

LEWISHAM

Security Novels Series - Episode IX



John M Upton

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Lewisham

"We danv" the Commander read from his diary with a slightly puzzled expression as the eight car train of Class 377 Southern Electrostar stock weaved its way through the complex track work that guarded the approach to Eastbourne station on the sunny south coast of East Sussex.

With some soul searching, he tried to rack his mind as to what this little note that he had at some point in the past hastily scribbled in the entry for three days time actually meant.

"We are now approaching Eastbourne" the cheery but annoying automatic announcement system called throughout the rear car in which the Commander was travelling "Our final destination. Thank you for travelling with Southern."

Failing to come up with the answer to the mystery, the Commander instead responded to the announcement of their impending arrival by returning the diary to the inside pocket of his best dress uniform tunic, rising from his seat and proceeding towards the doors just as the train came to a halt.

Exiting as soon as the release of the train doors would allow, the Commander walked briskly along the length of platform one to the ticket barriers where he was let through by the Station Supervisor with a friendly acknowledgement.

Having crossed the station's Victorian glass roofed concourse and exited out into Terminus Road, the Commander was greeted with the welcome sight of old friend and former Security Department colleague Commander Al Longton who was also attired in full dress uniform complete with ceremonial sword and looking none too comfortable in it as well.

"Well you certainly believe in cutting things fine Sir" he remarked as the two men met and shook hands warmly.

"Something came up at the last minute" the Commander offered by way of explanation.

"Nothing new there then" Longton remarked with wry grin "I have a fast car parked around the corner. We should just make it."

"Oh drat!" the Commander suddenly remarked as they reached the red marked Security Service patrol car parked in the taxi rank situated beneath the station awning alongside the platforms.

"You forgot the rings?" Longton asked concerned.

"No I got them" the Commander confirmed "I've lost my sword!"

"Where is it?" Longton asked.

The Commander looked across at the nearby platform where the eight car train on which he had arrived a few minutes earlier was now pulling away back the way it had come with a blast of its two tone horn.

"On its way back to London Victoria by the looks of it" the Commander commented with a little sigh as he watched "Never mind, we have a wedding to go to."

"You do know it's supposed to be the bride who is late for a wedding, not the best man?" Longton reminded the Commander as they got in the patrol car.

"Well if your driving is still anything like it was when I was your boss at Haychester then I reckon we should get their before we have left" the Commander responded as Longton started the car.

"Hold tight!" Longton announced as he activated the sirens and lights before accelerating away through the traffic.

"VIP Protection Division, Commander Sandhurst speaking" the experienced officer answered the telephone that was ringing on the vacant desk of his superior officer.

"No, Divisional Commander Caverner is not here today" Sandhurst explained to the caller "She is getting married this afternoon."

"Ah...." Sandhurst responded, an air of concern coming over him as the message was relayed by the caller "Well I can have a car and a couple of our best officers there within twenty minutes" he added as he quickly consulted the duty roster posted on the notice board alongside him.

"You've got them" Sandhurst responded "Just tell me where" he proceeded to jot down some details on the notepad on the desk before the caller passed a final instruction to him.

"The Administrator General?" he asked "Yes he is the Best Man at the wedding, Jennifer Caverner is his sister in law you see" Sandhurst explained "Eastbourne I think, his office at the yard should have the details."

The call certainly had an air of mystery to it and even though only one half was audible to the other officers in the general office, they became aware that an event of some significance appeared to have been set in motion.

"Yes Sir, I understand" Sandhurst confirmed "Right away, thank you Sir. Goodbye."

Sandhurst looked down at the telephone for a few moments in contemplation before looking around the general office where those present were all looking up in his direction as if in impatient anticipation.

"Terry, Imogen" Sandhurst called "Get hold of the fastest car we have got and get yourselves down to Lewisham General Hospital" he announced "Witness Protection just had one of their stars go down with a major coronary."

"Yes Sir" the two officers Sandhurst had selected for this job responded.

"Go to the main in patients entrance" Sandhurst explained "You will be met there but be aware they want this done strictly on the QT."

"On our way!"

Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner looked up and down the road with a distinctively worried expression as she stood on the pavement outside the church where her twin sister Jennifer was about to be imminently married.

"Where the hell are you?" she pondered.

"My fiancé or your husband?" Commander Simon Fuller enquired as he joined his soon to be sister in law on the edge of the pavement.

"Brides to be are supposed to be late" Tracy responded "The Best Man on the other hand is a different point."

"Well he did get promoted to Regional Administrator General" Fuller remarked "It was bound to happen that he would become busier."

"Some achieve greatness" Tracy remarked wryly "However my husband is definitely one who had it thrust upon him, by the National Security Committee in his case."

"I hear approaching sirens" Fuller remarked as he strained to make out a sound in the distance through the general background soundtrack of traffic as well as the over enthusiastic seagulls which frequently dominate Eastbