south" Applegate confirmed "everything will be all right."

"If you say so" Jennifer confirmed as they proceeded over Westminster Bridge.

As the car reached the south end of the bridge, Jennifer observed two people casually standing on the pavement, each one of them with a folded copy of the Evening Standard under their right arms.

Once the car had passed them, the two men on the pavement observed that the indicator lights flashed three times on both sides which once the car was out of sight, prompted one of them to reach for a mobile telephone.

"Sixteen Alpha" the caller simply declared "Alarm confirmed."

"Well that ranks as a rather unusual experience I must say" Tracy admitted as she and the Commander emerged from the main entrance of the Bank of England.

"Having a meeting actually inside the main vault of the Bank of England does rank pretty high on my list of unusual things that have happened to me" the Commander agreed.

"And that is a list which given your life is pretty extensive I should think" Tracy remarked.

"Oh hello" the Commander declared as he stopped in his tracks when his pager began to sound "What's this going to be?"

"That doesn't look good" Tracy remarked as she saw the message on the pager display screen, a simple message that read 'RED CALL - FOURTEEN'.

"What does the fourteen mean?" Tracy asked, curious about the suffix to the urgent recall order which she had not seen before.

"Probably Sir Richard getting his pager messages mixed up again" the Commander responded, not wishing to let Tracy in on the real meaning at that time.

"You go and see what's up while I go and pick up Jack from school" Tracy confirmed "and I will catch up with you later."

"Sounds like a good idea" the Commander agreed as he and Tracy kissed "See you later."

After watching after Tracy until she had disappeared out of sight, the Commander was about to hail a cab when one pulled to a halt directly in front of him.

"Now that is what I call service" the Commander remarked impressed but the reason for this apparent efficiency soon became clear when the rear door of the cab opened and Sir Richard Crowthorne appeared.

"Get in" he suggested with a strong hint of urgency.

"Yes Sir" the Commander responded with a little mock salute before joining Sir Richard in the back and closing the door.

"Better head back to the building site" Sir Richard suggested to the driver.

"Right you are boss" the cab driver confirmed as he proceeded back out into the flow of traffic.

"Oh, don't worry" Sir Richard reassured the Commander "Eric here is one of my little helpers, it is safe to talk."

"Red call with your calling card?" the Commander began, showing Sir Richard the pager message.

"Ten minutes ago MI5's Political Operations Unit received a silent alarm from one of the VIP Escort Division's ministerial motors" Sir Richard explained "As per standard procedure, a couple of roving monitor agents observed the car in question being driven south over Westminster Bridge whereupon Jennifer gave the standard double indicator silent confirmation signal that she was in trouble."

"Tracking device?" the Commander asked, now sharing Sir Richard's sense of urgency.

"Went dead about two minutes later" Sir Richard confirmed "Last confirmed sighting of the car we have is from a traffic camera just north of Stockwell."

"Do we know who the passenger was by any chance?" the Commander asked.

"Chief Secretary to the Treasury Sir William Applegate" Sir Richard confirmed.

"The guy who Jennifer has been driving around nearly non-stop for the last four days" the Commander responded.

"Exactly" Sir Richard agreed "We assumed that whoever it was claimed was keeping a constant watch on Jennifer to keep Simon co-operating was a remote sniper or undercover type."

"Never even occurred to us it was her passenger" the Commander concluded.

"Right under our ruddy noses the whole time" Sir Richard agreed, clearly annoyed at himself.

"Apart from the fact that Applegate is the guy who authorises paper shipments and seems to have got four times the normal amount on a lorry that was then promptly nicked" the Commander asked "What else do we know about him?"

"That's why we are going back to my office" Sir Richard confirmed.

"I thought we were going to a building site?" the Commander remarked.

"You haven't seen the state of my office lately have you?" Sir Richard confirmed "The builders moved in this morning."

"Well I'll say this for you" Jennifer mockingly remarked "Never let it be said you don't know how to show a lady a good time."

"A necessary step in what has become a situation that has got desperately out of control" Applegate confirmed as he showed her into the back of a red Ford Transit van inside Stockwell Bus Garage.

"I don't want to see a single scratch on that motor when it comes back" Jennifer motioned towards her ministerial escort car that was alongside it, into which a driver and a dummy passenger were being placed.

"Don't worry" Applegate confirmed "One of my employers associates is merely taking it for a nice leisurely drive, in the opposite direction from where we are going naturally."

"Well make sure he fills the tank when he has finished" Jennifer remarked as Applegate got in the front passenger seat of the van as the doors were secured from the outside.

"Ok, lets go" Applegate confirmed to the van driver who immediately proceeded to set off, driving through the dark cavernous interior of the nearly empty bus garage before emerging out into the traffic and then heading south.

"So what's all this about then?" Jennifer asked from the back of the van.

"To put it bluntly Ms Caverner, money" Applegate confirmed "The supply, demand and movement thereof."

"Oh, that old chestnut" Jennifer responded "So I guess you are the bunch of goons holding my husband I presume?"

"Indeed" Applegate confirmed "I do regret that you have got mixed up in this matter, however this enterprise would not have been possible without you husbands considerable talents."

"So this is your little circus I take it" Jennifer asked "which means you must be the ringmaster?"

"I regret that I am merely a small almost insignificant part of this little adventure" Applegate admitted clearly with some regret, although whether this was down to not being in control or whether he was being coerced into this was not clear "Someone far more powerful is running this show."

"Figures" Jennifer retorted "This level of operation takes flair and imagination and let's face it" she looked across at Applegate with a sarcastic grin "you are a politician."

"Shut it..." Applegate growled aside to the van driver who could not help but snigger at Jennifer's snide dig.

"So if you are not in charge" Jennifer asked "Who is and what hold does he or she for that matter have over you?"

"I think that is enough questions for now" Applegate dismissed her enquiry as he was most unwilling to discuss any further who had a tight hold over him for fear of potentially painful repercussions.

"Just as it was getting interesting..." Jennifer remarked with resignation as the van continued on its way through the busy streets of suburban South London.

"Hello Divisional Chief Superintendent" Megan, Jack's girlfriend not that he would ever admit to them being that close mind, called as Tracy pulled up outside the school gates where Jack was waiting to be picked up.

"You can call me Tracy you know" she responded with a wry smile as she got out of the patrol car and joined the two school children on the pavement.

"Home time I guess" Jack admitted with a bit of reluctance at having to leave Megan.

"You'll see me again in the morning" she reassured him.

"Come on lady killer" Tracy joked "We've got shopping to do."

"Oh yes, the Commander's birthday" Jack remembered "I'd forgotten as my brain has been largely devoted to the baffling world of photosynthesis. Something to do with leaves apparently was all I managed to figure out."

"Made perfect sense to me" Megan admitted wryly.

"We best get going" Tracy suggested.

"My Jack, going shopping?" Megan asked "This is a first."

"What the hell do I know about model railways?" Tracy admitted.

"I see your point" Megan agreed "I just hope he is just as efficient when it comes to my birthday next month."

"Now I have a problem" Jack remarked.

"See you tomorrow" Megan called with a cheery wave.

"Assuming I am not still shopping" Jack admitted as he and Tracy got into the patrol car.

"So, you are the expert" Tracy declared as she started the car "Where to?"

"First stop a bank" Jack confirmed as he checked his battered wallet "I need to lay my hands on some of the proverbial hard earned."

"You got it lad" Tracy confirmed as she proceeded to drive off.

"So what have I missed?" Jack asked as they headed down the main road out of Leytonstone heading in to central London where thanks to the turnout of most of the schools in the area the traffic had increased by ten fold in a matter of minutes.

"Oh dodgy politicians, iffy conspiracies, RTA's, the usual" Tracy admitted.

"Ah there's a bank" Jack pointed ahead whereupon Tracy pulled into the side of the road in Fleet Street, allowing Jack to get out and go to the cash point machine.

"I'll be right back" Jack confirmed as he headed off across the pavement at which point Tracy turned her attention to the radio as it sparked into life.

"Lima Mike One from Control, urgent message" was the foreboding sounding call.

"Go ahead" Tracy responded.

"The Administrator General urgently requests you to call him on his mobile Maam" came the message.

"Will do" Tracy confirmed with some hesitant worry "Lima Mike One out."

Over by the cash point machine, Jack was looking at his bank balance and working out how much of his accumulated savings to withdraw before deciding on one hundred pounds which after he had gone through the usual process of inputting his pin number and then taking his card, was produced in the form of five twenty pound notes from the slot.

As he took the cash and was putting them in his wallet, his attention was caught by Tracy calling from the car.

"Jack!" she called with an obvious sense of calm urgency "Get your butt in here, we have got trouble."

"Now there's a change" Jack remarked sarcastically to himself as he quickly returned to the car and got back in the front passenger seat whereupon Tracy pulled away before he had barely enough time to put his seat belt back on.

"I don't suppose I could possibly ask what has happened could I?" Jack asked tentatively as Tracy accelerated through the streets of central London with sirens and lights in full cry.

"Jennifer has disappeared" Tracy confirmed "and it would appear that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury may well have something to do with it."

"So where are we going?" Jack asked.

"We are going to meet Eddie and Sir Richard in Horse Ferry Road for some unfathomable reason" Tracy explained just as she was forced to swerve sharply to the left to avoid a collision with another car that was not paying any attention whatsoever to her regardless of the prominent sirens and lights.

"Take your pick from Channel 4 Television, the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the deliveries entrance of MI5 unless something has been added since this morning" Jack concluded as he looked in his wallet at the bank notes within.

"How much did you withdraw?" Tracy asked out of curiosity.

"A hundred" Jack confirmed "Model railways are an expensive business, girlfriends even more."

"Ah, so Megan has at last been promoted to proper girlfriend status at last" Tracy remarked.

"Is it that obvious?" Jack asked.

"I'm a woman" Tracy explained wryly "You will find we are pre-programmed with such skills."

"Erm, this investigation that's currently ongoing" Jack asked as he extracted one of the bank notes from his wallet and looked at it closely with a growing look of concern "It wouldn't happen to involve funny money by any chance would it?"

"Why do you ask that?" Tracy responded looking across at him with some slight concern apparent in her voice.

"Because unless my eyes deceive me" Jack explained as he fully pulled out the bank notes from his wallet and held them up to the light in front of him "a perfectly reputable national bank's cash point has just given me one hundred quid's worth of forgeries."

"Oh hell..." Tracy responded "That means they are already in the system."

"Well if you catch the buggers responsible, they owe me a hundred quid!!" Jack exclaimed indignantly.

"Here we are" Applegate declared as Jennifer felt the van bump over some kind of ramp in the road and slow down to a stop.

"And where is here exactly?" Jennifer asked as the back doors of the van were opened and two armed men escorted her out onto her feet outside where she looked around at the semi-derelict industrial premises but was unable to recognise any features of it or the surrounding area.

"Just a humble little backwater" announced the proud voice of Renault as he appeared from the warehouse like building almost as if he was greeting her warmly "Well away from prying eyes and nosy people such as your employers my dear."

"Let's dispense with the unpleasantaries and get down to it shall we?" Jennifer suggested defiantly.

"As you wish" Renault agreed "Bring the lady inside" he requested of the two armed men either side of Jennifer who duly took her by the upper arms and escorted her inside the building with Applegate reluctantly following.

"So what's all this about?" Jennifer asked as she was brought into the building where they passed along a corridor which ran down one side of what appeared to be a large and active factory floor complete with heavy machinery in operation and much feverish activity.

"Just a little private enterprise" Renault confirmed casually "Don't worry, all will become clear soon."

"It had better" Jennifer retorted "I have a very busy schedule to keep."

"As do I" Renault admitted with a knowing grin "Take her to him but keep her on a tight leash as I strongly suspect she is quite a handful."

"You think I am a handful now?" Jennifer responded "Believe me chum I haven't even begun to make your life a misery yet."

Renault merely looked on with a smug grin before leaving; walking off down the corridor with an evil chuckle that echoed all around even once he had disappeared from view whereupon Jennifer was shown fairly roughly up a flight of stairs and into an old office.

"You do know this is no way to treat a lady?" Jennifer remarked as she was roughly shoved into a chair to which she was then tied by the wrists and ankles.

"Do you think we give a toss lady?" one of the armed men responded gruffly before they left, slamming shut the door behind them and leaving her alone in the room.

"Blimey" Jennifer remarked as she looked around the grotty room and then across at the corner as a rat scuttled across "Reminds me of that B&B in Blackpool a few years back."

"Sorry about the accommodation" Applegate was heard to apologise as he came into the room "and also for our host's less than perfect demeanour."

"Where did you dig that guy up from?" Jennifer asked "Find him in the Yellow Pages under 'T' for 'Talent Less Thugs' by any chance?"

"He's just the hired help" Applegate admitted "There are far, far bigger players involved than him."

"Oh, such as?" Jennifer asked hoping to catch out Applegate and get a name out of him, not that it would have done her much good in her current situation.

"Nice try" Applegate responded "Anyway, I thought it was time you were reunited with something you have mislaid" he indicated over to one of the armed thugs who was standing in the doorway on guard who then stood aside as two more armed men appeared with Fuller.

"Thank God" Jennifer responded on seeing her husband alive and apparently well considering the circumstances.

"Let's give them some time alone" Applegate suggested to the armed men "After all I am not a totally heartless bastard."

"You're a politician" Jennifer retorted "Heartless bastard is in the job description isn't it?"

"Cute..." Applegate responded with a meek smile before he and the armed men left the room, closing the door behind them.

"Fancy meeting you here" Fuller remarked "Are you all right?" he asked clearly more concerned about her situation than his own which was far more precarious.

"I think so" Jennifer confirmed "We got your message by the way and the usual suspects are on the case."

"Well I am not expecting the cavalry to come thundering over the hill anytime soon" Fuller admitted "These guys are well financed, connected and very slick."

"So this is all about funny money?" Jennifer asked.

"I think there may be more to it than that but as far as Renault, he's the guy running this little outfit and his hired guns are concerned its just about the money" Fuller confirmed.

"I've just met him" Jennifer confirmed "and as to how Applegate fits into this little mess I have no idea."

"Sir William Applegate?" Fuller asked "The Chief Secretary to the Treasury?"

"The very same" Jennifer confirmed "He was the cunning little bugger who kidnapped me a couple of hours ago."

"Well that explains how they managed to get all that mint paper" Fuller concluded "They just got Applegate to up the legitimate shipment and then they helped themselves."

"Where are we?" Jennifer asked.

"No idea" Fuller admitted "They have moved me three times so far and each time I was blindfolded but I think at one point I was in East Croydon, I recognised the trains going by down below, being around our train loving brother in law too much seems to have paid off."

"Well I was in the back of a Transit Van all the way from Stockwell Bus Garage" Jennifer explained "Travelled about an hour and a half by my guess but then again we could have gone around in circles so we could be anywhere."

"I think that is quite enough of that" Renault declared as he, a couple of his armed men and Applegate returned.

"Kidnapping and holding hostage not one but two senior Security Service Officers isn't exactly going to look good in court is it?" Jennifer responded.

"Believe me my dear" Renault declared "Kidnapping is the least of my crimes and should at this point be the least of your concerns" he then signalled to one of his men who then brought in on a trolley a laptop computer which was placed in front of Fuller who then had his hands cut free.

"You are going to access the central mainframe system at the London Stock Exchange" Renault instructed Fuller sincerely.

"Sorry matey" Fuller relaxed back in the chair "I'm not playing anymore."

"I figured you might say something like that" Renault admitted as he calmly signalled to one of his men who immediately grabbed Jennifer by the hair, pulled her head back and held a hunting knife to her throat, just pressing the tip enough to her to produce a small drop of blood as if to emphasise the seriousness of their intentions.

"Wait a minute" Applegate protested "The man said that she was not to be harmed or touched."

"That was the other Caverner you idiot" Renault tersely responded "Tracy is the one that is not to be harmed in any way until the man declares the time is right, this one however is ours to do with as we see fit."

"All right!" Fuller declared as he duly surrendered and moved forward towards the laptop "I'm doing it, just don't harm her."

"Good boy" Renault responded as he duly nodded towards the armed man holding the knife to Jennifer's throat who withdrew and let her go "Now listen very carefully to these instructions as I don't want any mistakes, a lot of people with a lot of money are depending on you now."

"If you say so" Fuller responded with sincere regret as he began to work on the computer.

"Well here we are" Tracy admitted as she steered the patrol car that she and Jack were in off the north end of Lambeth Bridge, around the roundabout and into the south end of Horseferry Road.

"Over there" Jack pointed up ahead to the corner of Thorney Street on the left where the distinctive figure of Sir Richard Crowthorne could be seen on the pavement waiting for them.

"Got him" Tracy confirmed as she pulled into the side street and lowered the window whereupon Sir Richard went up to the car.

"Park the car around the back" he instructed "Then meet me on the corner of Marsham Street in five minutes."

"Mysterious as ever" Jack remarked as Tracy duly parked the car.

"What the hell are we doing here is what I want to know" Tracy confirmed as she and Jack duly got out of the car and after she had locked the vehicle, they headed back up towards Horseferry Road.

"This is a bit awkward" Sir Richard remarked as he saw Jack with Tracy as they met on the corner of Marsham Street.

"Err define awkward" Jack demanded to know.

"Well it's like this" Sir Richard hesitantly explained "neither of you are supposed to know anything of what I am about to show you and I hadn't bargained on you young lad coming along."

"I think you may find this of interest" Jack responded as he produced his wallet and gave Sir Richard one of the twenty pound notes out of it.

"Ah, good old fashioned bribery and corruption" Sir Richard responded not realising the significance.

"I'd take a closer look at that if I were you" Tracy suggested.

"I don't believe it" Sir Richard responded as he took a closer look at the bank note and then realised exactly what it was "Where did you get this?" he asked Jack.

"That and four more just like it came out of a cash point machine in Fleet Street about forty five minutes ago" Jack explained "Someone owes me a hundred quid and I am going to collect."

"Looks like they are starting to appear in circulation" Tracy admitted "One step ahead again by the looks of things."

"Join the party" Sir Richard responded "This way please."

"Where are we going?" Tracy asked as Sir Richard escorted them into the side entrance of the Home Office building and then turned sharply to the left, heading down a corridor until they reached a lift door set in the end wall.

"What you are about to see does not exist" Sir Richard explained as he produced a key attached to a chain from inside his jacket and inserted it into the lift control panel where upon turning it the lift doors duly opened and they stepped inside "Nor indeed were you supposed to know anything about it."

"Intriguing" Tracy remarked as Sir Richard put the key in the lock for the control panel inside the lift car whereupon the doors closed and to her and Jack's surprise the lift started to descend some distance downwards.

"Someone has been watching 'The Man from UNCLE' by the looks of it" Jack remarked "So do I get a little triangular badge with a number on it?"

"I admit there are certain elements of my new job that do play nicely to my more theatrical enthusiasm" Sir Richard admitted.

"So this would be Section Fourteen I assume?" Tracy asked as the lift slowed to halt.

"How did you know about it?" Sir Richard asked.

"You don't set up a covert investigation op on my manor without me knowing about it" Tracy confirmed "Besides" she added wryly as the lift doors opened and they stepped out into what was effectively a reception hall area "The big logo in marble on the floor kind of gives the game away" she looked down at the large 'XIV' roman numerals with a rampant lion above them that was impressed onto the marble floor.

"That's about the only bit that is actually finished" Sir Richard admitted as he duly led them through the complex which was still very much under construction "The rest is a bit of a building site at the moment."

"And I am willing to bet your drinks cabinet was the first bit to be completed" Tracy wryly mused.

"Actually that was the second thing" Sir Richard admitted as he showed them into his office where they found the Commander behind Sir Richard's desk trying to work the computer and failing miserably.

"Hello love" the Commander called from behind the computer "This is not going well" he admitted.

"You do surprise me love" Tracy wryly responded before returning to the most pressing matter at hand "Any word on Jennifer?" she asked.

"My colleagues at MI5 have been tracking the car via traffic cameras for the last hour" Sir Richard confirmed "Initially they lost it for a couple of minutes in the Stockwell area only to then pick it up again as it headed west. It is currently in the vicinity of Hounslow."

"That seems a rather round the houses route" Jack remarked.

"Exactly what I was thinking" the Commander agreed.

"Definitely has the whiff of a diversion hanging over it" Sir Richard also agreed "That couple of unaccounted for minutes at Stockwell sounds just right for a switch to be made."

"Which means if we stop the car, we will most likely find sweet F.A.?" Tracy admitted.

"However it is necessary to maintain the sense that they are continuing to lead us up the proverbial garden path" the Commander remarked "Tell me, does the telephone system work or is that still under construction like the rest of the place?"

"Press nine to get an outside line" Sir Richard confirmed.

"You know this will be a nice cushty little number this place if you ever get it finished" Jack remarked as he looked around.

"Hello Bob?" the Commander called over the telephone "I need a nice big, unsubtle and very public stop and seize on a car with the emphasis on the unsubtle."

"Who's Bob?" Jack asked Tracy aside.

"He is the head of the specialist Armed Support Unit" Tracy explained "He specialises in shoving large guns in people's faces and persuading them none too subtly to see the error of their ways."

"Sounds like someone useful to have in your contact book" Jack agreed.

"Thanks mate" the Commander confirmed as he finished the call before hanging up. "Right, that is that taken care of, now what do we have on this joker Applegate?" he asked.

"Fifteen years ago Applegate was the blue eyed boy of politics" Sir Richard confirmed as he produced a file and passed it over for the others to look at "Then he discovered it was far easier to be an expenses fiddling two faced pratt just like every other politician which is when he slipped into the mainstream mediocrity."

"Only coming up for a dose of the oxygen of publicity when he needed re-electing by the looks of it" the Commander remarked as he read through the rather scant file.

"If he is anything like some of the two faced no necks my late father had to deal with" Jack commented "a tenner of real money says the root of his problems is either a woman or money."

"Funny isn't it that he has disappeared just as the first of the funny money has hit the streets" Tracy remarked.

"What?!?" the Commander responded with concern and surprise to which Jack merely responded by handing over one of the forgeries from his wallet.

"Fleet Street cash point just over an hour ago" Jack confirmed "Needless to say I am not best pleased."

"That means these guys are even more advanced with their plans than we thought" the Commander concluded with a worried frown "Sir David Godwin is likely to have kittens when I tell him about this."

"As long as the financial sector doesn't hear about it, we should still be all right for now" Sir Richard remarked "Trouble is keeping it that way depends upon nipping it in the bud and we are not exactly swimming in leads at the moment."

"Tracy my love" the Commander asked sincerely "In the absence of Simon and his expertise, could you try and dig up anything you can about this Applegate character."

"I'll give it my best shot if it means finding my sister quickly" Tracy agreed.

"I'll help you" Jack added, "I can still remember some of the files and databases my late father used to access, they may prove useful."

"In the meantime, what sort of warrant do I need to turn over Applegate's gaff?" the Commander asked.

"Have you not read Section Fourteen's mandate?" Sir Richard asked with a knowing smirk "Where we go we don't need such trifling things as warrants."

"I can see my Security Service and your new Section Fourteen doing a lot of business in the future" the Commander concluded with a wry grin.

"News desk, Daily Chronicle financial section" the duty reporter answered the telephone.

"Ah good evening" the voice of a distinguished sounding gentleman declared "I have some crucial information that I feel needs to be in the public domain for the better good."

"If it is about the Exchequer's personal pension fund, the Telegraph are already running that one in the morning" the reporter responded.

"Let me assure you Sir that this is something far more serious" the mysterious caller coolly continued "A significant quantity of extremely convincing forged bank notes in dominations of both ten and twenty pounds sterling are even as we speak entering general circulation across London and the South East in an attempt to destabilise this country's already somewhat shaky economy."

"How can you prove this?" the reporter asked "Without evidence this is just wildly speculative hearsay at best."

"Simple" the caller easily replied "Go to your nearest cash point right now and pull out some money although I do suggest you only withdraw a small amount if you don't wish to be lumbered with dud notes."

"Where are you getting this information from?" the reporter asked, unsettled at the nature of this polite but unsettling conversation.

"A major power with key political connections is responsible for this and I am merely doing my civic duty by revealing certain key details so that the general public can be cautious once this fake money is in extensive general circulation" the caller explained "Who I am is not important, the fact that the right information gets to the right people which I am doing here most definitely is."

"Can I quote you on that?" the reporter asked as he made some notes.

"Absolutely my friend" the mysterious caller calmly confirmed before hanging up.

"Well that was odd" the reporter remarked as he too hung up his telephone slowly as he thought about what he had just been told. Thinking for a few moments, he then looked across the office to ensure that no one had overheard the conversation before reaching for his wallet.

Getting up from his desk, the reporter discreetly grabbed his coat and left the office, making his way out of the Daily Chronicle building, down the back staircase and out into the street where the early evening rush hour was starting to get underway.

The reporter crossed the street over to the nearby bank and proceeded directly to the cash point where after inserting his card and inputting his pin number, he hesitantly withdrew thirty pounds which was produced from the slot to his lower right in the form of a ten pound and a twenty pound note.

Quickly the reporter put the notes in his back pocket and made his way back up to his desk in the office. Once there, he checked around to ensure no one was watching before extracting the two bank notes he had just withdrawn where he then looked them over in his hands trying to determine if they really were fake or indeed the genuine item that to him initially at least they appeared to look like.

"Someone is definitely pulling my chain" the reporter remarked to himself and he was about to dismiss the whole story when a tiny detail on the twenty bank note caught his attention which prompted him to look in his wallet for one that he already possessed which he then held up alongside the other one.

"Holy Mary Mother of God" the reporter responded under his breath as he compared the notes and realised that the two were subtly different but yet the one that he had just withdrawn which seemed to have a barely visible discrepancy was printed on seemingly genuine mint paper.

"Boss, its Dorman" the reporter called over the telephone to the Editor in Chief "I think I have something here I want to run by you that could make the Barings Scandal look like someone lost a five pence piece down the back of a sofa."

"Hello?" the Commander called with authority through the closed door of the flat in the fashionable area of Kensington & Chelsea which he backed up with a further loud rap of his knuckles on the solid oak panel door.

"Looks like nobody's home" Sir Richard admitted.

"Well in the absence of a certain lock smiths daughter" the Commander concluded I guess we are going to have to do this the old fashioned way.

"Uh-oh..." Sir Richard remarked as the Commander duly proceeded to kick the door in which caused the lock securing it in place to splinter all around and the door open at a rather drunken angle as one of the hinges also gave way.

"Hmmm" the Commander mused as he entered the luxuriously appointed apartment and looked around as Sir Richard turned on the lights "Nice drum."

"On the amount he claimed on expenses last year" Sir Richard commented "I can't say I am in the least bit surprised."

"Can't say I am enthusiastic about his taste in art though" the Commander remarked as they entered the lounge and saw the ornately framed paintings on the wall.

"His taste in brandy is rather questionable as well" Sir Richard remarked as he opened the decanter and sniffed the contents "So what are we looking for exactly?" he asked as they continued to look around with the Commander casually opening some desk drawers but finding little of interest.

"Something, anything that could tell us where this guy is" the Commander confirmed as he sat down behind a large desk and began to rifle through the drawers "We find him and we might just find Jennifer, Simon and some answers."

"Well there doesn't appear to be any safe or anything that I can find" Sir Richard remarked as he continued to look in all the usual places for such a thing "In fact this place looks like it had been very well cleaned and preened."

"Indeed" the Commander agreed "I'll tell you one thing though" he added "Doesn't it strike you as odd, this guy has all these antiques and valuable articles about the place yet we just managed to kick the door in and go wandering around without any trouble whatsoever."

"Well he does have a pretty sophisticated burglar alarm but it wasn't switched on for some reason" Sir Richard confirmed as he went back to the rear wall of the lounge and pulled back the curtain to check the control box, it was then that he noticed something else.

"Am I imagining things or can you smell gas?" the Commander asked as he sniffed the air with the same level of suspicion as Sir Richard was also exhibiting.

"Bloody hell" Sir Richard exclaimed "Time for a very swift exit my friend" he declared as he dragged the Commander by the arm and bundled him towards the front door and consequentially out of the front door of the flat into the corridor outside.

"What the hell was that about?" the Commander asked as they stopped outside at the far end of the corridor.

"A nasty little trick we used to use back in MI5" Sir Richard explained as he waited seemingly with baited breath for something to happen.

"Err such as?" the Commander asked as seemingly nothing happened.

"Perhaps it was a dud?" Sir Richard wondered as they looked back down the corridor only to then have to throw themselves to the floor as the flat erupted in an explosion that threw burning debris out into the corridor as well as blasting out the windows facing the street outside.

"Then again" the Commander remarked as the echo of the explosion died down and was replaced with the sound of fire alarms and screams from passers by out in the street.

"You just can't find the workmanship these days" Sir Richard wryly admitted.

"What the hell was that?" the Commander asked as Sir Richard helped him to his feet before he brushed himself down.

"What we used to call a one stop cover all MacGuffin" Sir Richard explained "If there was someone we needed to 'disappear' say a witness or an agent's legend, we would arrange a little accident. Small explosive charge mounted onto the gas meter and a few pre-prepared witness dotted about the street outside, one usually armed with a video camera ready to send his exclusive eyewitness footage to the BBC. One bang and before you know it its 'tragic death following gas leak explosion', case closed."

"So someone is going around arranging special deals on disappearing Treasury Ministers by the looks of it" the Commander remarked.

"They are indeed" Sir Richard confirmed "and that sort of thing makes me nervous" he admitted "Come on, I need a drink."

"I'm just saying you have a better database for these sorts of things over here" Jack explained to Tracy as having relocated to her office on the top floor of New Scotland Yard he continued to work through the computer on her desk "Besides I have been around Uncle Simon enough to know all the ways in."

"There goes my faith in the Data Protection Act" Tracy wryly remarked.

"Whoa..." Jack remarked "It pays to be a Treasury Secretary by the looks of it, take a look at this guys accounts" he indicated the screen.

"Hold that thought" Tracy responded as she picked up the telephone on the desk and speed dialled a number.

"See, what did I tell you" Sir Richard remarked as he nodded up towards the television above the bar of the pub restaurant around the corner from Applegate's burning flat as the BBC News broadcast was barely audible over the sound of emergency service vehicles rushing past outside to attend the incident.

"Although it has yet to be confirmed" the BBC journalist who was reporting live from outside the scene declared as the fire could be seen burning in the background "Initial speculation from eyewitnesses and informed sources seem to agree that this was a tragic accident triggered by a gas leak. There is as yet no word on casualties but it is thought that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Sir William Applegate who is a tenant in this block of apartments was home at the time of the explosion and his current status has yet to be confirmed until the Fire Brigade have made a full survey of the interior of the premises."

"May he rest in pieces" the Commander agreed as he raised a glass to the screen at which point they were interrupted by his mobile telephone ringing.

"Hello love" the Commander called recognising Tracy's office number "You won't believe the evening we are having."

"Would that have anything to do with that gas explosion I am hearing about by any chance?" Tracy asked with some concern as Jack pointed to the breaking news story on the BBC News website that was being displayed on the computer.

"It might have some bearing on this I suppose" the Commander evasively admitted.

"Well anyway" Tracy came to the original point of her call "Jack has been doing a Simon and digging around in Applegate's life and we came across his accounts which make for interesting reading. How much does a Chief Secretary to the Treasury earn in a year?" she asked.

"I have no idea love" the Commander admitted "Hang on a minute" he looked over at Sir Richard who was just getting his glass refilled by the barman "How much does Applegate earn?" he asked.

"Including fiddled expenses" Sir Richard recalled from memory "Just under a hundred grand a year less tax."

"Call it a hundred grand a year roughly" the Commander informed Tracy.

"In which case he is either on the take, bent or has a very rich Uncle somewhere as he is trousering at least two million a year" Tracy confirmed reading from the screen "Much of it in regular cash deposits but also some from his not inconsiderable business interests."

"Take a look at this" Jack pointed something out "This most recent transaction about half an hour ago, that is what I call making a mint."

"Something interesting?" the Commander asked upon hearing what Jack had said in the background.

"Looks like he is cashing in his interests in various financial firms, city traders, a couple of the major banks" Tracy confirmed "Which given how the markets are likely to crash should news of the funny money going around leaks out is somewhat prudent."

"Can anyone here say insider trading?" the Commander asked "Admittedly I am not exactly the financial expert of the family but even I can spot a money fiddle when I see one."

"He still possesses a large share holding in some property development company though" Tracy confirmed "Phoenix Properties & Construction of Haychester."

"It would appear to be a small world" the Commander remarked "Unless I am very much mistaken, that is the very same property company former Administrator General Bordon had links to."

"Well it figures if it is all connected" Tracy concluded "After all, you said yourself you found that printing press in that old cement works."

"The problem is" the Commander mused, "All we have is a van load of theories and scant few facts, never mind evidence."

"Maybe something will turn up when Bob and his boys hit that car" Tracy commented "I know my sister is more than capable of taking care of herself but I am still worried."

"Don't worry" the Commander reassured her "She will be fine, it's the welfare of those holding her that's probably most in danger right now."

"Lima Alpha Romeo One Zero One to Team Alpha" Bob, the seemingly larger than life character who was head of the specialist firearms and tactical services unit called discreetly over his radio "Target vehicle is now approaching the M25 exit road for Heathrow Airport" he confirmed.

"When do you reckon boss?" the ARU Unit van driver asked as they continued to discreetly follow at a distance the black Mercedes saloon as it continued to head towards Heathrow Airport.

"As soon as it is off the motorway but before we are inside the airport perimeter" Bob confirmed as he consulted his map "Otherwise Ports & Ruddy Airports will complain again."

"They still haven't forgiven us for that gig we did at Gatwick last year" the van driver recalled.

"This looks a likely spot" Bob remarked as he looked ahead "Units two and three" he then called over the radio "We are going for this next junction about a mile up ahead. I want a nice enclosed pincer movement and as this needs to be public, plenty of tyre smoke and theatrics to please the onlookers."

"Unit Two standing by" came the first response.

"Unit Three standing by" then came the second response.

"Ok, let's do it" Bob duly declared as he got out his MP7 semi-automatic rifle and checked it.

Within moments the black Mercedes found itself surrounded and forced to a halt as a number of vehicles blocked it off both front and back, only the blue flashing lights now placed on the roofs of the cars signifying them as being from the Security Service.

Quickly the armed officers deployed and surrounded the target vehicle whereupon Bob was heard to bark instructions in his usual firm, direct if polite under the circumstances manner.

"You in the car" he called as he and two supporting officers advanced towards the front of the vehicle "You are surrounded by armed Security Service officers. Do exactly as I say and we all go home for tea in one piece. Stop the engine, take your hands off the wheel and get out of the car..... Slowly please."

"Passengers do the same, out of the car hands in the air and walk away from the vehicle" he again declared as the driver's door opened and a man got out, his hands in the air as requested.

"You won't get much response from the passengers I am afraid" the driver admitted.

"On your knees, hands behind your..." Bob continued but then paused as he suddenly recognised the driver and lowered his weapon in response.

"Evening Bob" James Caverner remarked with a wry smile.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Bob asked with understandable surprise.

"How long have you got?" James responded as he looked across to the car where two of Bob's officers duly discovered a pair of dummies sitting in the back seat "Only could we discuss it over a coffee, it's a tad complicated and it's been a hell of a day."

"Government sources have confirmed that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Sir William Applegate OBE has been killed in what is being described as a 'tragic accident' following a gas explosion at his apartment in the Kensington & Chelsea district of West London earlier this evening" the news report on the BBC confirmed as the Commander looked on from the kitchen table.

"There you go" the Commander admitted as he raised his mug of tea in salute with Tracy alongside him "Told you didn't I?"

"You called it love" Tracy agreed "Of course it does beg the question, if he didn't die when his gaff did the big firework, where the hell is he?"

"Well wherever he is" the Commander concluded "Ten to one he is up to no good."

"With someone else's money" Tracy added "Now who the hell can that be at this time of night?" she asked as the door bell went and she got up to answer it.

"Evening Maam" Bob declared with a respectful tug of the forelock as Tracy opened the door "I found something that I think may be something to do with you" he stepped aside and allowed James Caverner to make his appearance.

"Hello Sis" James sheepishly admitted "Sorry to drop in on you unannounced but I think we need to talk."

"Come in" Tracy eagerly confirmed "Bob, do you want some coffee or something?"

"No thanks Maam" Bob confirmed "I had best be getting back to my firearms" he admitted "Goodnight."

"Strange fellow" James remarked as Tracy led her brother through the kitchen where the Commander was still watching the news with a worried look.

"Good grief" the Commander remarked upon seeing James coming in "You Caverner's turn up everywhere."

"Speaking of which" Tracy remarked "I don't suppose you know where Jenny has gone do you?"

"All I know is that whoever these guys are" James admitted as Tracy poured him a clearly much needed cup of hot black coffee and passed it to him "They are well organised, the principal fixer is a lunatic by the name of Renault, they have your Commander Fuller and Jennifer held somewhere and seem to have some very high up connections including that Applegate guy who it would appear is dead" he remarked seeing the television news report in the background with a puzzled look.

"Never believe everything you see in the media" the Commander remarked "His place went bang nearly taking Sir Richard Crowthorne and me with it but he was most definitely not at home."

"Let me guess" James responded "Little explosive device attached to the incoming main somewhere near the gas meter timed to go off a few minutes after the alarm is tripped?"

"How did you know that?" the Commander asked.

"Old MI5 trick Sir Richard told me about a couple of years back when I did a few little jobs for him" James explained "I still do him the odd favour for him now and again which is how I came to be involved in this little mess if you see what I mean."

"Oh blimey" Jack remarked as he wandered into the kitchen "It's a family reunion. Some of us are trying to get some sleep you know; I have school in the morning."

"How are you doing Jack?" James asked.

"Oh not so bad" Jack admitted with quite a noticeably stifled yawn "Tell me is it some natural talent or just a genetic trait that means all you Caverner's and anyone even remotely related to them seem to have the ability to get into all sorts of trouble at the drop of a hat."

"It's a talent" Tracy, James and the Commander all admitted simultaneously.

"What I do know is that the first small shipments of funny money have probably already hit the streets by now" James confirmed.

"Don't remind me..." Jack responded with disdain "Good night..." he declared as armed with a fresh mug of hot chocolate he headed back to bed.

"What's that all about?" James asked.

"Jack made the crucial mistake of withdrawing a hundred quid in cash earlier this afternoon and he got landed with duds" Tracy explained.

"Whoops... Well anyway if what I understand is correct" James continued "Further shipments are scheduled to be introduced into circulation as soon as tomorrow, they have a printing works somewhere that is banging out top quality stuff at a hell of a rate and on proper paper as well but I suspect you already know about that?"

"Seems the paper shipments were increased courtesy of the supposed late Sir William Applegate" the Commander confirmed "then they got Fuller under duress to access the convoy routing so they could nick it."

"That was when I slipped aboard the good ship funny money" James confirmed "Thankfully as Bob has just very publicly arrested me at gunpoint, as far as they are concerned I am out of the picture."

"We think we may have a way of tracking how they are getting the fake money in amongst the real stuff" the Commander explained "The theory that Tracy, the Governor of the Bank of England and I are working from is that they are using the regular mint distribution runs that the Bank of England, getting the details from the central Bank computer courtesy of Fuller's talents and then swapping the shipments over before anyone realises what has happened."

"A shell game" James remarked "only with some really expensive balls in the cups."

"The problem is that as far as they are aware" Tracy continued "They are assuming we have no idea about the plot which means if we go in all guns blazing and seize their shipment, they will close down their operations, move somewhere else and what scant few leads we have will disappear into the night."

"How much is in a typical single shipment?" James asked out of curiosity.

"According to Sir David, the main shipments from the regional distribution centres can carry as much as ten million in cash" the Commander confirmed "More on the Friday morning runs as it tends to be the busiest day of the week."

"That's a hell of a lot of funny money" Jack remarked as he returned to the kitchen again, unable to sleep and deciding to return his now empty cocoa mug "They would be well cheesed off if some armed robber nicked it."

"That's it" the Commander suddenly declared.

"That's what?" Tracy asked, mystified as were the others as to the reason for the Commander's sudden declaration.

"Thank you Jack" the Commander declared as he rose to his feet and went over to the telephone where he proceeded to dial a number "You are a genius."

"Why thank you" Jack responded "Err why exactly?"

"Hello" the Commander called after his call was answered by the New Scotland Yard switchboard "Put me through to the Robbery Squad, Commander Iverson please."

"Do you know what he is up to?" Tracy asked James.

"No idea Sis" James confirmed.

"Well I am going back to bed" Jack responded "If you could keep the noise down it would be appreciated."

"Good night Jack" Tracy confirmed as the young lad left whilst James just waved.

"Garry" the Commander called having now got through to the head of the Robbery Squad at New Scotland Yard "Need a favour on the QT, who do we have on the active list of blaggers in South London who are both reliable and owe us a favour?"

"Are you thinking what I am thinking?" Tracy asked James upon hearing the Commander's conversation.

"Yep" James admitted "Your husband's reputation precedes him."

"Well look at it this way love" Jennifer admitted "At least we are together."

"That's what I love about you" Fuller remarked wryly as he looked down at the bonds that bound him firmly to the chair facing Jennifer who was similar restrained "Always looking on the bright side."

"I provide the country's most expensive taxi service for some of the most unpalatable no necks and two faced liars in the country" Jennifer admitted "Looking on the bright side is one of the necessities that the job requires."

"I see your point" Fuller agreed "Ah speaking of two faced liars, here comes Applegate."

"Sir William Applegate to you laddie" Applegate responded as he entered the room "I just thought you two would like to know that our work here is nearly finished."

"Great" Jennifer responded "Can we go home now?"

"Err I am afraid not my dear" Applegate confirmed with a definite hint of menace "Whilst we are finished with you and your husbands talents, letting you two go would just bring about repercussions that my associates just do not want at this time."

"So you are just going to leave us here?" Fuller demanded to know.

"In a nutshell, yes" Applegate confirmed with amusement "Now if you will excuse me, I am late for my appointment at the funeral directors."

"Charming fellow" Jennifer jokingly remarked as Applegate left the room, closing the door firmly as he went and leaving the two alone once more.

"Now normally I abhor unnecessary violence" Fuller remarked "but in his case, I think it moves over into the area of necessary."

"Take a number and get in line love" Jennifer responded "Anyway, we have to get out of here first. Do you suppose anyone back at the Yard has any idea what is going on or where we are?"

"Given the way these guys have been covering their tracks so efficiently, I doubt it" Fuller admitted "I leaked what intelligence I could which admittedly is not much so unless our infamous relatives and Sir Richard Crowthorne come up with anything before the morning, I think it is safe to say we are stuck here. Look at this way, things could be worse."

"Yikes! A rat just crawled past me, I hate the things!!" Jennifer suddenly blurted out as something scurried across the floor between them.

"Me and my big mouth..." Fuller remarked with a slow shaking of the head.

"If I ask what it is we are doing here" Tracy inquired as she and the Commander exited Caledonian Road Underground Station and crossed the street "Would I instantly regret it?"

"I am going to see an old friend" the Commander explained as they walked up a narrow street until they reached the door of the Black Dog public house which given it was now half past eleven at night was closed although the lights were still on inside.

"Isn't this the place that your old man used to drink in?" Tracy asked as she remembered the place "As in the one that was notorious as a den of villains back in the late 1960's?"

"Relax love" the Commander reassured her as he knocked on the door "There is nothing to worry about."

"Hello Eddie, no time no see mate" the barman declared as he opened the door, allowing Tracy and the Commander inside before closing the door behind them.

"Good to see you old friend" the Commander agreed as he shook the barman's hand "Are they here?"

"Usual place" the barman indicated towards the private saloon over towards the back "A drink?" he asked.

"I'll have my usual and a shandy for the good lady wife" the Commander confirmed.

"One lemonade and one shandy coming right up" the barman confirmed "Go on through, you are expected."

"It's like a meeting of villains reunited" Tracy remarked as they entered the private saloon bar where a number of gentlemen, many of them now looking a little the worse for wear in their forties and fifties sat around a table amid a haze of cigar smoke, looked up "and that includes you" she added, indicating Sir Richard with a smirk.

"Evening gents" the Commander declared as he and Tracy joined them, taking the two empty seats at the table "I should of course point out that it is illegal to smoke in a public building" he jokingly remarked.

"Given the varied and colourful history of those gathered around this table" Sir Richard remarked "and their family connections, yours included I might add, I don't think they are going to be too worried."

"Only joking guys" the Commander reassured them with a wry smirk.

"Been a while old friend" one of the men, the eldest present declared as a warm handshake was exchanged "How have you been Eddie?"

"Not too bad Jimmy" the Commander admitted.

"So I understand from our old friend here" Jimmy remarked as the barman brought in the drinks "You are looking for a little favour?"

"I need an armed robbery" the Commander simply announced.

"Oh is that all?" Jimmy responded with a chuckle "Business a bit quiet and you want to drum up some trade?"

"Oh if only..." Tracy remarked.

"Let me explain" the Commander continued "At six o'clock tomorrow morning, an anonymous van will leave from a secure warehouse in Coulsdon. At some point immediately after its departure it will be joined by a second to all intents and purposes identical van, it is this second van that we are interested in."

"Coulsdon?" one of the other men remarked after taking a long thoughtful inhale from his cigar "That wouldn't be the Bank of England's regional mint distribution centre by any chance would it?"

"Yes Garry" the Commander confirmed "the same one your old man has been casing for at least the last twenty years."

"What's the cargo?" Jimmy asked as he relit his cigar, clearly interested in the proposal that was being put forward but still holding understandable reservations.

"Between ten and twenty million in cash" the Commander confirmed.

"That's a lot of money" Jimmy remarked.

"One incy wincey little catch" Tracy added "It's all fake."

"You're kidding!" Jimmy exclaimed "Since when did the Bank of England start issuing dud notes?" he asked.

"Ever since someone stole a large consignment of genuine mint paper a few days ago and then found a way to get their product to market through apparently legitimate channels" the Commander confirmed.

"Would this have anything to do with that truck that got lifted near Debden?" Garry asked.

"How did you know about that?" Sir Richard asked.

"Word gets around" Garry admitted "Particularly in our line of work, besides someone has been trying to offload an articulated lorry in the last couple of days with dodgy plates."

"The problem is" Tracy explained "they have no idea we are on to them and if they were to find out, then the chances of catching them would evaporate."

"Can't say I am too enthusiastic about having millions in duff cash floating around" Jimmy remarked "Bad for business especially considering how much we do in cash around this part of town."

"There is also the danger that given the apparently well connected and well financed nature of whoever is behind this" the Commander remarked "the proceeds from this funny money enterprise could go on to fund drug and gun running operations."

"Definitely not what we want in this town" Jimmy agreed "I appreciate we have err criminal tendencies shall we say and some of the gear we buy and sell may be a trifle warm from time to time but even we have standards."

"So I take it you want a good old fashioned armed robbery" Garry asked.

"Balaclavers, sawn offs, getaway vehicles, the whole nine yards" the Commander confirmed "It has got to look as genuine as possible."

"Forgive me for sounding the inevitable note of caution" Jimmy remarked thoughtfully as he leaned forward "but the last time someone walked into this very saloon bar and placed such a proposal on the table, it subsequently all went very pear shaped especially for your good self if I recall correctly."

"I've still got the scars" the Commander admitted ruefully.

"As much as I hate to ask" Jimmy continued "what's in it for us?"

"Certain considerations for one thing" the Commander responded sincerely "the Robbery Squad are pretty certain that your old man was behind the West Street Post Office job a couple of years ago. I am sure what circumstantial evidence exists can be quietly lost somewhere in the system so to speak."

"All right" Jimmy agreed, still clearly with some reservations but now largely sold on the idea.

"Good" the Commander responded "Put a team together but keep it strictly an invitation only party" he instructed "No uninvited guests or hangers on."

"Understood" Jimmy agreed.

"What about wheels?" Garry asked.

"Should be able to find something from the vehicle pound I would have thought" Tracy confirmed "Couple of high speed motors and a plain Transit van suit you?"

"Sounds good to me" Garry readily agreed "I'll give Dave Stewart a call; he is the best wheel man in the business."

"He should be" the Commander agreed "my old man taught him to drive."

"Ok" Jimmy concluded "Where and when?"

"The old Coulsdon North station goods yard, five a.m. sharp" the Commander confirmed.

"We'll be there" Jimmy agreed.

"Good morning London" the alarm clock radio in the Commander's kitchen suddenly declared "It's three thirty and here are the headlines from the morning papers."

"All right" the Commander remarked "Who switched it from Radio Four?" he asked generally.

"Must have been Jack" Tracy admitted sheepishly evading the fact it was actually her who had changed the channel the previous day and had forgotten to put it back.

"You are a terrible liar my dear" the Commander remarked "Jack only listens to Classic FM and Radio Three."

"Yes but I make up for it with other areas of expertise" Tracy responded with a wry smile before kissing the Commander on the cheek.

"From today's Daily Chronicle" the radio continued which was when the Commander reached over to switch it off but stopped just short and continued to listen when he heard the next bit.

"Reports of forged banknotes being issued through legitimate cash machines in Central London" the radio presenter continued "Only the Chronicle is running it at the moment and this is the only report we have seen of this but it will still be enough to unsettle an already unstable money market when they open in a little under five hours time."

"Well that explains one thing I suppose" Tracy remarked "Why the forgeries are ever so slightly imperfect despite being printed on perfectly kosher paper, they wanted them to be detected."

"That would mean whoever is behind this is deliberately trying to destabilise the markets to make a mint" the Commander admitted "Sir David is going to have a heart attack over his cornflakes in the morning when he hears about this."

"Lucky for Applegate he sold all those shares yesterday evening" Tracy mused as she retrieved two slices of toast and passed them to her husband for buttering.

"If he has been declared dead" the Commander remarked with wry amusement "and supposing we ever catch up with him I can have the pleasure of beating a confession out of him in a nice sound proof room I suppose."

"You probably won't get the chance if my sister catches up with him first as she is not likely to leave much to identify knowing her" Tracy confirmed.

"Tracy my love" the Commander looked at her directly "I don't want you around when this all goes off" he insisted with sincerity.

"In other word if our little concocted Security Service sponsored armed robbery goes pear shaped you want me to have full deniability?" Tracy asked, neatly summarising the situation.

"The less people that are directly connected to it the better" the Commander confirmed "I'll run the whole thing on the ground, get the van to someplace where the forensics boys can crawl all over it. You can be back at the Yard, send in the boys when the alarm goes off and look all innocent."

"The moment you find anything that could find my sister and Fuller you will tell me?" Tracy asked with insistence.

"First phone call I'll make" the Commander reassured her before they hugged each other for support.

"So who have you got working this thing on the ground?" Tracy asked as they finished off the rather rushed breakfast.

"I've persuaded Commander Cassini and a couple of his boys to volunteer their services" the Commander confirmed "They don't know the full details though, just that I have a van I want tailed and at some point when something happens to it they are to disappear and say nothing."

"All very cloak and dagger love" Tracy remarked "Trouble is when there are daggers flying about someone is likely to wind up being stabbed in the back, be careful will you."

"Aren't I always?" the Commander wryly asked.

"This from the man who when he tried to renew his life insurance policy had to wait on the telephone ten minutes after telling the broker his name before the laughter died down" Tracy reminded him.

"Oh yes, I had forgotten about that" the Commander admitted ruefully before downing the last drop of tea and then putting the mug in the dishwasher which was as far as he ever went with operating the thing.

"Looks like your ride is here" Tracy remarked as she looked out of the window down to the street below where an anonymous and rather battered looking van was pulling into the bus stop lay-by at the south end of Vauxhall Bridge "Isn't it about time Cassini's department got a new surveillance van, half the villains in London must know that motor by now" she commented.

"If I can find the time, I'll torture the Justice Minister into upping my vehicle replacement budget" the Commander remarked with an amused grin as he grabbed his uniform tunic before checking his gun in its usual waist holster.

"See you later love" Tracy responded before she and the Commander kissed.

"I love you" the Commander replied, unwilling to let go of her for a few moments before he headed out of the door with a heavy step.

A couple of minutes later the Commander was crossing the street, holding his uniform tunic closed against the rain that was coming down until he was inside the van, taking the front passenger seat alongside Commander Cassini.

"Morning Sir" Cassini declared as he started the van "I got your message" he confirmed.

"Glad you could come along" the Commander responded as they moved off.

"Couldn't resist the invitation" Cassini admitted "It's always interesting to work with you Sir, that's why I brought my bullet proof vest."

"Well hopefully you won't need it" the Commander responded "But then again given my past history on these little jaunts anything is possible."

"So where to then Sir?" Cassini asked.

"The old station goods yard at Coulsdon North" the Commander responded "We are going to meet some friends."

"This should be interesting" Cassini remarked as he reached for his radio "Iggy, you and the lads got your ears on?" he asked.

"Right here Boss" Iggy, Cassini's deputy in the Undercover Surveillance Department from their vehicle about a hundred yards behind them confirmed.

"The Chief says we are to head for Coulsdon" Cassini confirmed.

"Oh, real glamour spot" Iggy joked in response as they headed south.

"So you want to fill me in on what this is about Sir or do I just brace myself for a surprise?" Cassini asked.

"Bad people about to bad things" the Commander confirmed "And that's just on our side."

"Right..." Cassini responded, a little uncertain at what was going on.

Half an hour later, the two vehicles were pulling off the main road and down a rather neglected old side alley until they pulled into the derelict old goods yard of the long closed former Coulsdon North railway station.

"Well this place has gone to hell" the Commander remarked as he looked around the semi-darkness, recognising only the old goods shed, the station itself having long since been demolished with just a few bits of brickwork from the old footbridge remaining "This used to be one of the largest stations in the area when I was a kid."

"Looks like someone is home" Cassini pointed ahead to the old good shed from which some light could be seen emitting.

"Give me one of your radios" the Commander requested "and stay here in the van, I'll be back in a minute."

"You're the boss" Cassini confirmed as he passed the Commander one of his radio sets before he got out of the van.

The Commander walked across the broken concrete surface of the yard which was more weeds than concrete now until he reached the old goods shed and went inside.

"Is this the best you have?" Jimmy asked indicating the van and car that had been found for his crew from the Security Service spare stock "I wouldn't hold up an ice cream stand with this junk."

"Welcome to my world mate" the Commander admitted "the vehicle budget I get isn't exactly what you could call flush."

"So I see" Jimmy agreed as he looked through the rust holes in the bodywork of the van.

"Here's a radio, its tuned into the frequency I am using with the surveillance guys" the Commander explained "We are going to follow the target van once we identify which one it is then call you and your boys in to grab it. Only go on my order though" he insisted "If I call abort, we all drive away and none of what has transpired ever happened."

"Got it" Jimmy confirmed "Where do we meet up afterwards?" he asked.

"If all goes according to plan" the Commander continued "you bring the captured van back here before 10 am and then clear out of here. You can keep the vehicles."

"Gee thanks" Jimmy remarked "All right, 10 am. Best get the lads organised."

"Be careful" the Commander warned.

"Don't worry old friend" Jimmy reassured him "We do this sort of thing for a living."

"In my professional capacity, I'll pretend I didn't hear that" the Commander wryly responded with a smile before leaving the goods shed, making his way back across the rain sodden ground to Cassini's van.

"All ready to go Sir?" Cassini asked as the Commander rejoined him in the front of the van.

"As ready as I will ever be" the Commander admitted.

With that admission, Cassini started the engine, turned the van around and drove back out of the old goods yards before returning to the main road a couple of minutes later.

"It should be just down this road off to the left" the Commander indicated ahead to a side turning "Pull into this lay-by just ahead" he instructed.

"And now we wait I presume Sir" Cassini asked.

"Five forty five" the Commander checked the time on his antique pocket watch "Are your lads in position?" he asked.

"Blue Ford Mondeo just down the street there" Cassini pointed ahead to the car with two of his officers parked some two hundred yards away, barely visible in the dark.

"I'll take your word for it" the Commander responded "You guys are very good at what you do."

"Invisibility is our trade" Cassini proudly declared "It doesn't always pay to advertise."

"Echo One from Unit Three" came a discreet call over Cassini's radio.

"Echo One receiving" Cassini confirmed.

"We've got a white Mercedes box body truck approaching from the south" the officer in Unit Three announced "No markings, dipped lights, two male occupants and moving quite slowly."

"Sounds like our guests are gathering" the Commander confirmed "Vehicle description matches the anonymous vans the Bank of England use for their bulk cash distribution."

"Has this got anything to do with that report in today's Daily Chronicle by any chance Sir?" Cassini asked.

"Maybe..." the Commander responded ever so slightly evasively.

"Ah, I see" Cassini remarked, quickly picking up on the Commander's tone and expression "So what's the plan may I ask?"

"Well anytime now a couple of vans are likely to appear from that building over to the south west there" the Commander indicated a rather dull and uninspiring looking industrial type building whose status was only declared by the unusually high level of its perimeter security "Then one of those trucks will either be replaced by or joined by, I am not sure which by our mystery guests in the identical vehicle over there."

"Sounds like a shell game" Cassini commented "Two trucks with genuine cash plus one with the forgeries."

"A shell game with a very expensive set of cups" the Commander agreed "All we have to do is follow our mysterious party crasher until *something* happens."

"Interesting emphasis Sir" Cassini responded "Your crystal ball must be fully warmed up I would wager."

"More of a good old fashioned hunch really" the Commander admitted with a certain degree of discomfort.

"Echo One from Unit Two" came a call almost whispered over the radio "Target premises are opening their front door."

"All right everyone" Cassini responded "Everyone standby, report anything significant you see" he instructed.

"Unit Two" came a fairly swift response "I've got a large white Mercedes box lorry emerging from the main gate of the target premises, no make that two."

"And so it begins..." the Commander commented as he observed through binoculars out of the side window the procession of two identical trucks leaving the facility.

"If they split up, which one do we follow?" Cassini asked.

"Whichever one our uninvited guests take an interest in" the Commander confirmed as they watched the two trucks emerge from the compound and proceed out into the street before turning left and passing them.

"Game time" Cassini declared as he started the engine "Unit's Two and Three, hang back and keep out of sight" he instructed "Unit One, we are going to follow whichever truck our guest takes an interest in."

The two trucks from the distribution centre continued slowly up the road until they reached the junction across the end of which ran the main dual carriageway.

As if almost synchronised, the two trucks parted company, one turning left, the other to the right. This was the cue for the mystery extra truck to commence its journey where it proceeded to discreetly join the traffic approximately a hundred yards to the rear of the truck heading north.

"Unit Two" Cassini called into the radio, "Can you see the registration number of our mystery guest?"

"Looks like Lima Tango Five Six Echo Oscar Tango" the undercover officer in Unit Two confirmed, important information that the Commander quickly made a note of before changing the frequency on his radio.

"Jimmy, you got your ears on?" the Commander called.

"Loud and clear mate" Jimmy confirmed from his car which along with the van containing his armed gang was waiting in a near deserted motorway service area car park just off the M25.

"Target vehicle is a white unmarked Mercedes box lorry currently in convoy with a second identical vehicle now heading north on the Coulsdon bypass possibly heading for the area distribution centres at either Harrow or Watford" the Commander confirmed "Specific target vehicle is registration number LT56 EOT."

"No problem Guvnor" Jimmy responded.

"Let's be clear on this" the Commander advised with insistence "That specific truck only is to be the subject of your talents; the other is not to be touched in any way."

"Consider it done" Jimmy agreed "See you later."

"Ok" the Commander confirmed "Good luck, out."

"I am guessing at this point that it would be better if I didn't ask what is going on Sir?" Cassini ventured as they continued to follow the trucks at an optimum safe distance.

"Indeed" the Commander confirmed with a knowing grin.

"Good morning Maam" the night shift duty supervisor called as Tracy entered the Central Control Room at New Scotland Yard "You are rather early this morning."

"Couldn't sleep" Tracy admitted "So what chaos and confusion has occurred in the world of law enforcement in this city since last night?" she asked.

"We've been getting a lot of calls from members of the public worried about these fake bank notes that are supposedly in circulation" the Duty Supervisor confirmed as he passed across the log sheet of calls received "No sign of any actual funny money though bar a report from a bank in Fleet Street."

"That story in the Daily Chronicle is likely to start a panic whether it is true or not" Tracy admitted "Honestly, there are times when I could happily round up every tabloid journalist in this city, put them against the nearest convenient wall and have them all shot, trouble is, the paperwork would be a nightmare."

"Central Control Room" the Duty Supervisor called in response to an incoming call "Yes, she is right here" he confirmed causing Tracy to look silently at him with a quizzical expression.

"A Sir David Godwin for you on Line Three Maam" the Duty Supervisor confirmed.

"Right, thank you" Tracy responded "I'll take it over at the central console desk."

With that, Tracy moved over to the vacant control desk where she duly put on and connected up a communications headset before taking the call.

"Sir David" Tracy answered "I take it you have just spat your breakfast out in horror having seen the Chronicle's front page?"

"Too bloody right I have" an exasperated sounding Sir David agreed "For the story to have become public this quickly is nothing short of a disaster."

"Well if it makes you feel any better Sir" Tracy responded in a brave if probably vain attempt at reassuring him "We have only had a few reports of this batch of duds in circulation, seemingly all from the same cash point in Fleet Street which by coincidence is where the reporter from the Chronicle just happens to work."

"Smells like a classic set up by someone very clever and manipulative" Sir David concluded.

"I'm going to send a couple of my best blood hounds over to the Chronicle's offices as soon as the sun is up to trawl through this journalist's desk, life, contacts, effects, phone records, pet goldfish, the works" Tracy confirmed "It may well have begun with an anonymous tip but it must have come from somewhere."

"Maam!" the Duty Supervisor called with an anxious wave of his arm to ensure he got Tracy's attention "It's the Administrator General on Line Two, urgent."

"Rightio" Tracy responded "Sorry Sir David" she apologised "my husband is on the other line, hopefully with some good news."

"I'll be in my office sulking and trying to avoid calls from the Chancellor's office" Sir David confirmed "Do please keep me informed."

"Certainly Sir, goodbye" whereupon Tracy switched lines "Morning dear, anything interesting happening?" she asked.

"Probably in about ten minutes" the Commander confirmed from Cassini's van as they continued to follow the suspect truck along the quiet early morning roads as the sun began to rise "As soon as the automated alarm these things have goes off, I want you to roll the entire Robbery Squad to the location but not too quickly if you know what I mean."

"I understand" Tracy confirmed "Do you want me to brief Commander Harrelson and his lads in detail or just give them the location and tell them to get on with it?" she asked.

"Oh Lord no" the Commander responded "This has to look as real and publicly spectacular as possible."

"Sounds like just the sort of chaos I can easily arrange" Tracy agreed "I'll see if Bob and some of his ARU lads fancy joining the party as well."

"The more the merrier" the Commander replied "Something that makes impressive headlines in the popular press will do nicely to make it look as realistic as possible."

"I'll have my finger poised on the button then" Tracy confirmed "Be careful love, please."

"I will" the Commander responded as Cassini tapped him on the shoulder and pointed at something up ahead "Got to go love, I'll see you later" he confirmed before abruptly hanging up.

"Something wrong Maam?" the Duty Supervisor asked seeing the worried look on Tracy's face.

"Eh?" she responded looking up "Oh, err no, well at least not yet anyway" she replied, hiding her deeper fears that she had about what was about to occur.

"Unit Four to Control" one of Cassini's officers called "Call me crazy boss but is there another surveillance team on this job and no one told us?"

"Grey transit van with the borderline MOT by any chance?" Cassini asked.

"Yes boss" came the concern laden confirmation.

"Don't panic" the Commander responded "They are expected."

"Do you want us to keep an eye on them?" the officer from Unit Four asked.

"Err that's a negative" Cassini confirmed after looking across at the Commander who simply shook his head "Concentrate on our mystery guest vehicle for the moment."

"This is Unit Three on advance escort position" came a call "I don't know if this is significant but there are a couple of cars trying not to be noticed parked either side of the main road about a mile ahead of the target vehicle's current location."

"All of Commander Cassini's units" the Commander called "Something is about to happen, when it does it is vital that you say and do absolutely nothing" he instructed.

"Sit back, relax and enjoy the show I presume?" Cassini asked, by now with a pretty good idea as to what was happening here.

"Something like that, yes" the Commander confirmed with a knowing grin "It's all a bit complicated I admit but trust me, the good guys should win in the end."

Up ahead as the two trucks approached a junction, the two cars that the officers of Unit Three had identified a few minutes earlier suddenly moved off, proceeding amid the loud squealing of tyres to shut off the road ahead and force the two trucks to stop abruptly.

The driver of the lead truck, the legitimate one looked around for a way out only to see in his mirrors armed men in balaclavas carrying sawn off shotguns bundling out of a battered grey van and stopping any possible escape from the rear.

"Push the panic button Nigel" the truck driver called to his co-driver "These guys are serious."

"Don't move!" one of the armed robbers informed the truck crew, his words backed up by the very persuasive pointing of a sawn off shotgun directly at them.

As the crew of the lead truck were being held at gunpoint, the majority of activity was concentrated on the second truck where its driver and passenger were being dragged from the cab, bound, gagged and then bundled into the back of the robbers van.

They were placed in the cab by two of the armed robbers who wasted no time in putting the vehicle into reverse and making good their escape.

"Thank you for your co-operation guys" the armed robber in charge of the lead truck declared as two of his associates bound the hands of the two crew members to the dashboard.

Once secured, the remaining members of the gang returned to their various vehicles and amid a cacophony of revving engines, slamming car doors and squealing tyres, departed into the early morning gloom as swiftly as they had arrived.

"Maam!" the Duty Control Room Supervisor called with an obviously heightened sense of urgency "Silent alarm notification from a Royal Mint lorry, armed robbery alert."

Tracy proceeded to act as if taken by surprise at this news whilst she stepped down from the console she was at and went over to the Supervisors desk.

"Do we have a GPS location fix?" Tracy asked with obvious concern.

"Looks like somewhere near Hounslow" the Supervisor confirmed as he proceeded to display the location of the truck on a large map projected onto the main screen at the front of the Control Room.

"All right" Tracy declared as she reached across the desk for the telephone "I'll summon the cavalry."

"Any unit in the vicinity of the Hounslow bypass" the Duty Supervisor called over the radio headset he was wearing "Armed robbery alert triggered from secure vehicle" he declared "Location reported as being close to the reservoir junction."

"Control, this is Lima Charlie Uniform One Zero One" Cassini called at the Commander's suggestion "I'm passing through the vicinity and could check it out if no one is closer?"

"Yes please" the Duty Supervisor replied "Use caution however and be advised that the Robbery Squad and at least one ARU is on the way but it may be a little while so advise you proceed with caution please."

"Will do Control, on way" Cassini confirmed.

"Now we cross our fingers that someone hasn't just or indeed is about to get their head blown off" Tracy declared with a sense of concern.

"I spy with my little eye something begging with 'C'" the truck driver remarked as he looked around in the early morning gloom as best he could given the restrictions from the cable ties that held his hands to the steering column.

"Calamity..." the co-driver remarked with a sense of depression "How can you think of playing I Spy at a time like this?"

"Bugger all else we can do" the driver admitted "Besides it means I avoid thinking too much."

"Hello, what's this?" the co-driver remarked as he craned his neck around to look in the wing mirror "Looks like we have company" he confirmed as he saw a van stop behind them and two people get out with guns drawn.

"Well they already took that other truck" the driver admitted "perhaps they are coming back for seconds."

"I don't think this is the robbers back for a second helping somehow" the co-driver remarked "in fact I think this could be the cavalry."

"Morning" the Commander declared upon opening the drivers side cab door and checking inside "I don't suppose you have seen any armed robbers around here by any chance?" he asked.

"Well now that you come to mention it..." the driver responded.

"Area is clear by the looks of it boss" Cassini confirmed as the sound of approaching sirens began to become audible in the distance.

"You missed the fun I am afraid Sir" the driver confirmed as the Commander cut free the crew from their bonds before helping them from the cab of their vehicle "About ten or fifteen of them there were, balaclavas and sawn off's. They grabbed that other truck that was behind us" he explained.

"Sawn off's" the Commander remarked "How quaintly old fashioned."

"But bloody effective though" the co-driver declared "You certainly didn't want to argue with them that is for sure."

"Here comes our backup" Cassini declared as several Security Service vans and patrol cars approached the scene from all directions whereupon numerous armed officers deployed to seal off and contain the scene.

"Morning Bob" the Commander called to the head of the ARU as he appeared, somewhat surprised even given the Commander's history and reputation to find him there.

"Morning Sir" Bob replied quizzically "I take it whatever happened, we missed it?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so" the Commander confirmed as he and Bob looked around them at the scene where a ring of heavily armed officers were surrounding and sealing off the area "Sorry to get you out of bed so early" he apologised.

"Interesting turn of phrase Sir" Bob commented "If I didn't know better I would say you knew more about this little shindig than at first it would appear, after all this isn't exactly your usual patch especially at this time of the morning."

"The world is full of mysteries, coincidences and speculation" the Commander agreed "Hopefully what has just transpired here will assist me in solving one very troublesome mystery indeed."

"Good luck Sir" Bob responded as the Commander departed.

"Thanks, I think I will need it" he admitted as he went over to a patrol car "I'm going to borrow your wheels Lieutenant" the Commander declared.

"Do you want me to drive you Sir?" the uniformed officer asked.

"No it's all right lad" the Commander confirmed as he got in the drivers seat of the car and the Lieutenant tossed him the keys "I promise to take good care of it."

"Yes Sir" the Lieutenant agreed as he shut the door whilst the Commander started the car before with a friendly acknowledgment with his hand, he drove off.

"Ok, left a bit, that's it ease her on in" Jimmy instructed his man driving the stolen truck as he reversed it into the old goods shed at Coulsdon North.

"Whoa there, that'll do Dave" Jimmy confirmed whereupon the driver stopped the truck and two men proceeded to close the goods shed doors.

"Any problems?" Sir Richard Crowthorne asked as he stepped out of the shadows and joined Jimmy by the truck.

"Went smooth as a nut old mate" Jimmy confirmed in his typically quirky cockney accent "Your two mystery guests are in the back of the van over there so as soon as my guys and I are out of here, it is all yours."

"Jimmy, there is a fuzz motor coming this way, one occupant" one of the gang's lookouts called as he looked outside through the dusty cracked cobweb filled window at a Security Service patrol car that was approaching across the weed and rubble strewn remnants of the old goods yard towards the shed.

"Not a problem" Jimmy confirmed "He's expected so let him in."

"If you say so boss" the lookout reluctantly agreed, clearly uncertain about allowing someone from the law inside but he did as he was told, opened the door and to his surprise let in the Commander.

"Morning lads" the Commander declared as he entered the goods shed and looked at the truck.

"As promised" Jimmy declared with some sense of pride "One secure van and two guests."

"Thanks, I owe you one, actually probably several" the Commander declared as he and Jimmy shook hands "Now I suggest you and your boys pack up your stuff and make a discrete exit."

"Certainly" Jimmy agreed before giving a shrill whistle to his guys "Pleasure doing business with you" he remarked before followed the last of his men outside, closing the door behind him.

"Let's get to work" the Commander declared to Sir Richard "Did you bring all that I requested?"

"In my motor" Sir Richard indicated his car over the far corner towards which he gave a whistle which resulted in the appearance of two tall broad shouldered men in matching dark suits and glasses, both carrying identical metal briefcases.

"Where did you find these two?" the Commander asked, looking up at the two men who fairly towered above his own modest five foot seven frame "Interrogators 'R' Us?"

"Let's just say" Sir Richard explained slightly evasively "Like the people you have recently hired in this jolly caper, I have worked with them before and they are very good at what they do."

"Let's get this thing open" the Commander indicated the truck whereupon they went around to the rear doors where Sir Richard examined the lock.

"Standard Mint Security locking mechanism" he commented "Either our mystery villains are even better informed and financed than we had thought or your rent-a-robbers have nicked the wrong truck."

"So how do we get it open?" the Commander asked.

"Oh that's easy" Sir Richard responded as he took the Commander's gun from its waist holster and switched the safety catch before casually taking aim and firing a single shot that saw the lock disintegrate all too easily.

"What the...?" the Commander responded "I thought you said it was a Mint Security lock?"

"It is" Sir Richard explained "Government issue supplied by the lowest possible bidder, this Government brings a whole new meaning to the phrase cheap and nasty."

"Their goes my faith in financial security" the Commander remarked as with the others help they managed to pry open the doors to reveal inside a couple of clear shrink wrapped wooden pallets with packs of banknotes stacked thereupon.

"What do you reckon?" the Commander asked as after jumping up into the back of the truck, he and Sir Richard examined its cargo.

"Have you got a fifty pound note on you?" Sir Richard asked the Commander.

"I got a wife, a son, two cats and a model railway collection" the Commander responded sincerely "I haven't seen a fifty pound note in years, would you settle for a tenner?" he proffered what he could find after a brief rummage around the murky depths of his uniform tunic pockets.

"There are some tenners on this other pallet over here" Sir Richard agreed as using a pen knife he cut away at the plastic shrink wrapping and removed a pack of ten pound notes.

Carefully he then proceeded to extract one of the notes before taking it and the Commander's bank note out of the van so they could perform a comparison in better light.

"There you go" he declared pointing out a tiny piece of detail on the reverse of both notes which unless you were specifically looking for it, would have gone completely unnoticed "They are duds all right."

"Right" the Commander responded as he and Sir Richard jumped down from the back door of the van "Time to call this in and get the forensic guys and gals in here, hopefully find some answers, but first a word with our two guests is in order."

"In the back of the van" Sir Richard indicated the tatty Transit Van which the armed robbers had used on the carefully set up raid.

"You two with me" the Commander requested of the two heavies before he led the way over to the van and opened the sliding side door to reveal the two men from the truck, tied up and gagged inside.

"I guess its just not your day is it lads?" the Commander wryly remarked with a sarcastic grin.

"They are not going to say much in that condition you know" Sir Richard commented.

"You know what, you are absolutely right" the Commander agreed mockingly before leaning forward and with little subtlety ripping off the tape that was gagging the two captured men.

"Right, that's better" the Commander declared after the men's initial reaction to the pain of having the gagging tape removed had died down "I want to hear everything you two gents know about forged money, illegal manipulation of the world currency markets, who you are working for and where I might find them. That's before we move onto the more colourful subjects of theft, manslaughter, kidnapping and illegal imprisonment mind you."

"We are saying nothing without a lawyer" the first man defiantly responded.

"And I ain't saying nothing with a lawyer either" the second man equally defiantly added.

"Any lawyers in the house?" the Commander called around the interior of the old goods shed "No? Oh dear, what a pity."

"Looks like we will have to resort to Plan 'B' then" Sir Richard remarked.

"Plan 'B'?" one of the men asked slightly apprehensively.

"Let me introduce you to two colleagues of mine" the Commander explained as he beckoned the two heavies that Sir Richard had brought along to step forward into view.

"Who are these two goons?" one of the men in the van asked.

"This is Boris" the Commander indicated the first heavy "he specialises in cracking ribs whilst his equally charming associate Morris here" he indicated the second seemingly all but identical heavy "prefers to practice that sadly neglected art of smashing kneecaps."

"You can't threaten us like this" the second man demanded "We want a lawyer."

"Now how could that be possible?" the Commander responded matter of factly "after all according to the world, his wife and their pet Dalmatian Colin you two are unfortunate victims, Bank of England employees who are currently being held hostage in a location unknown by a gang of ruthless armed robbers."

"What the...?" the first man responded, completely dumbfounded.

"Congratulations, you two have been well and truly set up" the Commander confirmed their growing suspicions, "The armed robbery will appear to your bosses to be a random bit of bad luck when in fact we set it up so we could get our hands on the evidence of what you and your associates are up to without them even realising it."

"Our boss won't let this fall down you know" the second man retorted "In fact he will probably have us killed if he even suspects we have been within a stones throw of the law."

"That's if he doesn't break our legs for losing his truck load of merchandise in the first place" the first man added with a grim feeling of the inevitable.

"You tell me everything I want to know" the Commander offered the deal "Boris and Morris here get sent away to have some breakfast and my associate here" he indicated Sir Richard stood alongside him "will arrange for you two to be spirited away somewhere warm and sunny complete with new identities before the day is out."

"Come on mate what have we got to lose?" the second man asked his colleague.

"Our lives?" the first man responded "I've heard this guy can find people even if they have been completely erased by the Witness Protection Programme."

"We stand a better chance though" the second man commented.

"Do we have a deal then gentlemen?" the Commander asked.

"All right" the first man reluctantly confirmed after he and the second man had agreed with nods of the head.

"Ok you two, go and get some breakfast" the Commander called to the two heavies who in response calmly turned on their heels in unison and departed, much to the relief of the two men in the van.

"I'll find us some coffee" Sir Richard declared "I think it is going to be a long morning."

"Good idea" the Commander agreed before returning to the two men in the van "Ok gents, your starter for ten. How many trucks did you mystery boss put into circulation last night and how did he or she know where to send them?"

"Six trucks from four different distribution centres" the first man confirmed "Each containing about ten to fifteen million in funny money."

"Sixty to seventy million" the Commander responded after some quick arithmetic "Good grief..."

"Apparently it has something to do with destabilising the economy and making money out of the stock markets" the second man added "The investors in this job are apparently holding large shareholdings in various banks, building societies etc purchased when the price was low then just before the funny money hits the banks, they sell up just in time to cash in before all the share prices collapse probably any minute now."

"And who are these 'investors' of which you speak?" the Commander asked.

"All we know is the name of the guy doing all the physical work" the first man explained a little reluctantly "Ex army guy by the name of Renault but he is not the guy actually in charge, he takes his orders from someone on the end of a telephone, no one knows who that is but from reputation alone it must be someone very powerful and well connected."

"Chief Secretary to the Treasury Sir William Applegate for example?" the Commander decided to play a hunch.

"That worm?" the second man scoffed at the suggestion "He's a two faced politician who is only in it for the money, Renault pulled him down a peg or three just last night."

"So if I were to find Renault I would also find Applegate and two missing friends of mine at the same time I presume?" the Commander asked.

"You mean the computer guy and his rather feisty wife?" the second man asked.

"That would be them" the Commander confirmed.

"Well they are scheduled to be moving the ops base later this afternoon" the first man responded "I don't know where to but if you can absolutely guarantee our safety then we can point you towards where they are right now."

"Gentlemen" the Commander declared as Sir Richard returned with a flask of coffee and a selection of polystyrene cups "I think we have a deal."

"The Attorney General and David Collins of MI5 to see you Maam" the Personal Assistant called via the intercom to Tracy as she was sat at her desk in her office at New Scotland Yard.

"Excellent, send them in please" Tracy confirmed.

"Morning Maam" David Collins, operations director for the Intelligence Service better known as MI5 declared as he walked in.

"Divisional Commander" Sir Hugo Carnforth, the Attorney General also declared as he followed Collins into the office where upon he passed across a document in a manila card folder to Tracy "One warrant although don't be surprised if there is hell to pay in Whitehall when news of this thing leaks out."

"I think it is safe to say gentlemen" Tracy responded as she gestured to the two men to sit down "that the Whitehall mandarins have got far bigger things to worry about this morning than the National Police & Security Service turning over some journalist's desk."

"I nearly choked on my cornflakes when I read the front page of the Chronicle this morning" Sir Hugo responded "How the hell has this happened and more importantly who is behind it?"

"That is what my husband is currently trying to find out now from a couple of chaps we have in custody, sort of" Tracy admitted.

"Should be interesting..." Collins remarked with mild amusement "Do we know how much we are talking about yet?" he asked.

"Well I just spoke with my husband a few minutes ago" Tracy explained "Even minus the one truck that 'ahem' disappeared en route courtesy of some armed robbers we are still looking at around sixty million quid."

"That wouldn't be the armed robbery near Hounslow in the early hours of this morning would it?" Collins asked "Only according to my sources..."

"That would be the MI5 guy you have in our Robbery Squad I presume?" Tracy interjected with a knowing grin.

"Err yeah, that one" Collins admitted slightly embarrassed "There was one bullion truck hit and nothing was taken."

"That is the story we are allowing to circulate" Tracy explained "MI5 aren't the only ones who can be sneaky you know. Our mystery printers of funny money have managed to gain access to the central Bank of England distribution computer; they added their seemingly identical trucks to the system so that when all bar one turned up at the local bullion distribution centres they seemed perfectly legitimate."

"So the robbery was a put up job?" Sir Hugo asked.

"Basically yes" Tracy confirmed "The robbers were all perfectly genuine though just they were working for us for a change. We could not risk whoever is behind all this finding out we were on to them so my husband arranged the armed robbery so it looks like random bad luck."

"It may be unconnected, then again maybe not" Collins replied "but the City Security Branch of my lot have been intercepting a lot of mumblings amongst the money markets over the last three or four days. It seems a small and previously unknown private hedge fund has been busy offloading small quantities of bank, building society and other shares across the board. Normally this sort of thing would have just resulted in a note being made in a file and nothing more but given how the money markets are likely to react to the story in the Chronicle alone when they open in ten minutes time it suddenly seems more than coincidence."

"One of the reasons I asked you up here this morning" Tracy explained "I need you to dig anywhere you have to, we want a name for these guys and even more importantly where they are and what else they intend to do."

"But strictly on the unofficial QT I take it?" Collins asked.

"Indeed" Tracy confirmed "We already know the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is involved since he kidnapped my sister yesterday so who knows who else in Whitehall these people have got their claws into."

"Applegate was bent?" Sir Hugo responded with amazement "in addition to being toast after his place went up yesterday that is."

"Bent, corrupt and now wanted" Tracy confirmed "He is a politician after all so what did you expect and by the way the explosion at his apartment was a duck blind, he wasn't at home."

"But he is or was or whatever a member of my club, on the wine committee no less" Sir Hugo replied, still stunned by this revelation.

"Not for much longer I suspect" Tracy wryly remarked.

"Is there anything else I can do to help?" Collins asked.

"Indeed there is" Tracy confirmed "From what I gather the Chronicle's story came about after an apparently anonymous tip off made in a telephone call to this journalist err" she consulted the file containing the search warrant that the Attorney General had just given her "Trevor Dorman."

"Ah, I see where this is going" Collins admitted "You are wondering if I can help with that I presume?"

"Well lets face it" Tracy responded "MI5 do routinely bug and monitor every newspaper and TV news editorial office in the country from the BBC right down to the Haychester Gazette so somewhere in your system is the recording of that call and the number it came from. Am I right or am I right?"

"Maybe..." Collins evasively replied "I'll err ask around if you know what I mean" he confirmed.

"Thanks" Tracy responded "Anything you find report directly back to either me or my husband assuming he isn't too busy breaking kneecaps and kicking in doors. After all we officially know nothing about this and I would like to keep it that way for now."

"What do you mean missing?" Renault shouted in anger at his telephone so loud the entire building heard it loud and clear causing many to look up from what they were doing and listen to that side of the conversation.

"Sounds like our genial host is having some domestic problems" Jennifer remarked aside to Fuller as they too overheard the anger of Renault from inside the office in which they continued to be held, bound to the chairs in which they had been put some hours earlier.

"My heart bleeds..." Fuller responded with more than a hint of sarcasm.

"Eddie, turn on the TV will you, BBC News please" Renault was heard to call over to one of his associates. A few moments later the sound of the BBC News channel could be heard filtering through the old factory complex.

"Although no statement has yet been made by the authorities" the reporter on the television confirmed "we have been informed by other sources that the Robbery Squad of the National Police & Security Service Metropolitan Division are looking at an armed robbery that took place early this morning which targeted a Bank of England Bullion van somewhere in the Hounslow district of west London."

"Oh dear, bad luck me old china" Fuller remarked with an amused chuckle.

"What are the robbers going to think though when they realise they have gone to all that effort to lift a truck that has ten million in duds in the back?" Jennifer asked.

"Probably nothing" Fuller remarked "at least that is what I think if my hunch is right."

"What, you think it is a put up job?" Jennifer asked.

"Well it would be an awfully simple way for the authorities to get their hands on physical evidence without tipping off this lot that they are on to them wouldn't it?" Fuller explained his theory "and who do we know who has connections with both the Service and certain elements of east London's criminal fraternity?"

"In which case lets hope the cavalry hurry's up and starts appearing on the horizon soon" Jennifer commented "As I was being taken to the loo earlier I overheard someone talking to Renault about moving this operation later today. If they don't hurry up they will find no one is home."

"What's happened boss?" one of Renault's associates asked him as the telephone call came to an end with the mobile telephone being angrily tossed onto the desk in front of him.

"Some of our brothers in the criminal fraternity only went and stole one of our trucks in an armed hold up didn't they?" Renault expressed his disbelief "One of our esteemed boss's Security Service contacts confirmed it, sawn off shooters, getaway cars, the whole nine yards."

"Not to mention ten million in our product gone walkabout" the associate added.

"Well at least the rest of it got to where it is supposed to go" Renault confirmed "By four o'clock this afternoon there will be so much fake money in the circulatory system of London and the south east that the country will go into total meltdown."

"Netting us a small fortune in real money in the process" Sir William Applegate added as he joined the conversation and raised a glass to their successful venture.

"Your helicopter will be ready later this afternoon" Renault confirmed to him "First we have to move to a new location and also dispense with our two guests through there."

"You're not going to kill them are you?" Applegate asked "Only the storm that could bring down on us doesn't bear thinking about."

"Relax" Renault reassured Applegate "Everything will be fine, by this time tomorrow you will be relaxing on a beach in a non extradition treaty company with a new identity, supping cocktails provided by dusky maidens and earning twenty percent net."

"So what does our chief get out of all this when it is all over?" Applegate asked "Only where he is right now I can't see him having many opportunities to actually spend it."

"Oh he has very special plans for his profits from this little scheme" Renault confirmed "Money is a very powerful motive for crime but freedom and revenge also appear very highly on his list of priorities as some people will soon see in the coming months."

"Sounds interesting" Applegate remarked "I'll have to make sure my luxury yacht and villa in the sun has satellite TV so I can watch the excitement as it unfolds."

"Meantime" Renault declared "It is time to make a move" he turned to the factory floor where the presses were now in the process of being shut down after twenty four hours straight of production of bank notes as well as some other papers "Let's get this all packed up and ready to roll gentlemen" he called.

As two large articulated lorries pulled into the compound surrounding the old factory that Renault and his men were based in, on a grassy cliff edge overlooking the site stood a lone figure who having clambered up the steep slope of the old quarry from the other side, now observed the site below through binoculars.

"Come on, give me a sign here" the Commander remarked to himself as he momentarily lowered the binoculars to look around before refocusing them again on another part of the site when he saw the man he assumed to be the one in charge by his poise and attitude appear from the building's side entrance with Sir William Applegate alongside him.

"Gotcha you bastard" the Commander remarked with a satisfied grin before lowering his binoculars again and reaching for his mobile telephone where after speed dialling a number he was put straight through to Tracy.

"Hello love" the Commander called "How are we fixed for SAS and other support teams in the vicinity of the old quarries east of Redhill?" he asked.

"Be at least half an hour I would have thought" Tracy admitted "and that is without allowing for the rush hour traffic and the barrier that is the M25 between Redhill and here."

"Great..." the Commander responded "By the time they get here our friends with the printing presses will be out of here if the recent activity is anything to go by" he confirmed as he once again took a look through the binoculars at the scene unfolding below.

"And if they came in by helicopter they would be seen coming a mile off" Tracy added as the patrol car she was a front seat passenger in proceeded down Kingsway approaching The Aldwych "plus that close to Gatwick Airport has restrictions on it."

"Isn't there an ARU team based actually at Gatwick Airport?" the Commander asked.

"Yes I think so" Tracy confirmed "Comes under Ports & Airports Division."

"Well any port in a storm" the Commander remarked "no pun intended. Where are you by the way?"

"On my way to the Daily Chronicle offices" Tracy confirmed "I've got a warrant to execute and a journalist to interrogate. I've also got our friend at MI5 to pull their telephone monitoring records, see if we cannot find out who tipped them off last night."

"All right love" the Commander responded "Sir Richard is on his way to the Yard with the two goons we picked up and the Forensic boys are about to find themselves in possession of a van full of dud banknotes that I want torn apart, the van that is not the notes."

"I'll get it organised" Tracy agreed "The forensics lads always like a challenge."

"Look love I've got to go" the Commander responded with a sense of urgency "I love you" he added before hanging up.

"What...?" Tracy responded but by then it was too late as the call had been disconnected.

"Something wrong Maam?" the officer driving the patrol car asked her superior officer as they turned off of The Aldwych and into Fleet Street.

"Oh just my husband is probably about to put his size tens in it yet again" Tracy admitted with a look of concern.

"What am I doing?" the Commander asked himself as he made his way down the rough path down towards the industrial site below. Upon reaching the open ground only a couple of hundred yards from where much activity was occurring, he ducked behind an old shed and retrieved his gun from its holster where he checked it was loaded.

Nearby the shouting of orders could be heard as Renault directed the loading operation which seemed to consist of a fork lift loader putting large crates and pieces of equipment into the back of the two large articulated trucks.

"This is a really bad idea" the Commander remarked to himself as he observed not only the operation in progress but also the heavily armed guards that were patrolling the immediate area "Ah well, in for a penny, in for a pound" he concluded before, as

soon as the nearest guard was looking in the opposite direction, he skipped across the open ground between his hiding place and the rear of the main buildings where after forcing his way through brush and undergrowth, he found an old partially boarded up window.

After examining the rotten loose boarding blocking the window, the Commander as quietly as possible extracted his pen knife and used it to lever off the boards and reveal the old window beneath which itself easily gave way to a little more leverage.

"Another uniform ruined" the Commander remarked regretfully as whilst climbing in through the window he caught his uniform tunic on a rusty nail ripping it down one side before dropping down into an old abandoned room that seemed to have been visited by nothing in the last twenty years except spiders, mice and now himself.

With his gun drawn, the Commander cautiously exited the room into a junk filled dusty corridor and made his way along it until he came to a couple of open plan offices where he was forced to duck down behind a partition to avoid being seen by two armed men who were loading papers and equipment into packing crates.

"Really, really bad idea" the Commander thought to himself as he kept himself ducked down behind the partition until the two men departed, carrying the crate between them whereupon it was safe for him to move on further down the corridor until he stopped when he caught the sound of a couple of familiar voices coming from a side room.

"Fiver on the red one" Jennifer remarked as she and Fuller passed the time taking bets on which of a couple of spiders they were sharing the room with was going to be the first to make it to the top of the window sill in front of them.

"Always bet on black" a voice remarked from behind them as the Commander appeared in the room.

"Ah the cavalry at last" Fuller responded.

"Well I wouldn't exactly call me a cavalry exactly" the Commander admitted slightly sheepishly.

"There has to be more than just you surely?" Jennifer responded.

"There stuck in traffic" the Commander confirmed with an embarrassed look.

"Have you seen how many armed goons there are on site?" Jennifer responded
"Upwards of seventy five odd at least."

"Only about ten or fifteen by my count" the Commander replied "They must be almost all moved out already, we need to act fast."

"I fully agree" Fuller responded as the Commander cut free the couple from their bonds.

"Here, you may need this" the Commander gave Jennifer his spare gun which she promptly took and checked.

"What do I get?" Fuller asked.

"Sorry, that's all I have" the Commander admitted "Anyway I thought you hated guns even more than me?"

"Under the current circumstances I am always open to new ideas" Fuller wryly admitted.

"Right, first things first is to get the hell out of here without being noticed" the Commander declared as he checked at the door to see the coast was clear "Ok, come on" he called seeing the coast was clear whereupon all three exited out into the corridor only to be greeted by Renault and a couple of his men coming in from the other side.

"Keep those ideas coming boss" Jennifer declared as they turned abruptly and made a run for it as in response to their escape Renault and his men opened fire after them.

"You two, deal with that" Renault commanded "the rest of you, we leave now!"

"In here" Jennifer declared as she found an empty side room and promptly bundled both her husband and the Commander inside before taking a defensive position at the doorway.

"Shouldn't I be helping here?" the Commander asked.

"My sister told me how bad your aim is" Jennifer admitted before firing off down the corridor which forced the two gunmen themselves to seek cover behind some of the abandoned furniture in the corridor.

"What is that noise?" Fuller asked as he listened in the background to something motorised approaching.

"Sounds like a helicopter" the Commander confirmed "They are definitely flying the coop."

"Damm it I'm out" Jennifer declared whereupon the Commander quickly passed a fresh magazine from his tunic pocket allowing her to reload and fire at the two attackers once more, this time putting one down.

"And that makes two" the Commander remarked with a hint of triumph as rarely for him he managed at the first attempt to send the second attacker down with the first shot from his old revolver to the amazement of the others.

"What?" the Commander asked seeing the others stunned responses.

"The bad guys are getting away" Fuller remarked whereupon they resumed exiting from the building and reached the yard where they were just in time to see the two articulated lorries depart in a cloud of dust. As they cleared the area they revealed behind them a black helicopter just lifting off.

"Cheeky bastard" Jennifer remarked as from the front seat of the helicopter as it ascended Renault gave a cheeky wave before the aircraft pulled away into the distance.

"Well I guess they know we are on to them now" the Commander remarked.

"If I were to play a hunch Sir" Fuller remarked "I am pretty certain they already knew indeed I get the distinct impression we have been played right from day one."

"Terrific" the Commander responded.

"Ah, here comes the cavalry" Jennifer pointed across the yard to a couple of armoured Security Service vans that were speeding onto the site "Better late than never I suppose."

"Sorry we are late Sir" the leader of the ARU unit declared as he got out of the van "Traffic around Gatwick was murder."

"Bit late for the party I am afraid" the Commander confirmed.

"If you don't mind Sir" Jennifer remarked "I am going to take my husband here back to the Yard and get him checked out by the medical department."

"Good idea" the Commander agreed as he took back his spare gun from her "Tell Tracy when you see her I am working on our little problem and to assume there is probably a mole in the Service somewhere."

"Yes Sir" Jennifer agreed "How do we get out of here by the way?"

"Redhill Station is about a mile over there I think" Fuller confirmed "I could hear the trains passing by just before you arrived Sir."

"See you later guys" the Commander declared as he got in the ARU van "Right gentlemen, two large articulated lorries just left here, I want them stopped."

"You got it Sir" the ARU leader agreed whereupon they departed as fast as they had arrived.

"Never a dull moment in this job is there?" Jennifer wryly mused as they paused to watch the two ARU vans speeding away into the distance before they turned and arm in arm walked off.

"Oh decisions, decisions" Tracy mused as she entered through the main glass doors of the Chronicle offices and approached the reception desk.

"I don't get what you mean Maam" the young officer accompanying her responded.

"Do I do this the subtle way or do I just take the direct approach" Tracy asked.

"Well these are the offices of one of the country's leading national newspapers" the officer advised.

"You're right Lieutenant" Tracy agreed "The subtle way it is."

"Can I help you?" the Receptionist inquired in that typical way that all Receptionists use.

"I have a warrant for the arrest of one of your hacks, a Mr Trevor Dorman and a court order signed by the Attorney General to seize all documents, recordings and other material related to this enquiry" Tracy declared directly, brandishing the documents for the Receptionist's brief inspection.

"Editorial office on the fourth floor" the Receptionist quickly conceded and pointed towards the elevators.

"Thank you" Tracy responded before turning smartly on her heels and heading for the lifts.

"Very subtle Maam" the Lieutenant semi-sarcastically commented aside.

"Thank you" Tracy responded with a grin of satisfaction as the lift doors opened and they stepped inside the vacant car.

"Mr Simpkins" the Receptionist called over the telephone to the Editor in Chief "There are a couple of officers from the National Security & Police Service on their way up with a warrant for the arrest of Trevor Dorman."

"Great" Simpkins replied as he put down the cigar in the silver plated ashtray on his vast desk with a sense of resignation "Did these two plods give any identification?"

"Well one of them was a Lieutenant but the other I am pretty sure was Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner of the Metropolitan Division" the Receptionist informed him.

"Oh hell!!!" Simpkins responded as he quickly slammed down the telephone and got up from behind his desk before speedily exiting his office and unusually for him practically running across the editorial office towards the lifts which he reached just as the doors opened and Tracy with the Lieutenant exited from the lift.

"Mr Simpkins?" Tracy asked "I want to see you boy Dorman immediately."

"You can't just barge in here like this" Simpkins protested in vain.

"My gilt edged invitation" Tracy handed Simpkins the legal documentation "Your co-operation will be appreciated."

"All right" Simpkins conceded before looking across the open plan office and calling out "Dorman, get your sorry excuse for a journalistic backside in my office right now. We got company."

"There they are" the Commander called pointing down below to the road at the bottom of a steep hill "If we are quick we might still catch them."

"I have to say Sir" the officer driving the ARU van remarked "If I wanted to make a quick exit, I would not have chosen an articulated lorry or indeed two as my getaway vehicle."

"Well these guys have a lot of equipment to lump around" the Commander admitted as with sirens and lights in full cry they gained on the two lorries quickly until they were within two hundred yards of the rear one "With a bit of luck the traffic through Horley should slow them down a bit" he confirmed as he checked a map of the local area.

"Sir" one of the officers in the back of the van called "If we cut down here and go around the back way we could get ahead of them" he suggested.

"Sounds like a good idea" the Commander readily agreed "We'll take the back road, Unit Two" he called over the radio to the second ARU van "You keep on this road and we will try and box them in."

"When we catch up with them" the leader of the ARU team inquired "Do you want this to be a domestic stop and search or something a bit more persuasive?"

"As far as I am concerned ladies and gentlemen" the Commander confirmed "the gloves are off and I want those trucks hit hard."

"Absolutely Sir" the ARU leader agreed as the lead van turned left onto the back roads along which they easily made rapid progress whilst the second van remained on the slower traffic clogged main road.

"Left, then right and then right again" the Commander confirmed as he traced their route on the map "That should get us just ahead of them then we have got them."

Only a matter of a couple of minutes later the ARU van returned back to the main road and as they looked out of the right hand side windows down the road they could see the two trucks approaching slowly towards them.

"I love it when a plan comes together" the Commander declared with a satisfied grin "Ok, hang back here and don't pull out until I say" he instructed before reaching for the radio "Unit Two, how close are you now?" he asked.

"About twenty feet behind the rear truck" the driver of the second ARU van confirmed.

"Ok people, ten seconds" the Commander called whereupon everyone found themselves counting down to themselves as paces raced and the tension built until the lead truck was but feet away from their location.

"Go, Go, Go!" the Commander called whereupon amid much revving of engines and tyre squealing, the lead ARU van pulled out right in front of the lead truck forcing it to brake sharply to avoid a collision whilst the second unit quickly swerved across the road and blocked off any possible escape from the rear.

"Armed Security Service Officers!" the ARU leader called as his officers dispersed in a well rehearsed manoeuvre to enclose and seal off the area "Stop your engines, get out of the vehicles and walk towards me with your hands on you heads" he ordered.

There were two men in each of the two trucks and together seeing that they were completely surrounded by armed officers, they took the very wise decision of surrendering. No sooner had they got out of their lorry cabs than they were face down on the ground being thoroughly searched before restraints were fitted and they were led away.

"Very nicely done Lieutenant Commander" the Commander complimented the ARU leader on his and his officer's work.

"Well we don't get much opportunity to do this for real" the ARU leader admitted "Gatwick Airport isn't exactly an international centre for global terrorism, not like the Home Secretary purports it to be anyway."

"Give us a hand with this will you" the Commander asked as they went over to the rear of the first lorry and between them unlatched and opened the heavy metal doors to reveal the contents, a significant number of wooden crates in various sizes which filled the truck almost to capacity.

"So what's in this lot then Sir?" the ARU leader inquired as the Commander clambered up into the back of the truck and looked at one of the sealed crates.

"An answer I hope" the Commander remarked "Have you got a crowbar and a torch by any chance."

"Never leave home without them Sir" the ARU Leader confirmed before turning to one of his officers "Dave!" he called "Crowbar and flashlight, quick."

A few moments later one of the officers arrived at the back of the lorry and duly passed a torch and a large crowbar up to the Commander who then proceeded to lever off the lid of one of the larger crates to reveal it was filled to the brim with shredded paper packaging.

"Oh I hate this stuff" the Commander admitted as he began to remove the tangled web of shredded paper, expecting to uncover something packed inside the crate but initially found nothing but more of the packaging material.

Sensing something was not right, the Commander resorted to lifting out vast handfuls of packing until he reached the bottom of the crate where he found absolutely nothing.

"What the hell...?" the Commander asked to himself.

"Something wrong Sir?" the ARU leader asked sensing the Commander's state of dumbfounded confusion.

"It's empty" the Commander confirmed before picking another crate. Once again he levered off the top and found nothing but densely packed packing material identical to the first crate he had examined.

"No false bottoms that I can see" the Commander added as he examined the outside of the two crates he had opened "Get your lads to look in the back of that other truck" he requested "I have a nasty feeling we have been well and truly had."

"Hello?" Tracy called answering her mobile telephone in the Chronicle editor's office.

"Hello Sis" Jennifer responded from the back seat of a VIP Protection Division car that had been sent to pick her and Fuller up and return them to London.

"Jenny, are you all right?" Tracy asked, delighted to hear her twin sister's voice once more.

"A bit battered and bruised" Jennifer admitted "Simon is here with me as well and we are on our way back now."

"What about my husband?" Tracy inquired "Last I heard he was chasing off after some lorries or something?"

"He went off with the Gatwick ARU guys" Jennifer confirmed "From what I hear on the radio chatter he got them but apparently their might be a problem."

"As if we needed any more" Tracy wryly remarked.

"Apparently the lorries were completely empty, only about twenty packing cases packed with nothing but shredded paper and bubble wrap" Jennifer explained "I think someone is well ahead of us on this little game."

"All right" Tracy declared "I'll catch up with you back at the office" she confirmed "Meantime I have a journalist to torture."

"Ooooh sounds like fun" Jennifer remarked with a giggle "Enjoy yourself!"

"See you later" Tracy confirmed before hanging up whereupon she returned to Dorman who was sitting in the chair in front of his editor's desk looking decidedly uncomfortable.

"So" Tracy continued "Let me get this straight, an anonymous tip comes to you in the middle of the night over the telephone, you run out to the cash point in the street then come back here, compare the bank notes from the machine with real ones from your wallet and then just decide to print this story" she tossed the copy of that days Chronicle onto the desk "without checking any facts or consulting with anyone in authority?"

"There wasn't time" Dorman flustered and protested "Press deadline was in twenty minutes when the call came in and I had to make a decision."

"And at no point did you think to make any notes as to who called you, their telephone number or anything?" Tracy asked.

"He said he wished to remain anonymous" Dorman confirmed with a resigned look as he realised the more he said the deeper the trouble he was sinking rapidly into "It was a major story and I had to run it."

"So far this morning" Tracy summarised "I have had worried telephone calls from the Director General of the Bank of England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's office and the Chairman of the Stock Exchange and that is just the calls I have had time to answer. They are all saying the same thing, this story whether it is true or not is just the fuel that starts a fire that in turns ruins all confidence in an already shaky economy."

"But I found fake notes in the cash point machine just like the caller told me" Dorman protested.

"The only cash point so far anywhere that had been proven to be issuing any" Tracy informed him "is the one to which you were directed. You've been had Mr Dorman and thanks to your actions which I think we can safely say whoever called you was banking on, this country's economy is about to be sent to hell in a handcart."

"FTSE is down almost three hundred and fifty points on initial trading already" the Editor in Chief Simpkins remarked as he got off the telephone "City Desk says panic buttons are being pushed all over the city and there is a run on cash from bank counters, no one is going anywhere near cash points for fear of being landed with duds."

"But what about the millions this guy claimed were being poured into the system?" Dorman asked "Are you telling me they don't exist?"

"Or they exist all right" Tracy confirmed "Fortunately the Bank of England suspended all cash distribution to the banks and building societies as soon as they realised their system had been compromised so none of it will get into circulation, trouble is now we have a jittery public who have lost all confidence in the banking system and all the repercussions that entails."

"I didn't know" Dorman responded, defiantly fighting his increasingly weak defence to the last.

"Isn't that the truth" Tracy remarked with resignation as her mobile telephone rang again and she turned away to answer it "Mr Collins, I do hope this is good news."

"Well maybe" Collins admitted as he looked at a screen in front of him at the Central Monitoring Centre in the heart of MI5's main offices "Your journalist friend received that call about nine fifteen last night, we've got it recorded and I have my best voice analyst experts working on it right now, see if the caller is known to us at all."

"What about where the call was made from?" Tracy asked.

"Unregistered pay as you go mobile telephone I am afraid" Collins confirmed "I am having the telephone company send me over a record of any other calls made and received to that number but we won't get that before the end of the day. I can however tell you roughly where the call was made."

"Do tell" Tracy prompted.

"We've narrowed it down to a five square mile section in of all places the Isle of Wight" Collins confirmed as he looked at the screen in front of him displaying the area within which the telephone call had been made.

"Perhaps this guy is on his holiday or something" Tracy mused "What is in that area?"

"Err hospital, bus garage, couple of schools and a prison" Collins responded.

"Which prison just out of interest?" Tracy asked sensing a potential connection in the air.

"Hanthorpe High Security Prison" Collins confirmed "Some real nasty pieces of work in that place make no mistake."

"Yeah I know" Tracy agreed "Between my husband and I we helped put most of them in there."

"I can get a friend in the Home Office to get a standard Prison Service shake down of the place if you like" Collins suggested "It may turn up something but then again given how carefully this whole thing has been planned from the start, the chances are that telephone is long gone by now."

"Might as well" Tracy admitted "It's obvious they have known we have been onto them since the beginning now so maybe shaking a few proverbial trees might focus their attention and force them to make a mistake."

"I'll make some calls" Collins agreed "Then I think it would be a good idea if we all got together over lunch and worked out where we stand."

"I'll bring the sandwiches" Tracy confirmed "Speak to you later and thank you" she remarked.

"My pleasure Maam" Collins declared before hanging up.

"Right" Tracy turned back to Dorman "Today might just be your lucky day" she explained "We have a recording of your telephone conversation with your mysterious informant so for now I strongly suggest you find yourself a very good lawyer, keep your fingers well away from any keyboards, pens or cameras and keep your trap firmly shut. Agreed?"

"Yes Maam" Dorman fully and unreservedly agreed with more than a hint of relief.

"Good God its like a feeding frenzy down there" Sir David remarked with concern as he looked down at the FTSE trading floor where there was sheer pandemonium, reflected by the huge swathes of red indicating dropping share prices across the board.

"It's ironic really" Caldwell remarked "after three years as Treasury Minister I finally get promoted to Chief Secretary and on my first morning, largely thanks to the efforts of my predecessor and his mysterious associates the entire financial sector winds up being posted to hell first class with knobs on."

"Not exactly the most auspicious start it must be said" Sir David agreed.

"Just tell me you got all the fake money out of circulation before it hit the streets" Caldwell requested, indeed almost pleaded.

"As soon as the Administrator General notified me of what was happening" Sir David confirmed "I had all cash shipments halted immediately. A few got through but the vast majority will not have left our regional depots."

"Thank God for that" Caldwell responded sincerely relieved "I thought I was facing the shortest tenure in this office's history for a while there."

"It does mean on most people's payday a lot of cash points are going to be empty" Sir David admitted "but largely thanks to the efforts of the press, no one is touching the machines anyway."

"So how long before the financial markets stabilise do you reckon?" Caldwell asked.

"Not before early next week I reckon" Sir David concluded "The whole financial sector was balancing on the proverbial knife edge anyway, this was the push that was needed to shove it over the precipice into full on panic mode."

"And whoever is behind it is probably laughing like a drain somewhere whilst clocking up a small fortune" Caldwell agreed with regret.

"Speaking of which" Sir David inquired "What of your dubious predecessor?"

"Well as far as the public is concerned" Caldwell remarked "from now until doomsday Applegate died tragically in a gas explosion at his flat in Chelsea. The Prime Minister was on the telephone this morning making it clear in no uncertain terms that public confidence in this Government could not stand the scandal if the real truth came out."

"So what if he suddenly rises from the grave?" Sir David asked out of curiosity.

"Then I expect by the time our beloved Commander has finished interviewing him, there probably won't be much left to identify" Caldwell remarked with a wry smile.

"Now that would be a pity wouldn't it..." Sir David agreed with a satisfactory smirk.

"Thanks for the lift" the Commander called to the officer driving the patrol car as he got out immediately outside New Scotland Yard before proceeding inside.

As he entered the reception area he was joined by Sir Richard Crowthorne and David Collins both of whom in unison handed him a number of files for his inspection.

"A little early afternoon light reading" Sir Richard confirmed "Background on our two friends from the truck, not that there is much to tell."

"Thugs for hire I see" the Commander read the summary "No surprises so far then" he admitted.

"The helicopter that this guy Renault flew off in" Collins added as they headed for the lifts "That is assuming it was his real name of course was booked with a flight plan that should have seen it land at Battersea Heliport about forty five minutes after it took off from Redhill. Needless to say it didn't turn up."

"Thus far none of this is getting me excited gentlemen" the Commander declared as the lift doors closed and the car headed upwards towards the top floor.

"I take it Tracy hasn't told you about the telephone trace then?" Collins asked.

"The call to the Chronicle?" the Commander responded.

"Came from an unregistered pay as you go mobile so nothing exciting there" Collins explained "The interesting bit however is what is in the area the call was made from" he showed the Commander a blown up map of the five square mile area as the lift doors opened and they exited out into the main corridor.

"Well unless the Southern Vectis bus company has gone into the money laundering business" the Commander remarked wryly "I think we can safely say this little mystery has its origins in Hanthorpe Prison."

"Weren't you there just a couple of weeks back?" Sir Richard asked.

"How did you know about that?" the Commander asked as they arrived at his outer office where the Personal Assistant waved them through "Oh no, never mind" he added when he remembered who he was talking to.

"Hello darling" Tracy declared as they arrived in the office and she got up from behind the desk "You're a mess" she remarked.

"It's been a hell of a morning love" the Commander admitted as they met in the middle of the office, embraced and kissed, both relieved and thankful to be seeing each other once again.

"Why does that never happen to me when I enter my office?" Collins asked Sir Richard aside.

"Not what I heard" Sir Richard responded to which Collins gave him a rather quizzical look "I've heard about you and that little Irish brunette researcher from 'D' section."

"Do you walk through walls or something?" Collins joked.

"Only on my days off" Sir Richard admitted with a wry smile.

"Has forensics come up with anything yet?" the Commander asked as he sat down behind his desk almost relieved to be back in his office once more.

"I was about to head down to the basement and see them" Tracy confirmed "James, Jennifer and Simon are also down there trying to put together a photo fit of this Renault character which with a bit of luck may give us some pointers."

"Sir David Godwin to see you Sir" the Personal Assistant called over the intercom.

"Ask him to join the party" the Commander confirmed whereupon a slightly apprehensive Sir David duly came in.

"Ok ladies and gentlemen" he declared as he entered the office "Would someone mind telling me what the hell I am supposed to do with five van loads of dud bank notes?"

"The world's most expensive bonfire?" Tracy wryly suggested.

"You got them all out of circulation?" the Commander asked.

"Most of them at any rate" Sir David confirmed "The damage to the money markets is done though and there is one other thing I was working out on my way over here."

"Inspire me" the Commander requested.

"The amount of mint paper taken in that lorry raid earlier this week should have provided enough to print about sixty five million in fake cash" Sir David consulted his rough workings out he had made on the back of an old envelope "The amount they

managed to get to our distribution centres totalled forty two million which plus the ten million your friendly armed robbers managed to err liberate shall we say makes a total of fifty two million recovered."

"So by that theory" Sir Richard remarked "Someone has about ten to twelve million floating around somewhere" he concluded.

"And given how good these fakes are, that is a hell of a chunk of easily spendable dough" the Commander added.

"Someone's retirement fund maybe?" Tracy ventured "Applegate perhaps?"

"He may be a two faced lying politician but even he would not be dumb enough to be paid for his services with duff notes" Sir Richard concluded "No, I reckon whoever has that money is saving it for a rainy day, something special."

"And by that token holding the economy of this country to potential blackmail again at any time he or she desires" Sir David added with a morbid sense of foreboding.

"Don't you guys ever think positively?" the Commander asked Sir David "Anyway, this is definitely a 'he' behind this I reckon and I have a pretty good idea who is pulling the strings."

"An old friend who just happens to reside in a certain prison on the Isle of Wight by any chance?" Sir Richard asked.

"That's my theory" the Commander confirmed "Proving it however is likely to be damm near impossible."

"So what about this site near Redhill that these guys escaped from?" Tracy asked "Any clues there?"

"I've got search teams tearing the place apart" the Commander confirmed "Somehow they managed to get all that heavy industrial printing equipment plus everything else out of there right under our noses only for it all to disappear."

"They knew you were coming all right" Sir Richard agreed.

"Indeed" the Commander remarked "The question is who exactly are 'they' and where are they now."

"We need to puts some names to some faces" Tracy confirmed "Perhaps we should see if those two renegades have managed to get anything with the e-fit system?" she suggested.

"A very good idea" the Commander agreed.

"I don't know" Fuller commented as he and Jennifer looked closely at the screen on which the computer generated reconstruction of the man they knew as Renault was being compiled "I thought his nose was a bit longer myself."

"It wasn't his nose" Jennifer realised where they had gone wrong "It was his face was slightly more filled out" she informed the technician operating the console who then made the adjustment to the image.

"That's the fella" Fuller agreed "What do you think darling?" he asked.

"I reckon that is our scumbag" Jennifer agreed.

"In which case I will run it through the facial recognition database and see if anything bleeps" the technician declared whereupon she set to work at her workstation just as Tracy and the Commander came in.

"Any joy?" the Commander asked.

"Well between us we have come up with this" Jennifer confirmed as she passed across a printed copy of the generated image to them "It's a pretty good likeness we think."

"Now all we need is a name to match it" Fuller added.

"An address, telephone number and current whereabouts would be nice too" Tracy agreed as she too took a look at the image "though I won't get my hopes up mind."

"Tell me" the Commander asked "When you two were in that place in Redhill, did anything strike you as odd, out of place or even just plain unusual?"

"What you mean apart from the armed men, printing works and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury being a thorough arsehole?" Fuller asked "Not that there is much unusual about the latter admittedly."

"Well it seems that not only were they fully aware that we were on to them, probably right from the off" the Commander concluded "but they also managed to pack up their gear and make a discrete exit without anyone noticing and not leaving a single trace other than two articulated trucks full of nothing but packaging and bubble wrap."

"Nothing that I can recall" Jennifer confirmed "That Renault guy seemed to be pretty much in charge but it was clear he was just the hired middle manager, he took his orders from a higher authority on the other end of a mobile telephone."

"If we can find that telephone" Tracy ventured "It could lead us to the organiser of this little party."

"There was one thing though" Fuller mentioned "When Jennifer was delivered by that traitorous git Applegate there was a rather unpleasant ten minutes during which Renault said something, trouble is I cannot remember what it was but it struck me as strange at the time."

"Oh I remember" Jennifer suddenly recalled "It was strange though, Renault had one of his goons holding a knife to my throat as my darling husband was refusing to cooperate to which Applegate said something along the lines 'I thought we had instructions she was not to be harmed or touched in any way' or something like that."

"Ah yes" Fuller remembered "Then Renault responds with erm 'That was the other Caverner you idiot' or words to the effect."

"They must mean you love" the Commander remarked with concern to Tracy who merely looked across at him apprehensively.

"Yes, but why?" Tracy asked "Is it someone I have worked with, someone I put away."

"That could be a heck of a long list" Jennifer commented "Where would you start?"

"I have no idea" Tracy admitted at which point their attention was taken by the computer bleeping as it had found a match for the composite image of the man they knew as Renault.

"We've got something" the Technician declared as she put the matched details up on a larger screen for all to see.

"That's our guy" Jennifer confirmed as she easily recognised the file photograph on the screen.

"Interpol file by the looks of it" Tracy confirmed as she read the details "Paul Francoise Musgrave, forty six years old, wanted in seven countries for drugs smuggling, murder, kidnap, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, gun running, robbery, handling stolen goods, etc, etc, etc."

"Busy fellow" the Commander remarked "Born in Belfast, raised near Dublin, no recorded relatives since his parents died when he was fifteen. Oh now this is interesting, he was kicked out of the IRA for being too violent would you believe."

"Oddly enough yes I can believe that" Fuller admitted.

"IQ of a hundred and forty eight" Tracy added "Impressive."

"Ah ha, beat him by one" the Commander smirked "One hundred and forty nine!"

"Last know whereabouts was Algeria apparently" Tracy read from the screen.

"Not exactly in the vicinity of Redhill is it?" Jennifer commented.

"Known associates?" the Commander asked.

"Printing them off now for you Sir" the Technician confirmed as the printer burst into life and began to spew out an endless stream of printed data.

"How about I wash this guy and his life through my little box of tricks upstairs Sir" Fuller suggested "Should come up with something as I have always tended to find the official files only ever really contain the details that certain agencies don't mind you seeing. They tend to leave out the juicer stuff for their own entertainment."

"Sounds like a good idea" the Commander agreed "Strictly on the QT though" he advised "and whilst you are about it, see who owns that Redhill site, who is paying the bills. It may not lead us anywhere but at this point I am willing to clasp at even the most remote of straws."

"I'll get right on it" Fuller agreed as he got up, still firmly locked arm in arm with Jennifer who was resolutely determined that she was not going to let him out of her sight for an instant "I guess you are coming along as well dear?" he asked her.

"Damm right I am" Jennifer informed her husband with clear determination.

"Am I ever like that?" Tracy asked as they stood aside to allow Fuller and Jennifer out of the door.

"Erm..." the Commander thought for a moment as to what would be his best response to Tracy's casual inquiry "No comment love" he decided to declare.

"Thank you gentlemen" Renault declared from the front of the room that he and his men were gathered in "Your services have proved invaluable and it has been a pleasure to work with you. Your payment has been deposited into your accounts as per contracts and that I think concludes our business. Once again my profound thanks."

With that, the crowd dispersed outside to various vehicles and within a matter of a couple of minutes they had all melted away into the late afternoon gloom as a storm system moved in over North London leaving just Renault and a couple of his closest associates alone.

"Smooth as a nut just like you said boss" the first of Renault's associates remarked with satisfaction.

"Indeed my old friend" Renault agreed "All that there is left to do is tidy up a few loose ends and then its home in time for tea and crumpets."

"The van is ready" the other man declared, indicating the blue Transit van parked nearby "Shall I make the delivery?"

"Please do" Renault confirmed "I'll see you in two weeks time in the land of cuckoo clocks and chocolate."

Renault watched as his two associates got in the van and with a wave of farewell drove off before he walked back into the lock up garage and picked up his mobile telephone where he dialled a number.

"Guv, its Musgrave" he called as soon as he was answered "Your cargo is on its way, the rest of our guests are being sent home and we are ready for the final phase" he confirmed. "No need to worry Sir, its all wrapped up" he confirmed before hanging up.

"So this is the labours of your efforts I take it dear?" Tracy asked as they entered the Forensics Examination area in the basement of New Scotland Yard where a number of white overall dressed scientific officers were examining the numerous crates from the trucks with seemingly little enthusiasm.

"God is in the details" the Commander admitted "At least that is what my old man used to say, speaking of which Doctor anything for us?" he asked the leading Forensic Officer.

"Would you believe me if I said yes?" the Doctor remarked.

"In this mess?" Tracy looked around the sea of packing material that seemed to be littering the place with a sense of disbelief.

"When your friends with the fondness for packing cases put this little collection together" the Forensic Officer confirmed "they obviously had to find enough paper to fill these boxes to the brim so it would appear they went and got a pile of newspapers."

"At least they didn't use the mint paper I suppose" the Commander remarked "So what did they use?"

"Come over here" the Forensic Officer beckoned with a happy grin "I think you will like this" she led them over to a desk where a number of individual strips of paper had been put back together to make part of it readable.

"The Debden & Loughton Gazette" Tracy read from the partially reassembled masthead of the paper "Three days ago as well."

"That's the area where the mint paper disappeared" the Commander added.

"There must be some sort of base of operations in that general area" Tracy remarked "I don't know, garage, flat, lock up, something."

"What we need is for something to come up in Simon's file search on this Renault or Musgrave or whoever he is this week" the Commander concluded as a uniformed patrol officer came running in with a worried look on his face.

"Sir, Maam" he called with a worried look "Coded bomb warning to the BBC three minutes ago. Van with explosives timed to go off in thirty minutes left in Threadneedle Street."

"Has the code word confirmed?" Tracy asked with a sense of calm urgency.

"Yes Maam" the officer confirmed "Active provisional IRA code word and CCTV is picking up a van in the location stated."

"Lovely timing" the Commander remarked "Rush hour in the City kicks off in less than twenty minutes" he confirmed as he and Tracy followed the officer back up to the ground floor.

"Right" Tracy declared as she extracted her radio from her tunic "This is Lima Alpha One to Control, put us on Alert One status, red flash the Bomb Squad and get me a three square mile exclusion zone around that area, fully evacuated and sealed immediately."

"I'll make the phone calls" the Commander confirmed as he and Tracy went their separate ways, her up to the Control Room whilst the Commander went through Reception to the street outside where a patrol car was made available immediately as per a well rehearsed bomb alert protocol.

"Threadneedle Street and make it snappy Lieutenant" the Commander called to the officer driving before getting in the front passenger seat and taking the radio handset on the dash board "This is Alpha One, get me a secure conference line to the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister, the duty operations supervisor at MI5 and our own Control Room on an Alpha Alert status please" he instructed as the patrol car, with sirens and lights in full cry plus an accompaniment of two motorcycle outriders set off at speed up Broadway before turning left out into Victoria Street.

"Ok ladies and gentlemen" Tracy declared as she walked into the bustling chaos that was the main Control Room and took her seat up at the main centre console where she put on a radio head set and plugged it into the communications circuit "Someone talk to me" she requested.

"BBC News international desk got a confirmed coded warning six minutes ago" the Duty Supervisor confirmed "We received the same pre-recorded message to our Crimestoppers line two minutes later."

"Where are we with our response?" Tracy asked.

"The Transport Division guys have mobilised everything out of Holborn and Liverpool Street to shut down and evacuate the Underground at Bank, Monument, St Paul's, Moorgate and Cannon Street with the option to evacuate Liverpool Street if we deem it necessary."

"Think of the blast radius of the Baltic Exchange bomb in 1993" Tracy reminded everyone "Lets not take the chance, have Liverpool Street cleared as well just in case."

"Lima Echo X-Ray One from Gold Control" Tracy called the head of the Bomb Squad "What's your ETA?" she asked.

"Gold Control from Lima Echo X-Ray One" came the response from the head of the Bomb Disposal Unit that was on its way but suffering in heavy traffic "We are at least fifteen minutes away" he confirmed.

"What are they doing, taking the bus?" Tracy wondered out loud for a moment with a sense of disbelief "Err right, step on it as quick as you can guys, the clock is ticking."

"David Collins on Line Two for you Maam" a call came across the Control Room.

"David" Tracy called "Has there been any whispers from our Irish friends on the boards lately?" she asked.

"This is the first we have heard from any of the usual dissident groups in the best part of three years" Collins confirmed from his office back at the head quarters of MI5 where he too was overseeing a scene of organised chaos in response to the incident.

"Do we know how this is being reported?" Tracy asked.

"We've got out contact in the BBC to let it run as a typical speculative breaking news about a major gas leak for the moment" Collins responded "the mains are so old around that area that it should stand up to scrutiny if anyone asks."

"Right, I will get back to you" Tracy confirmed "Someone tell me what is the status of the evacuation?" she requested.

"Transport Division Control Room on Line Five Maam" another officer called.

"Hello?" Tracy called "Lima Tango Control, are you receiving?"

"Transport Division Control" came the response from the Duty Supervisor over at Holborn "It's like the fall of Rome here at the moment Maam."

"I know the feeling" Tracy admitted as she looked around "What's the status with the tubes?" she asked.

"Central Line is closed off between Holborn and Mile End" the Holborn Supervisor confirmed as he sent through to display on the main New Scotland Yard Control Room screens a map with the status of the Underground for everyone to see "Northern Line is now closed between Euston and London Bridge. District and Circle between Embankment and King's Cross is nearly done and we have the Waterloo & City and the DLR off completely with most stations either evacuated or very nearly there."

"Great" Tracy agreed "When you have the stations closed off, get your officers to help the Met Division guys check that the streets are clear. Also my husband is on his way to you and if you could see he doesn't get blown up I would appreciate it."

"We'll keep an eye open for him" the Holborn Supervisor agreed "Lima Tango Control out."

"I heard that" the Commander's voice came over the speakers in the Control Room.

"I thought you might" Tracy confirmed "The Bomb Disposal Squad are stuck in traffic would you believe but the evacuation of the area is proceeding, where are you?"

"Suffering the same traffic problems" the Commander admitted "Fortunately my driver here is a City lad who knows the back roads so hopefully I should be on site in about three or four minutes. Anyone managed to contact the Home Secretary yet?" he asked.

"Err in a meeting with the Attorney General apparently" Tracy confirmed from a note handed to her by one of the Control Room officers at that point "that probably means he is on a golf course somewhere."

"This evacuation area that is being set up" the Commander asked as his car continued to speed down narrow side streets in an effort to bypass the worst of the traffic which itself was being made all the worse by having the centre of the City cordoned off with the ongoing incident "Does it include the Stock Exchange by any chance?"

"Hang on a moment dear" Tracy responded before consulting a map on another screen "Yes it does" she confirmed a few moments later "I guess that means the money markets will have to be suspended I guess?"

"When things have calmed down a bit" the Commander requested "Ask Sir David Godwin to give me a call as I am beginning to wonder if there isn't more to this little party than meets the eye."

"Will do" Tracy confirmed "When you get there, the on site Incident Command Centre is being set up at the top end by the Gherkin building" she informed him.

"Got it" the Commander confirmed as the car he was in rounded a corner and the bustling activity of officers and other emergency services in front of a Mobile Operations Unit in the shadow of the distinctive 'Gherkin' office building signified he had arrived at his destination "Speak to you later love" he declared before the car came to a halt and he got out.

"Evening Sir" one of the officers on site greeted him as he arrived at the Mobile Operations Unit and boarded what was effectively a converted single decker bus.

"Evening Lieutenant" the Commander responded "Who is the senior officer on site?" he inquired.

"Commander Morgan from the Transport Division" the officer confirmed pointing down the road in the direction of a tall senior looking officer who was directing operations with much gesticulating of the arms.

"In which case I had better go and see him" the Commander remarked alighting from the Mobile Operations unit once again and walking briskly down the street until he had caught up with Morgan who was looking far from impressed at how things were going so far.

"Ah good evening Sir" Morgan greeted the Commander with some sense of relief
"Welcome to the chaos."

"Thanks" the Commander reluctantly agreed as he looked around "What's the S.P.?"
he asked.

"We've got pretty much everyone out of the immediate area" Morgan confirmed "The
Bomb Disposal Unit are now apparently running on the pavements knocking old
ladies out of the way in an effort to get here in time which leaves us with just two
problems not including the suspect vehicle itself that is."

"Which would be?" the Commander asked.

"The press keep sneaking through the cordon in various places to get a better shot at
the scene" he indicated one member of the press who at that very moment was being
dragged past them back to the cordon line protesting loudly at the two large officers
who were removing him.

"If he does that again, nick him" the Commander called to the officers escorting the
reporter "What's the other problem?" the Commander asked.

"There are still three people in the Bank of England who are refusing to leave"
Morgan confirmed "A Sir David Godwin, some guy from the Treasury and one other.
I have tried everything short of arresting them but they won't go."

"Fear not" the Commander responded "I'll take care of it; you just get the Bomb
Squad to work on that vehicle as soon as they get here."

"Sir, you do realise that the blast area from that bomb..." Morgan warned him as he
was about to set off.

"...Alleged bomb" the Commander reminded him "It hasn't been confirmed yet."

"Well if this alleged bomb goes off, the Bank will take the full force of the blast with
you in it" Morgan informed him.

"All the more reason to get those three people out of there then" the Commander
declared "Watch the shop, I'll be right back."

"Yes Sir" Morgan confirmed as the Commander ducked under the tape that was
cordoning off the area before walking down Threadneedle Street all alone towards the
ornate front entrance of the Bank of England.

It was an eerie feeling being there, in the shadow of the Guildhall and the Bank, an
area that normally at this time of the early evening would be packed with commuters,
overloaded buses and traffic and yet now it was completely empty.

Looking across to his left over the other side of the pedestrian piazza that was in front
of the Guildhall the Commander could see the suspect van parked by the side of the

street waiting to either explode or be deactivated by the Bomb Squad if they ever got there in time.

Looking at his old pocket watch, the Commander could see he had just twelve minutes left before the scheduled detonation and there was no guarantee that the time declared in the coded warning was accurate so that time margin may be even smaller, he therefore wasted no further time and headed inside the Bank of England, crossing the ornate marbled entrance hall before proceeding to the staircase and heading upstairs.

"Hello?" the Commander called down the corridor of offices on the second floor as he approached Sir David's office whose door he then noticed was ajar as he arrived at it.

The Commander decided for once that caution was the best option rather than just blundering in as he usually would have done and so drew his gun before kicking open the door fully and aiming inside only to lift it up again and look on quizzically at what he saw inside.

"What the hell...?" he asked with a puzzled expression at seeing what was inside but before he could do anything about it a figure appeared from behind the door and struck him across the back of the head with the butt of a gun rendering him instantly unconscious on the floor.

"Bomb Disposal are here" an officer called to Morgan who let out a sigh of relief.

"Nice of you guys to join the party" Morgan called to the leader of the Bomb Disposal Unit as they deployed from their vehicle already fully equipped in their blast resistant gear and with their equipment in hand ready to get to work.

"Yes, sorry about that" the Bomb Squad leader Commander Rosewood apologised "Traffic was terrible" he admitted "Where is our device?" he asked.

"Blue van on the east side of the Guildhall" Morgan confirmed showing Rosewood the position both on a street map of the area as well as a live feed from the CCTV traffic cameras in that area.

"Area confirmed evacuated I presume?" Rosewood asked as he directed his officers to get to work.

"Err not exactly no" Morgan responded "There are four people in the Bank of England, three of which apparently refused to leave and a fourth that went in there to try and get them out."

"This fourth one isn't who I think it is by any chance?" Rosewood asked with a slight apprehension in his voice.

"Well who else in this service do you think would step in where angels fear to tread in a situation like this" Morgan admitted.

"Good point" Rosewood remarked "Garry, how are we doing down there?" he asked his operations officer on the ground.

"Approaching the vehicle now" came the confirmation over the radio "All the meters confirm no chemicals or radioactivity here, fair bit of heat from inside the vehicle though."

"Silver Command from Gold One" Tracy called over the radio "What is the situation down there?" she asked for an update.

"Silver Command" Morgan responded "Bomb Disposal on site, area evacuation almost completed."

"Err define 'almost' please" Tracy responded.

"Three people in the Bank of England refusing to leave" Morgan confirmed "It's being looked into now."

"I know this is going to sound a daft question Silver Command" Tracy asked "but where exactly is my husband right now?"

"I'd say nothing if I were you" Rosewood strongly advised having put his hand over his radio microphone "No need for her to worry, especially with all this going on."

"Err he's just dealing with the press Maam" Morgan responded "Shouldn't be many left not arrested before the hour is up I think."

"Right, thank you" Tracy responded not entirely convinced and after a few moments thought clicked her fingers in the direction of one of the Control Room operators in front of her.

"Jane" Tracy called as soon she had got her attention "Get Bob and his ARU unit boys on the telephone" she requested "Ask them to meet me on the roof in eight minutes and get me a helicopter on emergency standby ready to lift off."

"Yes Maam" the Control Room operator confirmed who returned back to her console and picked up the telephone to make the call.

"Initial sweep shows no external devices" the Disposal Technician declared over the radio, a fact backed up by the live camera feeds both from his team and also the traffic cameras watching from overhead "Also nothing in the front seats. His tax is out mind."

"Well at least we can get them for something more than not paying their congestion charge I suppose" Morgan remarked with a wry smile.

"Side door does not appear to be wired" the next update came "I am proceeding to open the door."

"Is this the point where I should stick my fingers in my ears and cross everything else by any chance?" Morgan asked.

"If you think it will help" Rosewood agreed.

"Opening the door on three" the Disposal Technician confirmed with a little apprehension even for a man in his line of work "One, two, three!"

"What the hell?" Morgan and Rosewood remarked upon seeing on the video link the contents of the van, four uniformed Security Service Officers tied up and gagged but otherwise seemingly unharmed.

"I don't suppose any of you guys have seen a bomb around here by any chance?" the Disposal Technician asked after removing the gag from one of the officers."

"Bloody well hope not mate" the officer responded "I have had a bad enough week so far as it is."

"Gold Commander from Silver Command" Morgan called into the radio "No device found but we have turned up something interesting I think you should see Maam."

"Roger that" Tracy confirmed "Keep the area sealed" she requested "I'll be there in just a few minutes."

With that Tracy opened the roof access door and exited out onto the helipad where a red Security Service helicopter was waiting for her as she had requested. No sooner had she arrived at the helicopter than Bob and his Armed Response Unit also arrived and joined her.

"Evening Maam" Bob declared in his customary friendly manner whilst holding his MP7 semi-automatic rifle as usual "You sent for us?"

"Hop in" Tracy instructed as she got in the front seat alongside the pilot whereupon Bob indicated silently to his three officers to get in the back "I'll explain on the way."

"Is this one of those hunches or something a tad more tangible this time Maam?" Bob asked as the helicopter lifted off amidst a whirl of turbulence and the whir of rotor blades before heading off towards the centre of the City in the fading light of early evening.

"Definitely a hunch" Tracy admitted.

"Ok lads, make sure you got your backup weapons fully loaded and ready as well" Bob responded "Looks like it is going to be one of those evenings."

"Don't wish to appear rude chaps but who the hell are you guys and what were you doing in the back of that van?" Morgan asked as he joined the four officers who had just been found at the back of an Ambulance as they were being checked over.

"A few days ago we were escorting a secure consignment from a security facility in Debden through to a place in Berkshire when we were ambushed" the lead officer explained "Since then we have been the unwilling guests of some nut job named Renault and his dodgy, not to mention heavily armed crew."

"And then after what three days or thereabouts they just chuck you in the back of a van and leave you here?" Morgan asked.

"You tell me mate" one of the other officers admitted "We just work here."

"All right" Morgan declared "You get yourselves checked over and freshened up" he suggested "I expect someone will want to talk to you guys at some point but it can wait for now."

"Confirmation for your report" Rosewood confirmed as he rejoined Morgan along with his disposal team "Our internal heat source that we picked up were the four guys here, no devices, booby traps or any other unpleasant surprises. I've put a call into forensics and they will recover the van for a thorough going over as soon as they can make their way through the traffic."

"Thanks" Morgan responded as the sound of helicopter rotors progressively became louder causing everyone to look up as a red Security Service helicopter came in low over the roof of the Guildhall until it proceeded to land with pinpoint precision in the centre of the main junction with just inches to spare either side.

No sooner had the helicopter touched the ground than Tracy and Bob with his ARU officers alighted from the aircraft and jogged over to Morgan.

"Hello Tom, long time no see" Tracy called as she and Morgan shook hands "What's the S.P. on this lot?" she asked.

"Definitely no device Maam" Morgan confirmed "However we did find these four gentlemen in the back of the van, claimed they were providing a security escort to some convoy or other that got hijacked a few days ago. Mean anything to you Maam?"

"Some of it yes" Tracy admitted "What state are they in?"

"A little dehydrated and rather pissed off but apart from that not too bad" Morgan confirmed "I have suggested they all go to the hospital to be checked out before they do anything else."

"Good idea" Tracy agreed "Where is that mad husband of mine?" she asked looking around.

"Well I assume he is still in the Bank" Morgan concluded "There has been nothing from him on the radio since he went in there about twenty minutes ago."

"Keep this area secured" Tracy declared "I'm going in" she confirmed as she drew her gun from its holster "Bob, you and your guys follow me."

With Tracy leading the way, the five officers headed at a brisk pace down Threadneedle Street to the main entrance of the Bank of England where after Bob and one of his officers had pushed open the heavy solid metal main door, they cautiously entered.

"Looks like no one is home" Bob remarked as they all looked around the high ornately decorated reception area with its vast high ceilings.

"One of you, find the CCTV or Security office for this place and see if you can pull up the cameras for this place" Tracy requested whereupon Bob silently nodded at one of his officers who promptly left them, heading off down a side corridor in order to carry out the instructions.

"Do we know who else was left in the building at the time of the evacuation?" Bob asked.

"Err Sir David Godwin, that new Treasury guy and one other apparently" Tracy confirmed "plus the Commander of course."

"In which case might I suggest we try upstairs on the office level?" Bob suggested.

"As good a plan as any" Tracy agreed.

"Sam, you stay here and guard the entrance" Bob instructed one of his remaining officers "No one enters or leaves without either mine or Divisional Commander Caverner's say so."

"Yes Boss" the officer confirmed before taking up a guarding position in the large doorway which afforded him a good view of the entire area as Bob, Tracy and the remaining ARU officer headed up the ornate marble stairway with caution.

"I don't like it" Bob commented as they reached the first floor and looked on from the staircase down the long corridor "Something is not right here."

"You can say that again" Tracy agreed "We just walked into the most important financial institution in the western world without so much as a bye or leave, let alone anything like a key."

"Ah well" Bob declared quietly "Step into my lair said the spider to the fly" he remarked as he, Tracy and the ARU officer cautiously advanced down the corridor, being careful to be as quiet as possible, a task not easy with Security Service standard issue hard soled safety shoes on highly polished marble floors.

"Fourth door on the right" Tracy whispered to Bob and pointed ahead "That is Sir David's place" she confirmed.

"You go over to the far side" Bob informed his officer in barely a whisper before they moved further down the corridor only stopping abruptly and leaning with their backs

up against the wall when they became aware of voices coming from the slightly ajar office door just metres ahead.

"Nice of you to join us Commander" the voice of Renault declared as the Commander came around to find himself disarmed and tied to a chair.

"Such welcoming hospitality" the Commander remarked with disdain before looking across and seeing Sir David Godwin and Treasury Secretary Francis Caldwell alongside him, also tied to chairs much like himself "So you must be Mr Renault I presume or is the name Musgrave?" he asked.

"You have been doing your homework Commander" Renault remarked with a hint of admiration as he waved an automatic rifle about like an orchestra conductor's baton.

"What the hell are you doing here?" the Commander asked.

"Solving a little cash flow problem you could say" Renault confirmed "You see my superiors have the ability to wreck the entire national economy at one fell stroke and I am here to cut a deal which of course will see I and my associates make a very large amount of money."

"Well that explains one thing" the Commander concluded "The code word for the bomb was perfectly legitimate because you were the one who sent it."

"Unlike most banks where you can just walk in, fill in a few forms and walk out again with a mortgage, a savings account, five hundred in cash and a free pen" Renault remarked "Here it takes a little more ingenuity to see the manager."

"Sorry for upsetting your plans" the Commander mockingly apologised.

"No apology necessary" Renault responded "In fact I was counting on your arrival. You see I know the standard operating procedures when a coded warning is received so once the fact that Sir David here was still in the building became apparent I knew you as the on site senior officer would come bounding in where angels fear to tread."

"Where is the money?" the Commander asked.

"And what money would that be?" Renault responded pretending he had no idea what the Commander was talking about.

"The estimated twelve to fifteen million in iffy readies that are still unaccounted for" the Commander responded "You managed to spirit your way out of an industrial estate in the centre of Redhill and left us chasing out tails with nothing but two lorry loads of packing crates to show for it."

"Yes, that was rather clever wasn't it" Renault enjoyed a brief moment of basking in his own self imposed brilliance before returning to the matter in hand.

"So what are you going to do?" the Commander asked "The place is surrounded by a hundred armed Security Service officers and even worse for you my friend one of

them is almost certainly to be my wife and she probably has several bones to pick with you."

"You can say that again" Tracy remarked to herself out in the corridor.

"We can take them" Bob whispered across to her.

"That guy has experience with some of the best extremist terrorist outfits across the world, it only takes a split second for him to shoot everyone in there and anyone who comes bursting in through the door" Tracy warned "So until the situation changes we hold."

"I have plans Commander" Renault confirmed "My employer has plans as well, quite extensive ones but I won't bore you with the details now, you will find out about them soon enough when he is ready."

"Can't wait" the Commander remarked "So who is this employer of yours?" he asked.

"Someone very well connected who has a few bones of his own to pick" Renault informed him "when the time is right that is" he declared as he walked over to the desk and opened the briefcase that was sitting on it and produced from it a number of items.

"Souvenirs from your Irish days?" the Commander asked with concern upon seeing the grenades in Renault's hands "I do hope you got a receipt for them as last I heard the IRA were not too pleased with you, chucked you out for being too violent according to the file I read."

"Not exactly" Renault responded "They could no longer afford my rather expensive services, I have expensive tastes you understand however if you will excuse me, I have something of a deadline to meet" he declared as he calmly pulled the pin on one of the grenades, let the clip fly off it and casually tossed it out of the office door into the corridor outside where it bounced off the opposite wall before starting to roll down the corridor towards Tracy and Bob.

"Grenade!!" Bob called as in response he, the other ARU officer and Tracy all made a hasty retreat only throwing themselves to the floor a few moments later when the grenade exploded in a cloud of tear gas rather than the explosion that was expected.

"Be seeing you" Renault declared as he left the office by a side door.

"Well that was odd" Sir David remarked as the gas began to clear and amid fits of coughing Tracy entered the room with Bob and the other ARU officer "He had three grenades and he chose the tear gas one."

"Probably knew my darling wife was out there" the Commander smiled at Tracy as she helped to release the bindings that had him restrained to the chair "Remember what Jennifer and Simon told us earlier that Renault said to Applegate, 'the other sister is not to be harmed or touched' and lets be honest I reckon he knew you were out there."

"Well in which case I should extend him the same courtesy" Tracy declared with grim determination.

"In other words only shoot out just the one knee?" the Commander suggested wryly.

"I am a lady of my word love" Tracy admitted.

"So Sir David" the Commander addressed the next problem "How many ways are there out of this place that doesn't involve walking straight into our heavily armed boys and girls in blue immediately outside all around the building."

"None that I know of" Sir David admitted "unless he has inside information from someone."

"What about Applegate?" Tracy suggested "How much does he know about the layout of this place."

"Well when he became the Chief Secretary to the Treasury I assume he would have got the same full tour of the place that I had this morning?" Caldwell suggested.

"The offices, cash room, display area, exhibition hall, the vault..." Sir David recalled as he made a mental tour of the building in his head.

"The vault" the Commander responded as he realised something important.

"But the place is a solid box set into the bowels of the earth" Tracy responded.

"Just trust me on this" the Commander responded as he left the office in a hurry with Tracy and Bob in close pursuit "this is one of those educated hunches of which I just know you guys are so fond of" he confirmed before they headed down the corridor to the rear staircase which they then proceeded to head down at quite some speed.

"Commander Morgan from Lima Mike One" Tracy called into her radio "Get a ring of steel though which even a mouse with a cloaking device could not pass through thrown around the Bank of England building right now" she requested.

"Yes Maam" Morgan confirmed from outside the Guildhall as he clicked his fingers in the direction of a group of officers and beckoned them over "Where are you now Maam?" he asked.

"Heading for the basement" Tracy confirmed.

"I should point out guys that after the ground floor we won't have any radio or mobile phone frequencies" Bob remarked "We'll be in the dark with no way of calling for help."

"Just like the good old days" the Commander declared as they proceeded with caution down into the basement access which leads to the vault.

"Now where?" Tracy asked as they reached a junction of dimly lit corridors with three possibilities.

"Well I can tell you one thing for certain" the Commander confirmed "He's not interested in the vault so lets try this way" he indicated down to their left.

At that moment a loud explosion rocked the basement of the building causing the three officers to instinctively throw themselves to the ground as the shockwave and the smoke, concentrated by the narrow confined nature of the corridor came towards them.

"I hate it when I am right" the Commander remarked as the deafening noise began to die down.

"Right about what?" Tracy asked as they picked up the pace.

"I took a closer look at our friend with the grenade fixation's file" the Commander explained "Before he turned to the dark side he was an expert engineer specialising in blasting in mines and subterranean structures."

"The Central Line" Tracy realised "None of the trains are running thanks to his phoney bomb call."

"And he has access to the materials as well as the expertise to use it" the Commander confirmed "Come on."

In the tube shaped running tunnel of the eastbound Central Line Renault shone a torch up and down the tracks revealing the indented cast iron tunnel lining and the cables running along the sides. It was towards the far wall that he proceeded where he pinched together the two bare wires running along the length of the tunnel which switched on the tunnel lights and illuminated the formerly bricked up recess and the hole beyond it through which he had managed to pass through just moments earlier.

Quickly he headed down the line being careful not to tread on the power supply rails towards the station whose lights were visible in the distance, only an evacuated train of 1992 type Tube Stock standing in his way which he quickly accessed through the emergency cab front doorway before proceeding through the drivers cab and then using the emergency handle to exit from the carriage out onto the platform.

"Watch your head" the Commander instructed Tracy as he helped her through the hole in the vault wall as Bob stood guard in the tube tunnel until they were all in there.

"Looks like he knows the old trick with the wires activating the lights" Tracy remarked as they looked around "So which way?" she asked.

"Right takes us to St Paul's" the Commander remarked "Left would be my bet, Bank and Monument stations, a combined rabbit warren of immense proportions."

"Anybody copying on channel six from Lima Mike Zero One" Tracy called over her radio only to be responded to with static.

"Come on" the Commander urged with his gun drawn whereupon they continued on up the track, following Renault's path up through the train and onto the platform.

"How many exits are there from this place?" Tracy asked.

"At least fifteen" the Commander confirmed "Let's get upstairs" he suggested.

As they headed up the spiral staircase leading from the Central Line platforms, the static coming from Tracy's radio gradually began to turn into vaguely recognisable transmissions whereupon in a corridor connecting the Central and Northern Line sections to the Docklands Light Railway part they stopped.

"Any station from Lima Mike Zero One" Tracy called "Can anyone hear me?" she asked.

"This is Silver Command" Morgan's voice came over the radio but very patchily "We can barely read you Maam."

"I'm in the bowels of Bank tube station" she confirmed "Renault is loose in the complex somewhere, seal off every exit and let no body out but be careful, this guy is armed and extremely dangerous."

"I've got a signal" the Commander confirmed checking his mobile telephone before dialling a number "Simon, are you anywhere near your box of tricks?" he asked as soon as his call was answered.

"Err yes Sir" Fuller confirmed as he let go of Jennifer's hand and returned to his desk "What do you need?" he asked.

"I need you to pull up the CCTV feeds from every camera in the Bank and Monument Station complex" the Commander explained as he, Bob and Tracy continued down one of the seemingly endless deserted corridors.

"No problem" Fuller confirmed as with a few taps of the keyboard and a couple of clicks of a mouse, the multiple monitors on his desk displayed the live feeds from every CCTV camera throughout the station complex.

"I think we are somewhere between the Central Line and the Circle and District" the Commander confirmed as he looked around the direction signs on the corridor walls.

"Actually you are heading towards the Northern Line Sir" Fuller confirmed as on one screen the three officers were seen passing down another corridor.

"Any sign of anyone else anywhere in the complex?" the Commander asked.

"Just a second Sir" Fuller confirmed as with Jennifer providing an extra pair of eyes they scanned through the best part of two hundred different camera views across ten

different platforms on multiple levels plus numerous stations entrances, ticket halls and other areas.

"Wait a minute, come back a bit" Jennifer suddenly called out as something caught her attention whereupon Fuller wound back a couple of views "There" she pointed out one view where a door was clearly seen to be swinging where someone had just passed through it.

"Boss" Fuller called down the telephone "Head to your left and back up to the main booking hall" he directed "Someone just accessed a maintenance access doorway down on the Waterloo & City line platforms."

"Have we confirmed that there are absolutely no Underground staff on site?" the Commander asked as he led the way quickly down another of the maze of corridors before heading up an escalator.

"Station manager confirmed with Commander Morgan that the whole place was cleared and locked down as soon as our dodgy bomb alert was dialled in" Fuller confirmed.

"Just a thought" the Commander admitted as they reached the top of the escalators and passed through the open ticket barriers into the booking hall located beneath the surface of the main junction at the south end of Threadneedle Street.

"Now where?" Tracy asked as they looked around.

"Cheapside and Poultry exit" Fuller confirmed "Leads to the Waterloo & City lines."

"Got it" the Commander confirmed as they headed across the booking hall and headed down the exit passageway before passing through the partially open sliding gate that led to the inclined Travelator down to the platforms.

"At the bottom, hurdle the barriers and then bear around to your left, you want Platform Seven" Fuller informed them "Specifically the maintenance access door adjacent to the end of the buffer stops."

Once they were through the ticket barriers, the three officers turned left and proceeded silently onto platform seven where using hand signals the Commander directed Tracy to stand over to one side of the partially open doorway whilst he stood against the wall on the other side with Bob braced and ready to kick the door open on the Commander's word.

"On three" the Commander mouthed silently to the others and then counted down with his fingers as Jennifer and Fuller watched apprehensively via the live CCTV feed.

The split second that the Commander's count reached three, Bob kicked the door in and aimed his gun with the light of the mounted flashlight on it through the door ready to fire if necessary.

"Stay back" Bob warned as he advanced forward and entered the dark room inside, scanning all around the interior but the light of his flashlight only illuminated runs of cables and switch boxes leading off into the distance.

"Do you get the impression we are a bit late for this party?" Tracy asked the Commander.

"Story of my life my dear" the Commander was forced to wryly admit.

"All clear!" Bob called from inside the doorway whereupon Tracy and the Commander duly entered.

"Simon?" the Commander asked over the telephone only to discover that the signal had been lost.

"Probably the interference from all this electrical gubbins" Bob commented.

"Bob, can you shine a light down there for me?" Tracy asked pointing up ahead into the darkest recesses of the maintenance room.

"Yeah sure" Bob agreed as he trained his torch down where Tracy was indicating.

"There's a draft coming from down here somewhere" Tracy commented as using the light of Bob's torch she started to clamber about amid the cable racking until she suddenly disappeared from sight.

"Tracy?" the Commander called as he looked around realising she had vanished from sight.

"Over here" Tracy suddenly declared as she popped out into the open again "There's an old access way of some kind back here and the dust seems to have been disturbed very recently."

"May I suggest caution?" Bob advised "If this guy is as experienced and as ruthless as I have been led to believe then I would allow for the possibility of unpleasant surprises."

"After you then" the Commander gestured whereupon Bob duly led the way into the murky unknown.

"Are there any spare Traffic Division officers available to try and get some of this backlog shifted?" Commander Morgan asked over the radio whilst gesturing in the direction of the roads beyond the cordon tape which were jammed solid with vehicles all going nowhere.

As control tried to sort something out and he awaited a response, Morgan noticed something out of the corner of his eye which caught his attention.

"What on earth...?" he declared with a look of astonishment as a man hole cover set into the pavement nearby suddenly lifted up with a metallic clank and slid to one side before Bob, the Commander and then Tracy emerged into the early evening light.

"I think we've lost him" Bob admitted with a strong tone of regret combined with frustration.

"Damm it..." the Commander remarked as he looked amongst the crowds gathered around the cordon.

"Back to the office?" Tracy asked.

"Absolutely my dear" the Commander readily agreed "Commander Morgan, lets get this area reopened before we get flooded with complaints."

"Certainly Sir" Morgan confirmed whereupon he duly set about organizing the lifting of the cordon and the hopeful return of the area to something approaching normality.

"And have Sir David Godwin and Francis Caldwell delivered to my office within the hour" the Commander requested "It is time to bang some heads together."

"Shall I have Sir Richard and Collins sent over as well?" Tracy asked as she extracted her mobile telephone and prepared to make a call.

"Absolutely" the Commander agreed "But in the meantime love, I don't know about you but I need a cup of tea."

"Ah Davy boy" Sir Richard called as he bumped into Collins outside the main entrance of New Scotland Yard "I see you got an invitation to this party as well."

"Indeed" Collins confirmed "In addition I am also bearing a message from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer" he added.

"And I bet it isn't peace and goodwill to all" Sir Richard commented as they entered the reception area and after a friendly wave to the Receptionist, continued to the lifts where once inside the car, Collins pressed the button for the top floor.

"Oh dear..." Collins remarked as the lift doors opened and the Commander's words could be heard coming down the corridor "That doesn't sound exactly friendly."

"Phasers on stun..." Sir Richard suggested wryly as they bravely ventured onwards "I have over the years tackled everyone from Islamic Extremists to the KGB and even after all that I have doubts about venturing in there."

"What I want to know" the Commander asked indignantly from behind his desk at Sir David Godwin and Treasury Secretary Caldwell who were both sat uncomfortably on the other side of the desk "is what the hell were you doing with the bad guy's bag man in your very own office?"

"An appointment was made two weeks ago for a meeting between us and a representative from the US Federal Treasury" Sir David explained "It was a scheduled meeting with someone we have met on several occasions prior to this afternoon."

"What name did he use?" Tracy asked from over on the couch.

"Alistair Greenfield" Caldwell confirmed "We even checked with the US Federal Reserve in Washington D.C." he explained "This guy's credentials were hopelessly impeccable."

"Alistair Greenfield" Sir Richard remarked as he and Collins entered the room "That was an old alias the CIA used to use for low level covert agents in Western Europe during the cold war. Caused a hell of a lot of confusion a few years back when an innocent chap from Cincinnati actually with that name flew into Gatwick once."

"All right so this guy walks in with cast iron credentials" the Commander summarised "That gets him in the door but my starter for ten is how did he manage to walk through the security of one of the most important financial institutions in the world carrying grenades and at least one gun?" he asked.

"We have a sort of arrangement..." Sir David reluctantly admitted "Recognised members of sister National Banking organisations have a certain reduced security clearance requirement."

"Unbelievable..." the Commander remarked with a certain sense of disbelief.

"Could I suggest that first thing tomorrow you start a radical overhaul of your internal security protocols before someone, probably distantly related to my husband decides to casually load your gold reserves into the back of a Transit van and disappear into the night?" Tracy suggested with a grin.

"So in this guy walks" the Commander continued "and then what?" he asked.

"Nice amicable meeting gets underway" Caldwell confirmed "A few glasses of whiskey, some fine brandy and the conversation moves onto the subject of international currency exchanges when the telephone call comes through about a coded bomb warning and that we were to evacuate immediately."

"That's when he suddenly drops the Yankee accent, pulls the gun and things turn nasty" Sir David admitted.

"You do realise" Sir Richard remarked "that this means who ever Renault's boss is he has had access to the inner circle of national finance far beyond whatever Applegate gave him?"

"It's a nightmare" Collins agreed "The Prime Minister will have a fit if he hears about this."

"Well at the moment we have more pressing problems than the PM's health" the Commander confirmed "We have to find Renault, the missing forged money, the printing equipment and whoever is behind all this."

"Not forgetting that two faced bastard Applegate" Tracy reminded them "My sister is itching to have a quiet word with him if we catch him."

"After the alert was sounded and the guns appeared" the Commander continued "What happened?"

"We were bound to the chairs and then forced to sign certain documents he had brought with him" Caldwell confirmed "These included certain release papers for Government bond issues, trading agreements and some other stuff all of which looked legitimate."

"Printed on our infamous stolen paper no doubt" Tracy concluded.

"Well five minutes later you roll in and the rest as they say is history" Sir David confirmed.

"So who is pulling this guy Renault or whatever his name is strings?" Tracy asked "as thus far no one seems to have come up with an answer to that question yet."

"Tell her..." the Commander reluctantly agreed nodding at Collins.

"Tell me what..." Tracy looked around the room sensing something was coming that she was not going to like at all, the reason why up until now it had not been mentioned in her presence.

"Tenuous links to just one name weave their way throughout this whole affair" Collins admitted "The only major pointer we have being the telephone call to the Daily Chronicle that gave them the planted tip off about the fake money being in circulation."

"You traced the call?" Tracy asked.

"Indeed" Collins confirmed "Thanks to a little judicious sneakery we managed to trace that call to an unregistered Pay as You Go mobile phone. From there we then traced where all calls made from that phone in the last few weeks have come from which led to something rather interesting" he reached inside his jacket pocket and produced an aerial satellite photograph from an envelope that he laid on the desk.

"Well that looks interesting" Sir David remarked as they all leaned forward and looked at the photograph "Err forgive my lack of knowledge but erm what is it?"

"Mobile telephones rely on a network of transmitters, we've all seen them pretty much everywhere" Collins began to explain "Well what not a lot of people know is that it is possible to trace through which transmission mast a telephone was making a certain call which gives you an approximately five square mile area in which the person making the call had to be sitting, standing, lying, whatever at that exact time."

"And this is the area I take it?" Tracy asked indicating the aerial photograph.

"A bus garage, a hospital, a supermarket and here is the real clincher" Collins declared "Hanthorpe High Security Prison" he pointed to the large complex of buildings that dominated the photograph.

"It could just be someone who works in Tesco's" Tracy motioned.

"Sadly I don't think so" Collins confirmed "We pulled up a list of numbers that have been called from that phone and apart from a long line of unlisted numbers there was also a couple of calls made to a mobile in the name of one of Renault's known alter aliases."

"So we send in a prison inspection team" Tracy suggested "Turn the cells over, shake the proverbial trees and see what falls out."

"Oh no, no, no, no, no..." Sir Richard responded wagging his fingers with concern "We can't do that."

"And why not?" Tracy asked slightly indignantly.

"The prison holds some really unpleasant people" the Commander confirmed "One of those is someone I believe you know, one Franklin Rogers."

"That slimy bastard?" Tracy responded "Let me drag him into a room and beat a confession out of him" she requested sincerely.

"Whilst I appreciate your feelings on the subject of the infamous Mr Rogers" Sir Richard explained "Unfortunately there are people in Westminster including both the Foreign and the Home Office not to mention the Justice Ministry to whom he has become something of a political hot potato of late."

"He was put away fairly and squarely nine years ago for a whole list of offences committed over a twenty year period including the cold blooded murder of two of my best officers" Tracy responded "I personally put him away and as far as I am concerned that gives me a licence to beat the hell out of him if the need arises."

"I have it on very good authority that under no circumstances is he to be approached, investigated, harassed or touched in any way" Sir Richard confirmed.

"That very same message also landed in my in tray a week or two ago" Collins confirmed "Hands off or else..."

"Why is he so god damm important?" Tracy demanded to know.

"I wondered that as well" Sir Richard admitted "So the other evening at my club I had a little chat over a drink with the Attorney General" Sir Richard "Our old friend Rogers is apparently launching a very expensive and high profile appeal against his convictions in the high court soon."

"A source we used to run" Collins added "said apparently this Rogers character has contacts and informers all over the place which may explain the Applegate involvement in this little adventure."

"Someone one told me once that Rogers had so many influential people on his payroll that he had to employ three accountants just to keep track of them all" Sir Richard added "When you have someone with influence like that a lot of people tend to start to get rather nervous."

"Great" Tracy declared "So we just let him get away with it I suppose."

"Well we can't touch Rogers" the Commander concluded "but Renault and his merry men are a different matter."

"But how do we find him?" Sir Richard asked "It appears that every time we have caught up with him he buggers off into the sunset."

"I suggest we sleep on it" Collins suggested "It is well past six o'clock now and now that the financial markets are closed after a day of horrors according to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we can look at this matter afresh in the morning."

"Sounds like a good idea to me" the Commander agreed as he checked his old pocket watch and rose from behind his desk "We will meet back here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning and I want to see a whole clutch of ideas."

"I think I will return to my office and have a thumb through my little black book" Sir Richard confirmed as he also rose from his seat.

"Meantime you two" the Commander directed himself towards Caldwell and Sir David "Check with whatever resources you have, find the leaks in the system and make sure any of those documents you were forced to sign don't come back to bite us on the proverbial rear end."

"You got it" Sir David confirmed as he and Caldwell left the office where once the door was closed the Commander motioned to Collins and Sir Richard to remain a moment.

"I think I can guess what is coming..." Sir Richard remarked seeing the serious look of concern on the Commander's face.

"Check those two out thoroughly" the Commander requested of both of them "Background, accounts, business interests, everything."

"I think between us we can manage that" Sir Richard agreed "Why, do you suspect something?"

"Well we only have their word for it about what happened in that office back in the Bank" Tracy pointed out.

"Indeed" the Commander agreed "and if Franklin's influence has resulted in his slimy tentacles getting into some high up places, quite frankly love I don't think we can trust anyone outside of those currently in this office."

"On which lovely note" Collins remarked "I will bid you goodnight" he confirmed.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave..." Tracy remarked once the door was closed leaving her and the Commander alone.

"You can say that again" the Commander agreed as he went over and sat down on the couch next to her and gave her a hug "You know I met him once."

"Who?" Tracy asked.

"Rogers" the Commander explained "It was shortly after all that business with the Haychester case, you know former National Administrator General Bordon and all that."

"You went to see him?" Tracy asked "In jail?"

"I thought it was time he and I met, err informally of course" the Commander admitted.

"Oh so that was where you mysteriously disappeared to after we left Haychester" Tracy realised "You were being rather evasive about where you were going if I recall. I suspected it was where you had gone but didn't like to speculate, well not too much anyway."

"Well we had a little chat, unofficially, off the record of course" the Commander confirmed as he reached inside his tunic pocket and produced a small plastic bag "Then I showed him this" he opened the bag to reveal a USB memory stick.

"What is it?" Tracy asked "I mean I know what it is but what I mean is what is on it?"

"During Bordon's years under Franklin's influence or on his payroll, I am not entirely sure which description is the more appropriate" the Commander explained "he accumulate a lot of unofficial evidence on Rogers and placed them on this which he then passed to me."

"I bet he didn't take too kindly to that" Tracy remarked.

"Well he stayed calm and unworried when I told him what it was so I offered him a deal" the Commander explained "If he packed up his little operations, kept quiet and never ventured above the parapet ever again then this little bombshell here will stay forever buried in a very safe place."

"Trouble is if he really is serious about launching an appeal and with his political connections" Tracy commented "then I am guessing he is not overly worried by anything you threaten him with."

"Looks that way" the Commander admitted "Come on, lets go home. Jack will be wondering what happened to us."

With that they both got up together off the couch where whilst Tracy put her uniform tunic on, the Commander went over to the safe mounted in the wall, opened it and placed the USB memory stick inside before closing and securing the door once more.

"All secrets safely locked away?" Tracy remarked as they took each others arm in their own before leaving the office.

"Most of them" the Commander confirmed before they kissed "If there is anything you want to tell me about your involvement with this Rogers character, you can always talk to me you know."

"It's a part of my career I have tried rather hard to forget" Tracy admitted as they left the outer office and proceeded down the corridor to the lifts "Such is Rogers influence and the potential danger he still holds even today that my part in the investigation that finally got him put away does not even appear on my official record."

"Yes I know" the Commander admitted as the lift began its descent to the ground floor "I checked but it does appear in the unofficial version that MI5 hold on you though. Their version of our personnel files tend to be somewhat more comprehensive not to mention very tightly locked away."

"My file must make for an interesting read" Tracy remarked "Yours must be even more colourful I would have thought?"

"Apparently yours is a box file" the Commander admitted "Mine takes up an entire filing cabinet" he confirmed as the lift doors opened and they exited, crossing the main reception area before coming out into the street outside where the darkness of an late autumn evening was rapidly descending.

"Do you really want to hear it?" Tracy asked with an obvious note of hesitation as they walked arm in arm across the road to St James's Park Underground Station.

"Only if you want to tell it" the Commander confirmed as they passed through the ticket barriers before heading down to the westbound Circle and District Line platform just as a six car train of 'D' stock was arriving.

"Well its complicated" Tracy admitted as they boarded the first carriage and took a seat together "I was heading up a specialist investigation team at the time, looking into long forgotten cases that had never been resolved and one of these concerned a contract killing in Stratford back in 1979 which was tenuously linked to Rogers."

"Was that the guy that was shot dead in his car slap bang in the middle of rush hour traffic in Stratford one morning and yet no one saw a thing?" the Commander recalled.

"That was the one" Tracy confirmed as the train moved off "No evidence and what few witnesses there were all managed to disappear into thin air before we could catch up with them."

"So someone decided to re-open the case I presume?" the Commander asked.

"Franklin Rogers has been running a gang land crime wave in north east London for the best part of thirty years" Tracy confirmed "Drugs, prostitution, stolen goods, smuggling, forgery, contract killers, car ringing, money laundering, protection rackets, you name it, even fake bus tickets at one point, his 'employees' of which there were a hell of a lot were into it and ten years ago he was looking to expand his already extensive business empire."

"Someone decided it was time to call a halt to his little enterprises I take it?" the Commander assumed.

"It didn't matter what anyone suspected him of" Tracy confirmed as the train began to slow for their stop at Victoria and they got up from their seats and headed to the carriage door "In over two hundred investigations by the Police and later the Security & Police Service and even a few investigations by MI5, nothing was ever pinned on him. Sure a few of his boys got their collars felt and duly slung in jail but even when offered heavy deals to give evidence against him, they would not talk which meant we had nothing."

"So how did you get him?" the Commander asked "I always got the impression he was the best greaser of palms in the business which is why he was always getting away with it, that and the way he managed his people in such a way that there were always sufficient layers of deniability between him and the crime."

"We were staking out an illegal gambling club he was rumoured to be running in Leytonstone" Tracy explained "however it would appear someone told him or one of his minions about our little operation as half an hour into it, two plain clothed officers I had in there were with apparent randomness pulled from the crowd, dragged out the back and shot dead in cold blood."

"I don't recall that making the news" the Commander remarked as the train drew to a halt and they alighted onto the platform before making their way through the station complex to the southbound Victoria Line platform where a train was just arriving once again.

"It didn't" Tracy confirmed "The whole thing was hushed up by someone upstairs, probably National Administrator General Bordon I would not be surprised."

"Friends in high places" the Commander remarked as they boarded the train of 1967 tube stock just before the doors closed and the train moved off into the darkness of the tube shaped running tunnel "The same old story once again."

"Well it became fairly obvious that the whole investigation was being got at from a very high level" Tracy continued "evidence was disappearing, witnesses were being intimidated, officers bribed, you name it because I think pretty much every dirty trick

in the book was being thrown at us until suddenly orders from on high citing 'budgetary constraints' would you believe resulted in the whole thing being shut down. That was when I decided to do a little freelance work."

"You found something didn't you?" the Commander asked as the intermediate stop at Pimlico came and went.

"I went back to the scene where the two officers were killed and I did a little sniffing around whilst there was no one about and that was when I found that whoever had been present at the killing had been leaning up against a wall in this back room" she explained "and on that wall there were fibres and a strand of hair from which I was able to get a DNA sample which matched Rogers."

"Putting him in a building where not only illegal gambling was taking place but where two Security Service officers were gunned down as well" the Commander concluded "But it would have taken more than that for a prosecution surely?"

"It was enough to get me a warrant to raid half of Leytonstone" Tracy admitted "I kicked down a lot of doors that day and rattled a lot of cages which got me enough evidence on tape to drag Rogers arse into court and send him down for a very long time."

"Nice one" the Commander congratulated her as the train slowed once more for their final destination of Vauxhall.

"Yes well it wasn't all plain sailing as you would expect" Tracy continued as they alighted onto the platform before heading up towards the station exit "We finally got one of what he called in court his 'less useful people' to speak up, giving evidence on video camera so at no point was his identity or any clues to it revealed at any point. A week after the trial ends and Rogers is sent down however a little old lady walking her dog in Newcastle finds our star witness who despite being in the care of Witness Protection, relocated and given a whole new identity nailed to a tree, crucified with and you will like this, one pound fifty in five pence pieces stuffed in his mouth."

"Thirty pieces of silver" the Commander concluded "Quite a message to others who were maybe considered joining him I presume."

"Indeed" Tracy confirmed "I went all the way up there to identify the body and there was not a lot recognisable left to actually make any identification with."

"Presumably after that case was when you transferred down south to Hampshire Division" the Commander remarked.

"It was felt by someone high up that it would be prudent if the Rogers case investigation team were broken up and scattered to the four winds for fear of attracting any further unwelcome attention" Tracy confirmed "and until very recently that was the last I ever heard of Franklin Rogers, the so called Lord of Leytonstone."

"Now it would appear he is taking up his old hobbies" the Commander remarked as they left the station and headed across the road towards their apartment building on the west side of Vauxhall Bridge Road.

"Between you and me love" Tracy remarked "I am not convinced he ever retired really and the thought that he is putting together an appeal does not exactly fill me with great enthusiasm either."

"It will be all right" the Commander concluded "When all this blows over I will have a chat with the Attorney General and see what the situation is" he reassured Tracy as he held the door open for her to pass through before they made their way up the stairs to the floor where their apartment was.

"Erm darling" Tracy requested hesitantly just as the Commander was about to unlock their front door "Don't mention any of what I have just told you to anyone please?" she asked.

"Consider my lips sealed my dear" the Commander confirmed with a smile before kissing her and then opening the door.

"Thanks" Tracy responded before proceeding through the front door into the hallway where she and the Commander hung up their uniform tunics.

"Jack, are you home?" the Commander called.

"In here" came a call from the living room where upon going in the Commander found Jack curled up on the sofa with the old tabby cat watching the television which was showing the BBC News Channel and its coverage of the events in the Bank area earlier that day.

"Sorry we are late lad" the Commander apologised as he joined him on the sofa.

"That's all right" Jack responded "I can see you have been rather busy" he indicated the news broadcast with its footage of the scene in and around Bank earlier.

"Do you gentlemen want some tea?" Tracy called from the adjacent kitchen.

"Whatever is going will be fine love" the Commander called back.

"Same for me too please" Jack added.

"How much are they reporting?" the Commander asked motioning towards the television.

"Just that there were reports of a suspicious vehicle outside the Guildhall" Jack confirmed "Coded bomb warning and an evacuation of the area. Apparently most people were more concerned about the Stock Exchange being evacuated affecting trading than the potential of being blown to bits."

"First rule these days" the Commander admitted "Defend the wallet."

"Which reminds me" Jack added wryly "You still owe me a fiver from the other day."

"Salve driver" the Commander joked as he fished around in his pockets until he had managed to amass five pounds worth of change "There you go, genuine article."

"They had better be" Jack remarked "I still have two of those dud twenties to shift yet."

"What happened to the rest of them?" the Commander asked.

"A rather high stakes poker game in the school canteen at lunchtime saw two of them offloaded" Jack admitted "and the other I spent unintentionally. It really is scary how easy it is to offload iffy money even with all this publicity that is going on at the moment."

"Well they were very good fakes" the Commander confirmed "And there are plenty more where they came from believe me."

"So what happened with this bomb then?" Jack asked.

"There wasn't one" the Commander admitted "It was a blind to send us off the track whilst the chap who has been producing our now almost legendary funny money paid a discrete visit to the Bank of England."

"Whoa, hang on a minute" Jack concluded "This guy plants a fake bomb..."

"...complete with a genuine coded warning" Tracy added as she came in with mugs of tea and passed them out.

"...which summons the entire Security Service by the looks of these TV reports" Jack continued "and then he wanders into the Bank of England right under your noses."

"That's about the size of it" the Commander confirmed.

"Now call me old fashioned but if I wanted a large diversion to keep my enemies occupied for a while I would organise it to be somewhere a damn sight further away than a hundred yards" Jack concluded "The other side of town or even the other side of a completely different town for instance."

"He has a point" Tracy agreed as she sat down alongside her husband on the sofa and the cat decided to transfer her allegiance over to Tracy's lap.

"He must have known we would send in everything we have as soon as the confirmed coded warning came in" the Commander summarised.

"Well there is a firmly set procedure with designations and those strategic theatre emergency scenarios" Tracy confirmed "It's all written down in a red file in the safe of every senior Security Officer in the country."

"Yes, who does what where, designations, nominated persons in charge, that sort of thing" the Commander agreed.

"So let's say a coded warning comes in now" Jack asked "Talk me through what happens" he prompted.

"Ok" the Commander began "Let us say Mr 'X' we shall call him calls the BBC with a coded warning. That call is automatically recorded by them and then their switchboard presses a button on their desk that automatically sends that call recording to the duty commander in the Anti-Terrorist Branch."

"Who then analyses it and confirms if the coded warning is legitimate" Tracy added.

"Then he or she pushes the panic button I presume?" Jack asked.

"Well yes" the Commander confirmed "At that point in the city or town where the bomb is supposed to be, all senior officers plus the duty commander of the Bomb Disposal Squad are immediately notified at which point the action plan swings into action."

"Or we just make it up as we go along" Tracy admitted "That has been known to happen before now."

"So the whole thing goes like this" the Commander continued "The nearest Command level Security Service officer to the scene goes straight there and proceeds to set up an on site Command and Control centre, establish a perimeter, assess the threat and evacuate the area backed up by as many officers as can get there in time."

"This is then coordinated with the designated Gold Commander who is the second most senior officer available" Tracy added "in this instance me who oversees the whole thing from the Control Room at Scotland Yard."

"Meanwhile the senior most officer available which on this occasion was me" the Commander confirmed "proceeds directly to the scene by whatever means are available be it car, bus or carrier pigeon and takes charge of the scene, directing Bomb Disposal into the site and confirming area evacuated as per the action plan."

"So if I were this chap in the Bank" Jack concluded "I would assume that you would come and check on any report of someone still not evacuated from the immediate area and indeed if those reported missing were of extreme importance..."

"Like the Director General of the Bank of England himself" the Commander added.

"...then it is fairly safe to assume that the person who will come in and check the building will be the senior officer on site, which I assume in this instance was you?" Jack asked the Commander directly.

"Spot on" the Commander confirmed.

"But why?" Jack asked "Isn't he taking a hell of a risk of being captured."

"You know Jack has a point there" Tracy agreed "Renault was taking a hell of a risk walking into the Bank of England moments before the place was surrounded by pretty much the entire Security Service."

"You're right" the Commander confirmed "It doesn't add up at all does it?"

"It must have been something very important in order to take such a huge risk" Tracy commented.

"And he wanted us or possibly more specifically me to know it was him in there" the Commander agreed.

"Perhaps he was establishing an alibi or something" Jack remarked wryly.

"Or he was establishing someone else's alibi" Tracy realised "like the two senior gentlemen he had tied up in there. You said it yourself earlier dear that we only have their word for it as to what happened prior to you arriving in there doing your John Wayne impression as per usual."

"Well I've got Sir Richard looking into both Sir David and Caldwell's background to see if anything goes beep" the Commander confirmed "So I guess we will see what we will see in the morning."

"I should be on commission for helping you out with these cases" Jack remarked cheekily "Only preferably not in cash given current circumstances."

"I'll make it up to you" the Commander readily agreed "I promise."

"Great" Jack responded "In which case you can give me some help with a problem I am having."

"If it's about girls, ask the missus" the Commander suggested.

"Did that one last week" Jack confirmed "No, this problem is about railways of the scale model variety actually."

"Now that I can probably help you with" the Commander agreed.

"In which case follow me" Jack prompted as he got up off the sofa and the Commander duly followed "I am having problems positioning these roof vents on this model I am building" he showed him the partially finished unpainted model coach on the table near by "All the pictures I am working from shows them in three different places."

"I see your problem" the Commander agreed "Wait here a minute, I think I may have the thing you require" he declared before heading off.

"I don't know" Tracy remarked wryly "Boys and their toys."

"Did you not have dolls when you were a child?" Jack asked her.

"I was more into motorbikes and lock picking tools" Tracy admitted "Made a few quid at school breaking into lockers for my fellow pupils who had lost their keys."

"Very enterprising" Jack remarked "I must try that one day."

"The answer should be in this lot somewhere" the Commander declared as he returned to the living room with a large tatty cardboard box full of books which he placed on the table before proceeding to search through them until he found a small A6 sized paper back book which he passed to Jack "Try this lad."

"Coaching Stock Recognition of British Railways" Jack read from the front cover of the rather tired looking book before proceeding to flick through its pages thoughtfully until he found the answer to his problem "Ah there it is, I think that answers the riddle, thanks."

"I have got the later edition as well" the Commander proffered another book.

"I think this will do me thanks" Jack confirmed before returning to his model and enthusiastically setting about it whilst the Commander, the book still in his hand returned to the sofa and sat down up next to Tracy.

"Do you ever throw anything away?" Tracy asked looking down at the tatty book in her husband's hand.

"Rarely" the Commander admitted "Well you've seen there you never know when something might come in useful."

"Well this looks fascinating" Tracy sarcastically remarked as she looked at the book with its exhaustive details of every type of coaching and parcel carrying rolling stock operated on the British Railways network since the 1950's.

"I've got one all about different types of slurry tank wagons somewhere if you are interested?" the Commander jokingly remarked.

"I think I'll stick to a good novel thanks" Tracy confirmed with a wry smile.

"I haven't looked at some of these in years" the Commander admitted as he flicked through the book "Actually I don't think a lot of the types listed in this book have been seen in years either..." he suddenly tailed off as he stopped at one particular page and some deep thought appeared to occur to him.

"Something wrong love?" Tracy asked concerned.

"Just a mad thought" the Commander admitted as he continued to read the page of the book in some depth "I need to see a map" he then declared.

"Of where?" Tracy asked as the Commander got up off of the sofa and headed towards the bookcase.

"That place near Redhill where I lost Renault this morning" the Commander confirmed as he looked through the maps but found nothing suitable.

"Try the Internet" Jack called from the other side of the room "You can find aerial photographs of pretty much the entire country on there these days."

"Good idea" the Commander agreed.

"I'll get my laptop" Jack confirmed.

"I'll get some more tea" Tracy added.

"So what are we looking for?" Jack asked as he returned a few moments later with his laptop computer that he proceeded to set up on the coffee table.

"Early this morning I was at an Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Redhill" the Commander explained "I need to see a plan of the place, an overhead view, anything that shows how close it is to the railway line."

"Should be able to do that" Jack confirmed as he called up Google on the Internet and after a few clicks of the mouse brought up a wide angle shot of south Surrey with Redhill dead centre.

"Can you zoom it in?" the Commander asked as Tracy returned with fresh supplies of tea.

"What are you looking for?" Tracy asked as she rejoined them on the sofa.

"Evidence to support a wild theory" the Commander admitted as Jack zoomed in the view so that just Redhill itself filled the screen "All right, up and to the right I think, over near the old sand quarries" he pointed out part of the image.

"There are your old quarries" Jack confirmed as the sandy yellow area of the view became dominant on the screen.

"Well there is the fast line that avoids Redhill" the Commander indicated one of the railway lines visible running north to south on the image "so if you move over to the left a bit you should see the industrial estate."

"Is that it there?" Jack asked pointing out part of the image as he moved it across the screen.

"I reckon so lad" the Commander agreed "Zoom in on that could you?" he asked.

"What are you looking for?" Tracy asked.

"That" the Commander confirmed as the close up view of the site appeared on the screen "I approached the site from this side" he indicated along one side of the site on

the image "Renault and his boys were loading his trucks and the helicopter was behind them just here when they cleared out."

"With two trucks containing nothing more than a thousand shredded copies of the Debden Gazette" Tracy remarked.

"So the question that has been hanging over this event is this" the Commander summarised "We know there was a significant amount of equipment on site so how the hell did they get it out of there without anyone seeing it?"

"The railway line" Jack suggested pointing to the other side of the site on the image "There is a private goods siding over on the opposite side of the site."

"Ladies and gentlemen" the Commander placed the book he had been looking at earlier on the table in front of the others open at the specific page "The diagram NW5 type SLB Bullion Van" he declared "Two high security converted former passenger coaches used for the transport of highly secure material and money."

"Ok so somehow they shifted everything out by rail whilst we were not looking I presume?" Tracy asked "What is the connection with these vans then?"

"Unlike anything else on the railway network" the Commander explained "The bullion vans do not appear on any of the monitoring and recording systems that otherwise trace every single vehicle, wagon, coach and locomotive that runs day in and day out. The only people who can authorise their usage and know of their routes and cargo are the Director General of the Bank of England, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and yours truly."

"You mean not even Network Rail knows where these things are?" Tracy asked.

"In a word err no" the Commander confirmed.

"There is more than one way to crack a nut" Jack remarked "All we have to do is check the rail enthusiast websites for any unusual or unscheduled freight movements in that area early this morning."

"Please don't tell me that some of the most secure rail traffic in the country can easily be traced by a couple of chaps on the end of Clapham Junction platform fourteen..." Tracy began.

"Platform eleven, far better view" the Commander interjected.

"...eleven then" Tracy continued "armed with a notebook, pencil and a flask of cocoa?"

"Eh voila" Jack declared as he duly accessed a photograph site "Taken at nine twenty five this morning, Class 47 locomotive number 47832 was called upon to operate an empty coaching stock run of old stock which is seen here passing through Wandsworth Road."

"And that looks like our bullion vans as the third and fourth vehicle in the formation" the Commander pointed out as he reached for the telephone.

"There goes my faith in railway security" Tracy remarked.

"Hello?" the Commander called over the telephone after he had speed dialled a number "Can you put me through to the duty operations manager, rail desk please" he requested.

"Who's he calling?" Jack asked Tracy.

"The lads over at the Transport Division" Tracy explained "They should be able to find out where the loco went in theory."

"Yeah Terry?" the Commander called "Need a favour with my railway enthusiasts hat on" he declared "I need to find out who hired locomotive 47832 this morning and where it went."

"Now there is a coincidence" Terry remarked as he consulted the computer "That is the one that the system 'lost' after the computer went down at Old Oak Common yesterday evening" he confirmed "There was a break in by some scrap metal thieves and the whole system covering north London went haywire for over an hour."

"So there is no way we can trace it?" the Commander asked.

"Not with the system in the current state no Sir" Terry confirmed "I mean the early King's Cross to Edinburgh express this morning wound up being hauled by a Class 60 this morning thanks to this computer glitch."

"Ok then" the Commander decided a different approach to the problem "What about any non scheduled freight or empty coaching stock movements in the east London area after about ten a.m.?" he asked.

"Three empty stock movements all to London termini" Terry read from his screen after a few clicks of a mouse brought up a list to answer the question "two extra engineer's workings both heading down Eastleigh way and a postal service bound for an unspecified destination beyond Stratford by the looks of it."

"I don't suppose the system could tell you how many of those were diesel hauled by any chance?" the Commander asked more out of hope than expectation.

"The only diesel hauled train out of that lot was that last one" Terry confirmed "that van train bound for deepest Essex."

"Debden" Tracy remarked "That's in one of the darker recesses of Essex when I last looked."

"All right, that will do me nicely" the Commander responded "Thanks Terry, I owe you a drink."

"So now what happens?" Jack asked, slightly confused.

"Well you get some sleep as you have school in the morning" the Commander concluded "Tracy love, you stay here and rest, I meanwhile am going to follow the money, literally."

Sir Richard Crowthorne stared intently at the ringing telephone on his desk in a vain attempt to make it stop by some form of telekinesis which, needless to say did not work and so as the ringing persisted he reluctantly answered it.

"Westminster Central Decorators" Sir Richard responded with a cheeky grin "You want a whitewash, we got the paint" he declared.

"Never had you down as a DIY man" the Commander remarked with a chuckle of amusement from the patrol car he was driving through the streets of central London "I was wondering if anything turned up in that little background check I asked for?"

"It all rather depends on how you look at it" Sir Richard admitted still slightly unsure of his findings himself "I talked to Simon Fuller about an hour ago and he informed me that amongst the various computer jobs he was forced to do for them was run some sort of 'spider' program that judging by what I am seeing on the screen did a through laundering job on certain peoples records."

"In English please?" the Commander requested.

"Well I am looking at Caldwell's record here in front of me now" Sir Richard leaned forward and looked closer at the computer screen on his desk "This is the file that the Political Monitoring Unit over at MI5 maintain and its very, very strange."

"How so?" the Commander asked.

"I don't really know how to put it" Sir Richard admitted "It's all appears clean as a whistle, all the 'i's dotted and 't's crossed but that is the problem, it is just too perfect."

"Like someone or something has rewritten it for example?" the Commander ventured.

"That would be my best guess but looking at the way this has been done" Sir Richard remarked "I doubt even Simon or the IT Fraud Division would be able to unpick this lot."

"What about our highly ranked bank manager Sir David Godwin?" the Commander asked.

"Bit more straightforward" Sir Richard confirmed as he switched the file view on his screen "Looks much more legitimate thanks to the usual spelling errors being present. Did you know he was banned for two years for speeding back in 1973?"

"Well there you go" the Commander admitted "Proves that no one is perfect, rewritten record or not."

"You sound like you are on the move" Sir Richard commented "Aren't you supposed to be in bed by now snuggled up to that wife of yours?" he asked.

"You remember David Collins suggested we should sleep on it, maybe come up with some fresh ideas in the morning?" the Commander reminded him.

"Err yes" Sir Richard agreed "Except its only just gone half ten so it's not even morning yet" he confirmed looking across at the clock on the wall.

"Well I just had a fresh idea and I am going to check it out" the Commander confirmed.

"Not on your own I do hope?" Sir Richard responded with concern.

"Well not exactly" the Commander responded which failed to reassure Sir Richard one bit "I'm going to make a house call on the way."

"On the way to where?" Sir Richard asked.

"Deepest darkest Essex" the Commander confirmed.

"Oh no, not again" Sir Richard responded remembering the last time that the Commander had ventured into that county on one of his hunches "Where are you now?" he asked.

"Just passing Victoria Station" the Commander confirmed as he drove around the corner from Wilton Road into Victoria Street.

"You are just around the corner from my office" Sir Richard declared "Stop outside in a few minutes and I will meet you there."

"Before I get there" the Commander asked as a thought occurred to him "could you possibly look up an address for me as I have also had an idea."

"A hunch *and* an idea?" Sir Richard responded with a worried frown "Sounds like we are in very serious trouble" he joked.

"I have no idea what I will say when the lady behind the counter asks me if this parcel contains anything of any value" one of Renault's associates remarked as he closed the lid on the large cardboard box into which he had just finished packing a considerable quantity of fake notes.

"Well technically it's pretty much worthless" Renault admitted as he passed across the parcel tape dispenser.

"It would still give the Postie a few moral dilemmas if he knew what was lurking inside it mind" the associate remarked as he proceeded to seal shut the parcel.

"That's the trouble with society today" Renault wryly remarked "too many criminals about."

As his associate finished sealing the large parcel, Renault withdrew to the side office to make a discrete telephone call.

"Morning boss" Renault declared which judging by how quickly he was answered indicated that his call was very much expected.

"Your little care package is ready to be posted now" he confirmed as he looked through the office window at the parcel which his associate was now proceeding to load into the back of a van "All I need to know is who is the lucky recipient although I suggest it be local as I don't think it will go on letter rate postage somehow."

As the person on the other end of the telephone re-laid their instructions, Renault proceeded to write down the name and address of the recipient on a large sticky label before passing it to his associate to be affixed to the package.

"Well I think Sir that just about wraps things up, err no pun intended" Renault declared "Shall I notify our friend to proceed with his part of the plan?"

Renault's associate looked on with an apprehensive look as Renault himself got the word.

"Very well Sir" Renault confirmed "It has been a pleasure doing business with you, good luck with your appeal" he confirmed before hanging up.

"Are we done then boss?" the associate asked.

"Indeed we are" Renault confirmed with a satisfied smirk "the payment for our services is being authorised even as we speak and all we need to do now is get this lot out of here."

"What about all the printing machinery and stuff?" the associate asked "We are not going to just leave that all lying around are we?"

"Oh no lad" Renault confirmed with a definite evil glint in his eye "I have something special planned for that, call it a little surprise package only this one is a little less welcome for its unlucky recipient."

"Definitely the fuse love" Bob called out from his under stairs cupboard as he examined the main fuse box that fed the power into his house "Probably the water heater again I would wager."

"Well can you fix it?" Beatrice his wife of ten years called from the kitchen as she attempted to make cocoa by candlelight.

"It's not exactly my speciality you know" Bob called back as by the light of a pen torch he continued to examine the fuse box "I tend to specialise in guns and munitions."

At that moment he was distracted from the problem at hand by the ringing of the front door bell.

"Now who the hell could that be at this time of night?" Bob asked as he backed out of the below stairs cupboard only to bash his head on the top of the door frame.

"I'll get it" Beatrice responded as she headed into the front hallway with her candle like Florence Nightingale much to her husband's amusement as she went past him.

"Ah err good evening" the Commander declared as the door was opened and by candlelight Bob's wife appeared at the door "I do apologise for the lateness of the hour my dear but I was wondering if Bob was at home."

"Come in" Beatrice responded, understandably surprised to see the Commander at the door who with Sir Richard offering his usual gentlemanly deference followed him in. "He's under the stairs trying to fix the fuse box, the emphasis being on trying I am afraid" she admitted.

"Problems?" the Commander asked as he joined Bob in looking at the dusty fuse box under the stairs.

"You could say that Sir" Bob admitted in defeat "I mean I can field strip and reassemble some of the most complicated weaponry known to man in thirty seconds flat but a simple fuse wire I have not a clue about."

"Allow me" Sir Richard declared as he reached inside his overcoat pocket and extracted a small tool kit that he always carried with him, a legacy from his MI5 front line days and replaced Bob and the Commander before examining the problem.

"So what brings you to my humble home Sir?" Bob asked "Assuming that is you didn't deliberately pop around just to fix my electrics."

"We've got a little problem that I am attempting to look into but I thought it prudent to acquire some specialised backup if you know what I mean?" the Commander explained.

"Invitation only I assume?" Bob asked sensing the tone in the Commander's voice which added to the unusual lateness of the hour and their location merely reinforced his belief.

"This err problem which we have" the Commander continued to explain "we think may be compromised by a possible mole or three somewhere in the system so for now

it is as you well summarised strictly invitation only and I need to borrow you for the rest of the evening."

"What's left of it" Bob admitted as he looked at his watch by torchlight which showed it to be passing half eleven now.

"I think I've got it" Sir Richard declared from the stairs cupboard "Try this" he called whereupon with a click all the power came back on, the lights switched on throughout the house and Beatrice jumped with surprise when the dishwasher suddenly started up as she was leaning against it in the kitchen.

"Well done, thanks" Bob called back.

"No problem" Sir Richard confirmed "Used to be rather good at electronics when I was a youth?"

"You mean to say you were actually young once?" the Commander jokingly asked.

"Very funny..." Sir Richard responded with a slight sneer.

"I'll get my coat and my little black bag" Bob confirmed.

"Thanks mate" the Commander responded "We'll meet you outside in say five minutes?"

As Sir Richard and the Commander walked back down to the patrol car parked outside it was clear that he had concerns.

"Is this going to be one of those daring to go where angels fear to tread type operations by any chance only it sounds kindly risky all this cloak and dagger stuff" he admitted as they got in the car.

"Since when have you ever known me to leap in with my size tens in some unwise move?" the Commander sarcastically asked.

"Oh I don't know" Sir Richard wryly recalled "about once a fortnight on average?"

"Cute..." the Commander responded with an indignant scowl.

"Seriously though" Sir Richard reminded him "You have a family now what with Tracy and young Jack and you have to consider that unlike all those years ago when you were the lone officer who was happy to take risks because there was no one to leave behind, its different now and you ought to remember that."

"Yes I know" the Commander admitted "It is a thought that has been occurring to me a fair bit lately."

"Doing what we do can be hell on family life" Sir Richard advised "Your wife is in the service with you which probably helps but Jack has lost one set of parents already in his life, so be careful please."

"Does your wife know what you do for a living?" the Commander asked.

"Good God no" Sir Richard responded "If Sybil ever found out what I really have been doing for a living for the last thirty years she would kill me."

"So what does she think you do?" the Commander asked.

"Senior civil servant at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food" Sir Richard confirmed with a giggle "She often complains about the apparent lack of free food samples being brought home though."

"Evening gentlemen" Bob declared as he opened the back door of the patrol car, slung his black bag of equipment on the seat and then squeezed his tall frame inside the car.

"We were discussing families and our respective rather dangerous career choices" Sir Richard declared "How many kids do you have Bob?" he asked.

"Three" Bob admitted as the Commander restarted the car and they drove off just as the first rumbles of a heavy thunderstorm began to roll in across the west end of Greater London "They can be a handful at times but I love them."

"So does your missus worry about your somewhat dangerous line of work?" the Commander asked.

"Let's put it this way" Bob admitted "I am never allowed to leave the house, even if it is to pop around the corner for a pint of milk unless I have my bullet proof vest on."

"Unlike some people I could mention..." Sir Richard muttered under his breath.

"Last time I wore one under my uniform the Evening Standard said I looked fat" the Commander admitted.

"The first time you were shot without one the Evening Standard said you were dead" Sir Richard reminded him with sincerity.

"Still here aren't I?" the Commander responded rather unconvincingly.

"Erm I hate to interrupt Sir" Bob inquired "but where exactly are we going may I ask?"

"To catch a train" the Commander confirmed.

"Coming down!" Renault's associate warned before dropping down a cable from up on a walkway high in the ceiling of the warehouse.

"Got it" Renault confirmed as he stepped forward and once the cable reel had hit the ground, took it and unwound it as he proceeded backwards into the side office where he proceeded to plug it into a control console of some kind before flicking a switch alongside which for now merely illuminated a little green LED light.

"We have a heartbeat" Renault declared with an evil looking smirk as his associate joined him having scampered down from the walkway, his task now completed.

"So what does this stuff actually do boss?" the associate asked as he watched Renault perform various tests and calibrations on the console into which several wires were connected originating from numerous points around the building and its surrounding environs.

"Just a little toy I picked up some years ago whilst I was supplying some err management consultancy to some very rich and well armed rebel forces in South America" Renault explained.

"Is there any lunatic groups you haven't been involved with?" the associate asked.

"Not many" Renault proudly admitted as he continued to work on the control device "and you are right, most of them were little more than a bunch of gun toting loonies but they well financed and readily willing to part with large sums for my services, speaking of which" he motioned outside "You best get going."

"Right you are boss" the associate confirmed "I'll get the parcel on its way, meantime good luck Guv" he declared.

"Thank you" Renault responded sincerely as his associate departed.

"Right I think that will do it" Renault declared as he connected and successfully tested the final connection before sitting back and admiring his handiwork before reaching for a telephone and speed dialling a number.

"Evening Sir" he called as soon as he was answered "My little toys are in place, we have our game, all we need now is our players."

"Isn't this technically illegal?" Sir Richard asked as he, Bob and the Commander managed to make their way through a security gate into a railway yard somewhere in North West London "At the very least we are talking jurisdictional conflict here."

"Arrest me then" the Commander jokingly challenged him.

"No one would dare I would have thought Sir" Bob commented as they made their way across the semi-abandoned yard towards a large shed that dominated the site.

"Oh I don't know" the Commander remarked "I expect some fool probably in the Civil Service will try it one day."

"I dread to think what would happen to anyone if they tried" Bob remarked.

"Tracy would probably have them roasted on a spit in Trafalgar Square" the Commander wryly mused as they reached the shed which appeared dark and unoccupied.

"Are you sure we are in the right place?" Sir Richard asked as they entered the shed by a side door "only this place looks pretty neglected to me."

"It's still used for rolling stock storage and maintenance at the moment" the Commander confirmed "but it's scheduled to be pulled down sometime next year hence why it's been let go a bit" he explained.

"So what exactly are we looking for Sir?" Bob asked.

"Two bullion vans of which I am fairly certain we will find no trace and a specific locomotive which we may have better luck with" the Commander confirmed as they continued to look around, walking up and down between rows of stored rolling stock of various different types.

"Looks like something was parked here recently" Bob remarked as he shone the light of the torch mounted on his MP7 rifle along the length of rail on one track where the lighter colour of the rust showed where something had been removed.

"Which considering this is long term storage junk seems to support the theory so far" the Commander agreed before he led them through out the other side of the shed to the locomotive yard sidings "Ah there she is" he declared pointing ahead to a line of locomotives at the head of which was a fairly anonymous looking blue and yellow example, the only external identification being a number."

"I take it that is supposed to be there presumably" Sir Richard asked as they approached the locomotive whereupon Bob did a customary search to ensure there were no unpleasant surprises awaiting them.

"That's the one" the Commander confirmed as he checked a printout he had brought with him "47832 parked right she supposedly has been sitting for the last eight days which is a tad odd considering that Jack found a picture on the Internet earlier of this very loco passing through Clapham Junction early this morning with our two missing Bullion Vans in tow."

"The penny drops" Sir Richard remarked "High security transport that doesn't appear on any ledgers or duty sheets anywhere, ideal if you need to shift something like high security printing equipment, several million in dud notes and by strange coincidence happen to have access to someone like our Mr Fuller who through duress can arrange it all through the national railway network computer."

"So why did they leave the locomotive here?" Bob asked as he completed his examination which confirmed that on the outside at least there were no devices or any other objects present that may have presented a danger.

"You mean where someone like for example err me perhaps might find it you mean?" the Commander asked as he clambered up to the side cab door before opening it and proceeding inside "I do believe we will find that this is a personally addressed invitation" he explained.

"Hasn't this guy heard of the telephone?" Sir Richard asked as he followed the Commander up the cab access steps "Dear God I am getting to old for this" he admitted as he reached the top and came into the cab.

"I do believe we are dealing with subtleties here" the Commander admitted as he looked around the interior of the driving cab where the torch he was scanning around with came to a halt on a newspaper resting on the driving seat "and I would be willing to bet this is a copy of the Debden Gazette" he declared, a theory that as soon as he picked it up proved to be correct.

"Sir" Bob pointed out as a plain brown envelope fell out of the newspaper onto the cab floor which the Commander bent down and picked it up before carefully opening it.

"The National Administrator General, Sir Edward Regent GC is cordially invited to a soiree" the Commander read "No weapons, black tie, bring a friend."

"Does it say where?" Sir Richard asked.

"Nope" the Commander confirmed as he looked at both sides of the paper "That is all it says but I have a very good idea where to start looking."

"I strongly recommend against this Sir" Bob responded "You know what they say, if it smells like a trap, looks like a trap and sounds like a trap..."

"...then it is a trap" the Commander agreed "however it also my only decent chance of finding out exactly what is going on here" he explained.

"In which case I insist that anything you venture into you only do it with full armed backup" Bob insisted.

"That is why you are here" the Commander explained "You are going to watch our backs when we venture in."

"Our backs?" Sir Richard picked up on the Commander's turn of phrase and the look he was giving him.

"It does say bring a friend" the Commander indicated the message again "and given how well informed these guys have been with their irritating knack of being one step ahead from the start I am pretty certain that means you."

"I am definitely getting to old for this sort of thing" Sir Richard reluctantly admitted.

"No, no, no, no, no..." Jack replied confidently "Gordon Jackson and a Ford Granada flying through a plate glass window for no readily apparent reason was The Professionals" he confirmed "Dempsey & Makepeace was the one with the exploding betting shop at the end of the opening titles."

"How the hell do you know all this?" Tracy asked "That was at least twenty years ago and you are only twelve."

"Digital channels full of endless repeats of the classics" Jack confirmed as he used the remote control to change the channel on the television in the living room as if to prove his point. The loud thunderstorm brewing outside had meant neither of them could get any sleep and so both had decided to veg out with a large bag of crisps in front of the television.

"Usually it is my husband who gets all the television trivial questions right when I drag him each year to my parents Christmas dinner table" Tracy admitted "It is about the only bit of the festive activities he actually enjoys."

"Oh I do like a challenge" Jack remarked "Do we play for cash?"

"After Eight mints usually" Tracy confirmed "although last year during one particularly tense game of Trivial Pursuit my father upped the stakes to a bottle of finest malt all hinging on some question about a green Transit van."

"Rockcliffes's Babies" Jack immediately declared "Same van was also used as the undercover surveillance van in the first series of The Bill as well, but don't confuse it with the pale blue mark II version that appeared in both Minder and The Paradise Club."

"Jack my lad" Tracy responded with a smirk "I hereby pick you for my team this Christmas."

"Deal" Jack agreed as the mobile telephone on the coffee table began to vibrate its way across to the point that by the time Tracy had managed to lean forward to grab it, it was almost off the edge of the table and heading for the carpet.

"Caverner" Tracy declared as soon as she answered the telephone whereupon Commander Morgan of the Transport Division of the Service responded.

"Evening Maam, or rather good morning" Morgan declared "I do apologise for disturbing you at this hour but I have a standing order on my office notice board here that says to always give you a ring if we should notice a certain Commander doing something odd or rash and well, he has."

"Can't say I am that surprised" Tracy admitted "So what has he got his size tens into this time dare I ask?"

"Well it would appear" Morgan confirmed as he checked the status report he had just received "he, one of your ARU guys and a certain Mr Crowthorne spent the last half an hour rooting around the storage shed at Old Oak Common."

"Are they still there?" Tracy asked.

"They left about five minutes ago" Morgan confirmed "It was one of our officers who was having a tea break in the site security office there who spotted them and called me" he explained.

"Right, thanks" Tracy responded "It is probably my husband getting himself into trouble again, I'll look into it."

"What was that all about" Jack asked as he had only been able to hear one half of the conversation.

"Jack, where would those bullion vans we were talking about earlier have been stored?" Tracy asked.

"The old carriage sheds at Old Oak Common near Willesden" Jack confirmed.

"That's what I was afraid of" Tracy confirmed as she reached once again for her mobile telephone and dialled a number.

"Hello, Simon?" she called as soon as she was answered.

"Morning Maam" Fuller responded as he reached out to his bedside table and checked his alarm clock that confirmed his suspicions that it was well past midnight.

"Sorry to wake you up at this hour" Tracy apologised "however I need a rather urgent job done" she explained.

"Does this involve me leaving the house?" Fuller asked as he sat up in bed.

"It only requires a connected laptop in theory" Tracy confirmed.

"Ah well, that's all right then" Fuller responded as he reached over the side of the bed and grabbed his laptop computer before switching it on "I don't even have to get out of bed then. What do you need to know about whom?"

"You know that vehicle tracking system we fitted to all our patrol cars about three months ago" Tracy responded "Can you access it from where you are?" she asked.

"No problem Maam" Fuller confirmed as he started to work on the laptop accessing the appropriate system.

"I am looking for a patrol car that left the main gate of Old Oak Common railway depot about ten or fifteen minutes ago" Tracy explained "I need to know where it is now and which way it is heading."

"Do I even need to ask who is in the car?" Fuller sarcastically asked as he worked on his laptop.

"Of course not" Tracy replied "It may be nothing or it may just be my husband getting into trouble again."

"Regrettably my money would be on the latter" Fuller admitted "Ah, this must be the one" he declared as the laptop produced a result "There is a patrol car with no assigned duty number currently heading east."

"All right" Tracy confirmed "keep me updated on it's progress on my number, don't use the regular radio frequencies as we think whoever is behind all this may have contacts on the inside."

"If you like, I could throw a few carefully selected red herrings into the system and see if anyone bites?" Fuller suggested.

"I have to admit that idea has a certain merit about it" Tracy admitted "For now however is Jennifer there?" she asked.

"Yep" Fuller confirmed as he looked across at his wife alongside him.

"Ask her to meet me outside your front door in fifteen minutes and bring plenty of armour" Tracy instructed "With any luck she may get the chance for a little revengeful arse kicking."

"Do you think this is it?" Sir Richard asked as, standing by the side of the patrol car, they looked across the dark street to a factory unit as the approaching thunderstorm rumbled ominously ever closer and the first few spots of rain began to fall.

"Well there are only three rail connected sites in this area" the Commander confirmed as he rechecked his map "and the other two were either occupied or too small so I reckon this has to be it."

"This may be a coincidence" Sir Richard remarked pointing to a 'To Let' sign at the front gate of the suspect premises which was only just visible by the dim light shed upon it by the only working street lamp in that road "Isn't that the same property company old Bordon was mixed up in?"

"Now you should know by now I don't believe in coincidences" the Commander wryly responded.

"Oddly enough" Sir Richard confirmed "ever since I met you, neither do I anymore."

"So what is the plan if I may ask Sir?" Bob inquired "We do have a plan I presume?"

"I'm err working on it" the Commander reluctantly admitted.

"Can you work on it a little faster only it is starting to rain and I can feel water running down the back of my neck" Sir Richard remarked as the thunderstorm was well and truly setting in now.

"Bob, have a look-see around the perimeter and see what sort of exits we have" the Commander indicated around the side of the site.

"And whilst I get to do battle with the undergrowth, what are you planning to do if I may ask Sir?" Bob asked.

"I thought I would just walk right in through the front door" the Commander admitted rather unenthusiastically.

"Step into my parlour said the spider to the fly..." Sir Richard remarked.

"Come on" the Commander responded "Let's go before I change my mind."

With a certain amount of trepidation they proceeded to walk across the road and through the gates of the site until they found themselves standing in a yard which although empty now, had clearly been in use very recently judging by the lack of intrusive vegetation as well as the shiny condition of the railway lines set into the concrete which was made all the more noticeable by the rain water collecting rapidly now that the long promised thunderstorm front was moving in overhead.

"Just walk in the front door?" Sir Richard asked.

"I guess so" the Commander agreed still clearly uncertain about the whole set-up "besides if we stay out here much longer we will get soaked."

"After you" Sir Richard declared whereupon the Commander with his gun drawn duly led the way ahead and inside the warehouse building itself.

"Looks like nobody is at home" the Commander remarked as he scanned his torch around the darkened interior of the warehouse as the thunderstorm overhead grew ominously closer.

"Good morning Commander, so glad you could join us" a voice echoing around the interior of the building suddenly declared whilst at the same time the heavy metal doors behind them through which they had just entered slammed shut.

"Way over our heads even for us" Sir Richard remarked aside.

"Please, don't move gentlemen" the voice called once again "The building is filled with some very intricate booby traps that are now armed and it would be a shame if our little conversation were cut short because of some unforeseen err accident shall we say."

"We were kind enough to accept your admittedly unusual invitation and you know our names which puts us at a disadvantage sir" the Commander called out formally and having to raise a voice somewhat to be heard over the sound of the storm whose rain

was now beating down hard on the metal sheeting that made up much of the buildings structure.

"One face, many names" came the almost god like response as a spotlight was switched on concentrated on the spot where Sir Richard and the Commander were standing and enveloping the surrounding area in a veil of ominous darkness.

"Besides" Renault declared as he stepped into sight for the first time "this is not about little old me, I am just the hired help as it were. No, no this is all at the invitation of my employer."

"And who would that be?" Sir Richard asked.

"I pride myself on strict client confidentiality Mr Crowthorne" Renault casually admitted "besides in my line of work especially considering the rather brutal nature of many of my best clients, it would be very bad for business."

"So if you are just the hired help, your words I point out" the Commander responded "he or she won't be too bothered if I were to accidentally kneecap you or worse?"

"Commander, I feel that is not the right attitude" Renault replied casually, unmoved by any potential threats to his well being "I could have had you, Sir Richard here and even your lovely wife killed with a click of the fingers but like any good employee I have very specific instructions from my employer. I would if we had the time take you to see the last man who tried to defeat me, must be well over fifteen years ago but I don't think anyone here thought to bring a shovel."

"Would I be right in saying that amongst various aliases you would be known as a certain Mr Renault?" the Commander asked, unimpressed by his bluster in the slightest "or is it former IRA weapons man Paul Musgrave perhaps as I have a very colourful file on you back at the office."

"I admit I do seem to have got about a bit" Renault admitted with almost a sense of pride apparent in his voice "but this is not about me, it is about you two gentlemen and my current esteemed employer."

"Who is...?" Sir Richard asked.

"...remaining nameless at this time" Renault finished "suffice to say that your paths have crossed to a lesser or greater degree over the years, not so much you" he indicated the Commander "but certainly your good lady wife."

"Take me to your leader" the Commander retorted with a wry smirk which resulted in a strange look from Sir Richard in response "Sorry, always wanted to say that" he admitted.

"Very droll..." Renault responded "Unfortunately he is currently unavailable at the moment which kind of brings me to the main point of our little discussion, however at this juncture I think we would all feel a lot better if we were sitting down" he then reinforced the aim of his automatic weapon upon the two men "Wouldn't you?".

"Tracy's here" Fuller confirmed as he looked out of the front window to see a Security Service patrol car pull up outside and the familiar figure of his twin sister in law get out of the drivers seat and make a direct line towards their front door.

"Right, have I got everything?" Jennifer declared as she came into the front hallway securing her uniform tunic before checking she had her gun and spare ammunition clips.

"Come in" Fuller declared as he opened the door for Tracy.

"Ready to go Jenny?" Tracy asked as she brushed off the rain water from her uniform as outside it had deteriorated to the level of a torrential downpour.

"I think so" Jennifer confirmed "I tried to call Bob from the ARU section just now but apparently according to his wife he took off with the Commander and Sir Richard Crowthorne in a company motor about an hour ago."

"Well at least he had the sense to get some armed backup I suppose" Tracy admitted "Simon, what is the current location of that tracker."

"Err that's the next problem I am afraid" Fuller responded with a slightly apprehensive tone "it went off about ten minutes ago somewhere near Debden."

"Life is never simple is it?" Tracy remarked.

"I'll head to my office at Scotland Yard" Fuller confirmed "See if I can't try and re-establish contact somehow and be ready to summon the cavalry if you need it."

"We are supposed to be doing this all softly softly and quiet like" Tracy reminded him.

"I can do subtle" Fuller admitted.

"All right then, let's go" Tracy declared whereupon she and Jennifer headed out but not before Fuller had kissed his wife goodbye for luck.

"Nice night for it" Jennifer remarked when they had got in the car having run from the front door of her house to try and avoid the worst of the utterly appalling weather.

"Good" Tracy responded as she started the car "Maybe it will persuade the majority of this city's criminal fraternity to stay off the streets while we sort this mess out."

"Now that we are all more err comfortable" Renault remarked as he walked around the Commander and Sir Richard who were tied to chairs back to back in the centre of the vast empty warehouse "we can continue our little discussion, so where were we?"

"You were about to surrender to the authorities and tell us all about your employer including where we may find him and any of his minions that happen to be running about" the Commander responded.

"Nice try" Renault responded "On the contrary we were going to discuss the nature of any ongoing investigation into my employer's alleged activities."

"This would be the unnamed guy who can't be with us right now due to other commitments I suppose?" Sir Richard called back.

"That would be the fella" Renault confirmed "Although lets be honest here gentlemen..."

"That would be a first for you I would have thought" the Commander wittily cut in, a remark Renault choose to ignore and continue.

"...according to his well paid and informed sources across many spheres of both law enforcement and Government I think we all know exactly who we are talking about don't we?" Renault stated clearly as he continued to walk around them in a menacing circular route all the time with the gun ever present in his hands "after all it would appear you have been poking around in matters to which you have been firmly warned off from interfering in."

"Franklin Rogers, the so called Lord of Leytonstone" the Commander declared "and currently serving a very long prison sentence for a whole string of nasty offences from money laundering right up to conspiring to commit murder several times over if I recall correctly."

"Now what were the words someone told me that were used the other day" Renault faked trying to recall something for a brief moment "Ah yes, a political hot potato I believe is what he was described as."

"Someone has been listening at a few keyholes by the sounds of it" Sir Richard remarked.

"Oh more than a few I would say" Renault confirmed "but of course there are those who listen because they are told to by their bosses and then there are those who listen because they also listen well when money is being put in their pockets. Money talks gentlemen but more money speaks louder I think you will find."

"So what do you intend to do with us?" the Commander asked "As soon as you have finished your demi-god act that is."

"A message from an old friend" Renault confirmed as he stopped walking around them and knelt down a few feet away to come face to face with the Commander direct "Back off Rogers and any of his associates. We have more power and influence than you could possibly imagine."

"From a man who will be looking at the inside of a jail cell for the rest of his life" the Commander retorted dismissively "you will forgive me if I don't consider that to be much of a threat unless of course it was came from the mouth of the man himself and not from one of his hired guns."

"All in good time gentlemen" Renault confirmed as he stood up again and resumed his circulatory walk around them "The dice are rolling Commander, one of the best legal teams in the country is working on it and unless certain political heavyweights want their names branded in the papers in a less than salutary light in what looks likely to be an election year, our mutual friend Mr Rogers and his associates will be left well alone by the authorities."

"No deal" the Commander responded "You forget one thing, when it comes to corrupt politicians manoeuvring things for their own ends I don't take any prisoners, well actually yes I do now I come to think of it but only after they have been very publicly nicked and dragged away kicking and screaming that is."

"Speaking of corrupt politicians" Sir Richard remarked "Where is that worm Sir William Applegate?" he asked.

"Ah the beloved former Chief Secretary to the Treasury" Renault recalled "Such a helpful chap."

"We know he is still alive" the Commander confirmed "The little trick with the gas main bomb may have made his departure from public life fairly spectacular but he's still breathing more is the pity."

"I have to admit I was not entirely sure that gas main thing would work" Renault admitted "but one of your former MI5 colleagues did reassure me it was the ideal tool to as you say end the public life of one of the nation's ahem most trusted financial authority figures who at this moment is sailing away somewhere counting the earnings from some rather fortuitous share trading."

"That was what this was all about in the end wasn't it" the Commander responded "Money, insider trading."

"You have us and the Bank of England chasing our tails with some very convincing fake money" Sir Richard summarised "leak the story to the press at the right moment and even if the bulk of the fake cash failed to make it into circulation, you create enough financial panic in an already unstable economy so that you make a killing out of some very carefully planned share trading deals."

"An almost totally untraceable crime" Renault confirmed "All of the trading agreements were signed off by the supposed late Treasury Minister Applegate but with him dead there is no one to prosecute for insider trading, no money to be recovered because it was all siphoned electronically into off shore accounts within seconds of the trade occurring and of course the Government could never afford nor survive the scandal if any official ombudsman investigation publicly named Applegate at the top of the list of facts."

"Case closed, thank you very much, goodnight" the Commander concluded.

"Exactly" Renault confirmed "Which just leaves a few loose ends to tie up."

"We won't be able to take your warning to back off to our superiors if you kill us" Sir Richard warned "Remember what they always say, don't shoot the messenger."

"Indeed" Renault responded "Instead I shall be leaving you here to your thoughts gentlemen but although I am fairly certain the cavalry is probably on the way already don't expect them too quickly" he produced a small electronic device from his pocket and threw it at their feet "I took the liberty of disabling your vehicle's tracking device and also I would not get any foolish ideas about making a swift escape from these premises as..." he tailed off "Ah no, lets not spoil the surprise."

"Booby traps?" Sir Richard asked.

"Booby traps" the Commander agreed.

"Oh one last thing before I go" Renault suddenly remembered just as he was about to leave "My employer passes on his regards to your lovely wife and hopes to be seeing her again soon."

The Commander merely glowered with a menacing stare at Renault as he mimicked Sir Richard by tugging his forelock before disappearing out of sight into the darkness surrounding them.

"Charming fellow" Sir Richard remarked wryly as he tugged at his bonds in hope of freeing himself but to little avail.

"Sounds like what is outside is not the only storm coming" the Commander remarked as a loud and very close rumble of thunder rippled through the skies immediately overhead and the rain continued to hammer down onto the building's roof almost drowning out their conversation.

"Bluff and bluster old friend" Sir Richard confirmed "We know that Rogers has launched an appeal against his sentences but he doesn't stand a cat in hell's chance of getting anywhere with it no matter what he or his minions say."

"Don't be too certain" the Commander reminded him as he too attempted to try and loosen his own bonds "After all like our recently departed friend just said, money talks and more money speaks louder and when I last looked there was still about ten to fifteen million in very convincing forgeries unaccounted for which would pay very nicely for a palm greasing extravaganza and the best legal defence team in the business."

"If we get out of here I will look into it" Sir Richard confirmed "Unofficially of course, we don't want to be upsetting the natives who keep issuing all these stern warnings to back off."

"You see that is the trouble with me" the Commander admitted "Whenever someone tells me to back off from something you just know I will do exactly the opposite."

"Plus you are unbuyable" Sir Richard confirmed "I mean do you have any weaknesses at all?"

"Just the one" the Commander admitted with a little hidden worry in his mind "Just the one."

"Armed Security Officer" Bob called out suddenly as he saw Renault emerge from a side entrance and try and make good his escape "Don't even think about it mate" he strongly suggested as soon as he saw the man instinctively reach for a weapon before changing his mind.

"All right officer" Renault declared as he put his hands up and turned around to face Bob "I surrender" he admitted with a smile that made Bob all the more suspicious.

"Face down on the ground" Bob ordered, his weapon not moving off Renault for an instant as he moved forward "Hands on your head and keep quiet."

"If you insist officer" Renault agreed as he dropped to his knees "Oh by the way watch your step" he suddenly added casually.

"Ah hell" Bob suddenly called out as his boot struck a trip wire laid across the ground, the walk towards Renault having led him straight into a trap that had been put there for just such a purpose.

"Sorry about that" Renault remarked with a chuckle as Bob was suddenly hoisted by his leg into the air and suspended in mid air during which his gun fell from his grasp and landed on the ground from where he picked it up "I think I will take this, you could kill someone with this you know. Good night" he then declared before walking off laughing.

"Kestrel, this is Guardian" Bob called into his radio as he hung upside down from the trap that was suspended from an old loading gantry "I am afraid to report Sir I am in a bit of a pickle.

Renault laughed manically to himself as he left the site by a back entrance, passing the old sidings that once served the place in which were parked the rake of railway vans including the two bullion vans that he and his team had used earlier.

It was into one of these that he climbed up inside to retrieve a large canvas bag and a suitcase that he then took back outside and loaded into the boot of a parked four wheel drive car before he went to the driver's seat and started the engine.

A few moments later his vehicle was emerging out onto the side road that led alongside the site and he began his journey away, now thinking about his next

assignment in some far off part of South America so much so that he failed to notice the Security Service patrol car that passed him in the opposite direction.

"Tracy, stop!" Jennifer suddenly called out resulting in her sister slamming on the brakes so hard they were thrown forward.

"What?" Tracy responded.

"That was that bastard Renault" Jennifer explained as she looked over the back of her seat at the four wheel drive vehicle disappearing off into the distance down the road.

"Are you sure Sis?" Tracy asked as she attempted to turn the car around only to ram the back of it into a fence and rip part of the rear bumper off.

"Definitely" Jennifer confirmed as she drew her gun from its holster and checked it "Go on, get after him" she encouraged.

"Control from Lima Mike One" Tracy called into the radio as they set off in pursuit of the rapidly disappearing vehicle Renault was driving "All units to respond to a dark blue Land Rover Discovery currently heading west on the Debden bypass near the industrial estate" she declared "Vehicle and occupants to be detained using all necessary caution as driver is believed to be armed and dangerous."

"Lima Mike One from Lima Mike Whiskey Three Two Three" came a swift response from a patrol car also in the area "We are about two minutes away from that location."

"Join the party" Tracy confirmed as she switched on the lights and sirens and set off in pursuit.

"I guess she is better than I thought" Renault remarked as he saw the patrol car looming large in his mirrors to which he responded by speeding up despite the dangerous wet conditions.

"He's making a run for it by the looks of it" Jennifer remarked as Tracy struggled to keep up with Renault's vehicle in the slippery wet conditions as they approached the main dual carriageway which fortunately because of the time of the morning was quiet with no other traffic on it.

"This guy is good" Tracy remarked as she was forced to steer sharply to avoid a collision as Renault tried a few swings from left to right across the carriageway to try and shake off his pursuer "Not that I am the best driver in the world to compare with admittedly..."

"I'm saying nothing Sis" Jennifer responded quickly, well aware of just how legendarily bad Tracy's driving could be.

"Lima Mike One from Lima Mike Whiskey Three Two Three" came a call over the radio "We are approaching the Debden and Loughton junction now and can hear your sirens."

"We will be on top of you in about three seconds" Jennifer confirmed leaving Tracy to concentrate on driving.

"What was that?" Tracy asked as she managed to outmanoeuvre another violent swing by Renault's vehicle.

"I think we are about to have an accident" Jennifer admitted as she rechecked her seatbelt.

"What is this, a convention?" Renault suddenly called out as another Security Service patrol car seemed to appear out of nowhere immediately to his left forcing him to turn sharply to avoid a collision whereupon he proceeded back up the opposite carriageway.

"Hang on Sis" Tracy declared as she performed a hand brake turn in order to continue to follow Renault, narrowly missing a traffic island bollard in the process.

"I think you had better stick to motorbikes" Jennifer admitted wryly.

"I don't like the way the water is building up on the carriageway" Tracy remarked as side by side the two patrol cars continued to pursue the speeding Renault along the desolate but rain sodden dual carriageway "this is starting to get rather dangerous."

"Control from Lima Mike One" Jennifer called into the radio "Be advised target vehicle has now turned around and is heading at speed in the opposite direction."

"Lima Mike One from Control" the radio called "There is a Traffic Division unit about two miles ahead of you with a Stinger device on board if you wish to deploy."

"Sounds like a good idea to me" Tracy agreed.

"Confirmed Control" Jennifer relayed the confirmation "We can do with all the help we can get."

"I'll let them know Lima Mike One" the Control Room supervisor responded.

"Lima Mike Whiskey Three Two Three" Jennifer called via the radio to the other patrol car involved in the pursuit "Did you get all that?" she asked.

"Stinger in two miles Maam" the driver of the other car confirmed "We'll hang back a bit when we close in."

"Which at this speed" Tracy remarked as she struggled to keep control of the car as the combination of high speeds and waterlogged road surfaces was potentially leading to slipping and aquaplaning "will be in less than a minute."

"Well come on then, is that the best you can do?" Renault called to his rear view mirror as he saw that he was now beginning to put a bit of distance between himself and the two pursuing patrol cars. Unfortunately for him, looking back behind him meant he took his eye off of the road ahead and before he knew what was happening

there was a sudden bang from beneath his vehicle and the ride became very lumpy and jerky as a result of riding over a stinger device that had been deployed in his path and burst both left hand tyres.

"Got him" Tracy declared with a sense of satisfaction "Lets see how much further he can go on two wheels and two rims" she wondered as it became noticeable that he was slowing down significantly and despite the wet road surface, sparks were now coming from the left hand side of Renault's vehicle where the tyres had shredded off and the rims were making direct contact with the road surface.

"Whoa, there he goes" Jennifer remarked as Renault lost the battle with his almost undriveable car, skidded sideways on a large patch of standing water and slammed sideways into the central reservation crash barrier with a huge thump.

"Watch yourself" Tracy called to the two officers from the other patrol car as they all dispersed from their vehicles and guns drawn proceeded to surround Renault's car where they saw he was trying to get out but with the drivers side door jammed up against the crash barriers, he was trapped.

"Don't even think about it pal" Jennifer strongly suggested as she covered Renault through the broken windscreen with her gun pointed directly at him whilst Tracy opened the passenger side door and did the same with her own weapon.

"Hello there" Tracy declared with a sarcastic smile "It's a pleasure to meet you at last."

"What?" Renault groggily responded.

"I think you will find my sister means you are nicked mate" Jennifer confirmed as, helped by the other officers, she unceremoniously dragged him from the vehicle where he was promptly searched and handcuffed before being led away.

"Well that is the bag man under arrest" Tracy declared as she re-holstered her weapon "Now where the hell is my husband?"

"That's got it" Sir Richard declared as he finally managed to struggle free before releasing the Commander from his bonds whereupon they stood up for the first time in over an hour.

"Whoa, don't move" the Commander stopped Sir Richard just as he was about to step forward "If I am not imagining it there is a laser beam going across the floor about three inches in front of your foot" he pointed out the barely visible little red dot being emitted from a device over on the far side of the room that seemed to line up with some sort of reflector device on the opposite side.

"Actually" Sir Richard confirmed as he looked around carefully "Unless my eyes are deceiving me I would say there are several laser beams all around us."

"Have you got a cigar on you?" the Commander asked.

"You don't smoke" Sir Richard responded "and this is hardly the time or situation to start I would have thought."

"Just answer the question" the Commander pleaded.

"Well yes" Sir Richard confirmed as he retrieved his cigar case from his jacket pocket "Ah, I see" he then realised what the Commander had in mind as he proceeded to clip the end of a cigar and light it.

"Look at it this way" the Commander remarked "At least if we do end up being killed you go out happy" he commented.

"My doctor is going to give me hell for this" Sir Richard commented as he inhaled deeply from the cigar before crouching down and exhaling ahead of him, whereupon the smoke briefly revealed there were in fact two laser beams in front of him travelling in two different directions.

"Well looking at that" the Commander concluded "I would think it is safe to say there are at least six or seven beams surrounding us in a sort of hexagon like pattern."

"Good guess" Sir Richard confirmed as he breathed smoke around to their right which duly substantiated the theory "So now what?"

"Tread very carefully" the Commander suggested.

"No kidding" Sir Richard agreed "Right we should be safe if we lift up our legs high enough and step about eighteen inches straight ahead.

"You first" the Commander responded.

"Thanks" Sir Richard replied with a distinct lack of enthusiasm before he took a deep breath and then stepped over the laser beam that was directly in front of him landing safely on the other side of it. A few moments later the Commander took an equally deep breath and promptly followed.

"I think there is another one about two feet in front of us" the Commander pointed ahead whereupon Sir Richard duly inhaled on his cigar once more before exhaling smoke ahead to confirm the theory correct.

"Damm you are good" Sir Richard commented.

"Probably spent too many night shifts in Haychester watching The Adventure Game in the staff canteen" the Commander admitted.

"Was that the one with the vortex, crystals and the planet Arg which looked suspiciously like the BBC studios in Birmingham?" Sir Richard asked.

"That would be the one" the Commander confirmed as they both bravely stepped over the next beam "Trouble is so far this seems just a little bit too easy."

"Well if I were setting this little challenge" Sir Richard remarked "I would be betting on my contestants continuing to look down so..." he took another deep inhale on his cigar before exhaling directly ahead which revealed a new laser beam at head height straight in front of them.

"Sneaky" the Commander agreed.

"What do you suppose these beams are wired up to?" Sir Richard wondered as they carefully ducked under the next beam which meant they were now over halfway to the door.

"Given our boy's colourful record" the Commander concluded "I would expect something along the lines of demolition charges or similar within the load bearing members of the building's structure or maybe some sort of automated gun sequence."

"Charming" Sir Richard responded "I thought he said something about not wanting us dead."

"I think technically it is Tracy who is supposed to be the untouched and unharmed one" the Commander reminded him "We are just the collateral damage."

"Ok" Sir Richard confirmed "Next one is back at floor height and then we are at the door" whereupon they stepped carefully over it before stopping just short of the main door that led outside.

"Looks clear" the Commander remarked after examining the door carefully "Which is exactly what is bothering me."

"I was thinking the same" Sir Richard admitted as he too looked around the doorframe carefully only to step back suddenly when someone knocked on the door from the other side.

"Hello?" Tracy's voice was heard to call "Is there anyone in there?" she asked loudly.

"Yes" the Commander called back "Don't open this door until you check it for booby traps" he warned.

"Got it" Tracy confirmed as she saw a hand grenade wedged in the door jam which if it had been opened at that point would have armed it and exploded. Carefully she took a hold of the grenade, securing the spoon part in place before pulling it away safely.

"It's ok" she called "You can open the door now."

"Thank God for that" Sir Richard responded as between himself and the Commander they opened the heavy door and breathed a sigh of relief as they headed outside into the atrocious rain that was still hammering down.

"What do you want me to do with this?" Tracy asked indicating the grenade in her hand.

"Err guys can someone help me here?" Bob was heard to call from some distance away whereupon they turned to see him still hanging upside down from his foot looking wet through and thoroughly fed up.

"Chuck that over there" Sir Richard suggested whereupon Tracy duly slung the grenade as far away as she could before they all ducked down as it exploded safely.

"What the hell are you doing up there?" Jennifer asked as she and Tracy helped him down.

"Oh just hanging around" Bob joked as he returned to his feet and they rejoined the others by the door to the warehouse where Tracy was about to walk in when the Commander stopped her.

"I wouldn't if I were you dear" the Commander strongly suggested "Booby traps."

"Oh come on dear" Tracy responded disbelievingly "You don't seriously believe Renault would have the intelligence to set up something as clever as that do you?"

"All right then" the Commander declared "If everyone would care to step back I will endeavour to demonstrate" he confirmed as he picked up an old brick off of the ground and as soon as everyone was clear, he stepped back himself.

"Fire in the hole!" he called out as he threw the brick in through the open doorway where it duly broke one of the laser beams inside.

"I take it something is supposed to happen now love?" Tracy asked as they all looked on at the building which remained completely silent.

"It could have been a bluff I suppose?" Sir Richard ventured but then a series of explosions commenced around the perimeter of the building as demolition charges detonated in the supporting columns of the building before in a cloud of sparks, dust and smoke the roof and walls collapsed in on themselves.

"Well that was fun" Jennifer remarked as the rumble of the explosions died down.

"I don't suppose you happened to see a mad Irish maniac around here by any chance?" the Commander asked as they headed to Tracy's patrol car parked nearby.

"Traffic Division got him with a stinger about twenty minutes ago" Tracy confirmed with more than a hint of satisfaction "He is on his way under armed guard to a very secure little grey windowless room at New Scotland Yard as we speak."

"Good work my dear" the Commander declared as he and Tracy kissed "I think it is about time he and I had a little chat on my terms for a change."

"So what about this place?" Jennifer asked.

"Get it sealed off" the Commander ordered "Forensics can come in first thing in the morning, the bullion vans are parked on a siding around the back and I am willing to bet Sir David would like first dibs on a shufti at their contents."

Despite being a little before four o'clock in the morning, the duty warden was obliged to wake up and bring Franklin Rogers from his cell to the telephone as it was his defence lawyer calling.

"Rogers" the warden called as he opened the door finding that he was already awake as he in fact had been expecting this call "Your lawyer wants a word, come on" he informed him gruffly.

"Thank you my good man" Rogers responded as he got up, put on his dressing gown and followed the warden from his cell along the corridor and down to the prison office where he was shown into a side room whose stark interior contained only a battered table, chair and a telephone which was off the hook awaiting him.

"This is Mr Rogers" he declared in his typical fake upper class voice with all the attendant mannerisms "I believe you have news for me Mr Thorndyke?"

"Indeed I do" Thorndyke, the highly respected lawyer leading Roger's extensive legal bid appealing against his multiple jail sentences confirmed "I have had it confirmed from our friends in the States that their Justice Department are sending through the necessary paperwork for our case later today."

"God bless the freedom of information act" Rogers responded with a sarcastic grin "So what word from our own Attorney General's office?"

"Well Sir" Thorndyke confirmed as he checked his diary on the desk in front of him "As long as the paperwork reaches us and it confirms what we believe to be correct then the case should be held in the Court of Appeal on the twenty sixth of this month."

"Excellent" Rogers confirmed "So what news of our friends?" he asked.

"Is this line secure?" Thorndyke asked with some understandable concern.

"It should be, it cost me enough" Rogers responded.

"As you predicted, Renault's enthusiasm got the better of him and he has been arrested a couple of hours ago by the Security Service" Thorndyke confirmed "That angle is however being taken care of in the usual way."

"Well if he had lived we would have had to have paid his bill for his extensive services" Rogers remarked with a wry grin.

"Err quite" Thorndyke responded with some uncertainty "Meantime I am endeavouring to see to it that Applegate is also dealt with, in fact we are quite lucky in that respect actually."

"I should say so" Rogers agreed "He is already technically dead and implicated across the board in some share dealing swindles so I think it is safe to say we can let the political machine and the Security Service take care of him on our behalf. Don't you just love irony?"

"Indeed" Thorndyke was forced to agree with a slightly nervous laugh.

"And the legendary Ms Caverer" Rogers asked "Architect in chief of my current incarceration, she is unharmed as I instructed?"

"Not a hair harmed on her" Thorndyke confirmed "as you instructed."

"In which case I think we can all relax and look forward to the twenty sixth" Rogers confirmed as he sat back in the chair thoroughly relaxed "It is going to be a hell of a show."

"Don't take this the wrong way love" Tracy remarked as she entered the Commander's office and sat down alongside him on the couch where they put their arms around each other "but you look like hell."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded as they kissed "Oh look at that" he looked towards the window that looked out across the city where the first glow of the approaching sunrise could be seen beginning to make its appearance "it is nearly morning already."

"Well at least it has stopped raining" Tracy confirmed "Apparently there is so much water in the Northern Line the morning rush hour is blown to hell before it has even started."

"Just another day in the city" the Commander confirmed "Speaking of which I really ought to get this chat with this Renault guy over and done with and then we can go home to bed."

"Sounds like a good idea" Tracy agreed as they got up "Only I am coming with you, in the state you are in you are likely to fall over."

"May your shoulder always be there for me to lean on my dear" the Commander declared "preferably still attached to the rest of you" he added as they left the office and headed down the hall to the lifts.

"By the way, you never told me what Renault had to say" Tracy inquired as they headed downstairs in the lift.

The Commander looked across at her silently for a moment wondering exactly how much to tell her but quickly decided that the less she knew the better.

"Oh just the usual megalomaniac type ramblings" the Commander admitted "Apparently his 'employer' has everyone or at least their wallets at his beck and call if you believe it."

"Franklin 'I'm the Guvnor' Rogers?" Tracy mocked with an assured laugh "Trust me love there is no way that particular vile piece of work will see the outside of prison except horizontally inside a wooden box."

"Are you sure?" the Commander asked "only there is this appeal he is supposedly mounting."

"The evidence I put him away with was rock solid" Tracy confirmed determinedly "besides I have cast iron guarantees sworn by the Attorney General on a stack of grandmothers that he will never breathe free air again."

"Well I guess planning pointless appeals will help pass the time for him at least" the Commander admitted "Everyone should have a hobby" he declared as the lift doors opened on the first floor, home to the custody suite where the night shift desk supervisor duly stood up upon seeing his superiors arrive.

"Good morning Sir, Maam" the Supervisor declared "Interpol, have collected the prisoner as per your instructions."

"Whoa there" the Commander stopped in his tracks "Err what instructions?"

"The extradition warrant for the prisoner" the Supervisor confirmed as he found the paperwork in question and showed it to the Commander "Renault, transferred to the custody of Interpol representatives the best part of half an hour ago."

"Is this the point where I should just hit my head repeatedly against the nearest brick wall?" Tracy asked with obvious disbelief.

"Hold on a minute love" the Commander urged "Could you pass me a telephone" he asked.

"Who are you calling?" Tracy asked as the Commander proceeded to dial.

"Old friend of mine over at Interpol" the Commander confirmed "I am about ninety nine percent certain they have absolutely no knowledge of this but just to make sure..."

"These guys that showed up claiming they were from Interpol" Tracy asked the Supervisor as the Commander was busy speaking to his contact over on the other side of the room "Did they show any identification?"

“Got copies of it right here Maam” the Supervisor confirmed “We got a memo a few weeks back from somewhere or other saying that we should get photocopies of all identification in all prisoner transfer cases.”

“A little suggestion from our friend Mr Crowthorne I suspect” the Commander remarked having now hung up the telephone “Well one thing is for certain, Adrian Chambers over at the London Interpol Office has confirmed it wasn’t them but if we do ever find Renault again, they would like a crack at him assuming there is anything left when we have finished with him.”

“Is it just my vivid imagination love or do you look not entirely unsurprised this has happened?” Tracy asked.

“Dark influential forces are at work once more my dear” the Commander admitted “they move amongst shadows and don’t like prisoners being taken amongst their ranks and that makes me fairly certain that wherever Renault is now, he won’t exactly be enjoying it.”

“Come on, let’s go home and get some sleep” Tracy strongly suggested.

“Agreed” the Commander confirmed “Thank you” he responded to the Supervisor “Good night.”

“Err morning actually” Tracy reminded him wryly as they left arm in arm.

“...and financial markets are stabilising following yesterday’s turmoil triggered by the story in the Daily Chronicle claiming of a large amount of fake money heading into circulation across the UK” the BBC World Service news broadcast announced causing Sir David Godwin and the Prime Minister to lower their morning papers in the back of the Ministerial Escort Car to listen for a moment.

“A joint statement from the Attorney General and the Director General of the Bank of England...” the radio broadcast continued.

“Ah fame at last, Shelia will be pleased” Sir David remarked with a chuckle.

“...confirmed late last night that only a tiny amount of fake banknotes had entered circulation and that these had been stopped before being issued to the general public. Reports that the National Security & Police Service have made arrests in the ongoing investigation have not yet been confirmed” the news report concluded.

“And now the fickle national press can return to the safety of printing a headline story about some footballer’s wife having a boob job” the Prime Minister joked “It seems to me that is all the public are really interested in these days. Do you think it would work for me?” he asked.

“What getting a boob job Prime Minister?” Sir David nearly choked on his coffee “Well it would certainly gain some publicity I will say that at least.”

“The National Financial Ombudsman Graham Wainwright QC has refused to comment on growing speculation that the late Sir William Applegate...” the radio news broadcast continued at which point the Prime Minister with a sense of reluctance leaned forward and turned it off.

“I think that is quite enough of that for one day” the Prime Minister declared “and its only just gone nine o’clock in the morning.”

“That is going to be a pretty mess to sort out if it ever gets into the public domain” Sir David remarked.

“Well lets hope it doesn’t” the Prime Minister responded with insistence clear in his voice “The Government is in a perilous state as it is already and that is even taking into account the lack of a credible opposition to step in as well.”

“We’re here” the driver called back to them whereupon the official Jaguar saloon car pulled off the road into the yard in Debden where the Fire Brigade had just finished making sure the badly damaged main building was safe whilst waiting for them was the familiar tall figure of Sir Richard Crowthorne along with his successor at MI5 operations, David Collins.

“Good morning Gentlemen” the Prime Minister declared as he and Sir David got out of the back of the car and greeted the two men “The Commander not with you?”

“Here he comes now” Sir Richard pointed behind the Prime Minister to the speeding Security Service patrol car that was at that point entering the yard before it pulled up alongside.

“Sorry I am late gentlemen” the Commander declared as he got out of the drivers seat “Had to drop Jack off at school on the way over here on account the Central Line is stuffed at Mile end, again!”

“Well you haven’t missed much” Sir Richard confirmed “In fact we were just about to get started.”

“I sent my team in this morning to take a look at your Bullion Vans” Collins confirmed as he led the way around the side of the main building towards the rear of the site and the railway sidings “In fact two of my guys had to look these things up on the Internet to find out what they were. There were more references to the kit to make scale models of these in OO scale than there were of the real thing.”

“Yes I know” the Commander admitted “I’ve asked the forensics photographer to send Jack a set of detail shots of the vans as he wants to build a model of them himself.”

“Well we got here about half an hour ago” Collins confirmed as they reached the vans where a step ladder up to the doorway had been erected “We just opened them and then we discovered something rather interesting had wandered in while no one was looking” he confirmed as he opened the door and showed the men inside.

“Oh how I hate it when I am right” the Commander declared as they came upon the extraordinary sight of Renault’s lifeless body, bloodied and battered and fastened almost as if he had been crucified to the end wall of the inside of the van.

“Been dead about an hour, maybe ninety minutes” Collins confirmed “and he didn’t die quickly or painlessly either.”

“Oh dear, what a pity” Sir Richard mockingly responded as he and the Commander took a closer look at the body.

“We also found this pinned to him” Collins produced a plastic evidence bag “Nice little warning I reckon.”

“A message from an old friend” the Commander read the blood stained piece of paper in the evidence bag “As you can see we don’t take prisoners, be seeing you.”

“One hell of a hard message” the Prime Minister responded.

“Well there goes our one and only decent lead” the Commander declared almost despondent.

“What about the equipment?” Sir David asked.

“All of the printing equipment as far as we can tell is in the other vans in this rake” Collins confirmed “but there is no sign whatsoever of the remaining fake money or any other documents they may have produced. Also it looks like any masters that they had on the computers that control this lot have been very professionally wiped.”

“Well I guess that is case closed then” the Prime Minister remarked “Publicly at least.”

“There is still the Applegate question” Sir Richard responded “He is out there somewhere very much alive and if he were to be seen in public, even a suspicion of him still being alive with these corruption and insider trading charges floating in the air...”

“Let’s just say that is being taken care of” the Prime Minister confirmed “Just don’t ask any questions” he strongly suggested.

“Oh I wouldn’t dream of it” the Commander responded wryly with a fairly good idea of what was in mind for the traitorous Applegate at some point in the not too distant future.

“So what do you want us to do with this lot?” Collins asked indicating some of the equipment in the van they were standing in.

“I think once the Security Service’s finest forensic experts have finished dusting it we could find a useful home for it all” Sir David confirmed “Save us a fortune on our annual equipment budget.”

“Sounds fair enough” the Commander readily agreed before they proceeded to leave the van returning outside to the cold stark morning air.

“Commander, a word please” the Prime Minister asked beckoning him aside out of earshot of the others. “I gather the name Franklin Rogers has popped up again?”

“Like a slice of mouldy bread in a toaster” the Commander admitted.

“And no doubt you have been advised at some point that this gentleman is somewhat of a err how shall I put it...?” the Prime Minister continued.

“Political hot potato?” the Commander prompted.

“Very nicely put” the Prime Minister agreed “Well to put it bluntly, there are those around the upper circles of Government who start coughing and looking all nervous whenever his name is mentioned these days” he explained “This upcoming appeal of his has really got some people reaching for the Valium apparently.”

“Of course you do know who was the leading officer in the inquiry that put him inside in the first place don’t you?” the Commander asked.

“Wasn’t one of yours was it?” the Prime Minister asked.

“Not this time” the Commander confirmed “No, this is the crowning glory of my dear wife’s career. The only thing is it was never put on her official record on account of Roger’s reputation and long list of contacts and influences yet somehow he seems to know all about it.”

“Good God, it’s worse than I thought” the Prime Minister responded with a very genuine look of worry on his face.

“Well apparently the Attorney General is saying there is no way his upcoming appeal has a hope in hell’s chance of being successful so for the moment I am not going to worry about it” the Commander stated.

“I have to go” the Prime Minister declared as he checked his watch “I will leave you with this thought, nothing is as clear cut as it may seem. Be careful old friend” he responded before with a very sincere look he departed heading back to his car where Sir David Godwin was already waiting for him.

“That looked like an interesting conversation with a very worried man” Sir Richard remarked as he came up to the Commander and standing alongside each other they watched as the Prime Minister’s car departed the site, mud splashed all over its normally shiny black paintwork.

“Signs and portents I think” the Commander admitted “Signs and portents...”

“Captain, hostile vessel sighted green three two zero Sir” came the call across the bridge of the British Nuclear Submarine HMS Neptune.

“Thank you” the Captain responded as he proceeded to lift the periscope and turn it until his view came to bear on the target vessel in question, a humble looking motor launch with sails aloft which was heading out into the mid Atlantic approximately two hundred miles off of the southern Irish coast “Get me the Admiralty on a secure line please.”

Back in central London, the Prime Minister was in the back of his car having dropped off Sir David Godwin back at the Bank of England before heading back into Whitehall when the telephone rang.

“The Admiralty on the phone for you Sir” the driver called back “Secure line.”

“Thank you” the Prime Minister responded as he took the call “Admiral” he declared “What news from the open ocean.”

The Prime Minister listened intently as the Admiral of the Fleet re-laid the information he had just received from the HMS Neptune before pausing a few moments to seriously consider his next decision.

“Proceed when ready” the Prime Minister confirmed before slowly hanging up and pouring a much required stiff drink from the decanter.

“Admiralty signals order given to fire Sir” the radio operator confirmed to the Captain.

“Very well” the Captain agreed “Number One, load tubes one and two, flood and open outer doors please. Helm make our course one eight zero and maintain current depth.”

There were a tense few moments on the bridge of the Neptune as the submarine moved into firing position, all this being constantly monitored by the Captain through the periscope.

“Fire one” the Captain calmly ordered “Fire two” he then added whereupon two soft thuds were heard as at the front of the submarine the two torpedoes were launched and sent on their way to the target.

“Twenty seconds to target” the Number One confirmed with his stopwatch in his hand.

The Captain continued to maintain his watch through the periscope amidst total silence which was only broken by the ominous beeping noise which gradually speeded up as the torpedoes approached their target until a single tone matched with the view through the periscope as the motor launch blew apart in two successive large explosions.

“Number One” the Captain called “Signal the Admiralty, target has been neutralised.”

As the Prime Minister got out of the back of his car outside Number Ten Downing Street, his mobile telephone rang which he immediately answered with an anxious look.

“Admiral” the Prime Minister responded “The target?” he asked whereupon he got his confirmation before hanging up and proceeding inside the front door of Number Ten.

Once inside with the door closed behind him, the Prime Minister looked around to ensure he was alone before dialling another number on his mobile telephone.

“It’s done” was all he said before hanging up again.

“Well that is the case zipped up in a body bag I am afraid” the Commander admitted regretfully as he placed the coroners report on Tracy’s desk as he came in.

“Couldn’t have happened to a more deserving chap” Tracy remarked as she looked at the report contained inside the file including the photograph of Renault’s body “Made a hell of a mess of him though by the looks of it.”

“He didn’t go quietly apparently so the Forensic Examiner reckons” the Commander agreed as he sat down alongside Tracy and they put their arms around each other.

“And Applegate?” Tracy asked.

“All at sea apparently” the Commander confirmed “Which just leaves us with the missing funny money and probably a whole box load of fake official documents floating around in God knows who’s hands.”

“It’s strange” Tracy remarked “Usually on these big cases we have some kind of conclusion, someone in jail, a signed and sealed confession, something but this time all we have are doubts and whispers in shadowy corners. I can’t help thinking something is coming.”

“Given the strange way some people have been acting lately” the Commander admitted with an apprehensive tone “including the Prime Minister, I fear you may be right.”

“Come on” Tracy urged her husband on a brighter note to try and lighten the mood “It’s lunchtime, the City is at peace, all is quiet at the moment and the canteen are serving chocolate gateaux for dessert.”

“It’s not Friday” the Commander responded.

“I managed to persuade the catering manager to change the menu” Tracy confirmed “I reckon we both needed some cheering up with some good old fashioned comfort food.”

“I don’t deserve you, you know that?” the Commander remarked, kissing her gently.

“Of course” Tracy admitted as they got up and prepared to leave arm in arm “But then again who else would have you?”

“Good point love” the Commander agreed.

Jack looked up momentarily from doing his homework as the BBC London News headlines were read out on the television in the corner of his room. He was one who always liked to keep up on current affairs but he did not take all that much notice of the news that afternoon as the problems of his English Literature coursework were presenting more pressing problems.

"...and in a lengthy statement released in the last hour by the Rogers defence team, they are quoted as saying that this new appeal will be based on a wide ranging and indefatigable piece of new evidence recently received and which is said to have cost something in the region of a million pounds to put before the appeal court" the reporter stood outside the Law Courts in Whitehall informed his audience.

"Let's hope they weren't paid in cash then" Jack casually remarked aside as he reached for the remote control and switched off the television before returning to his homework.

To be continued...

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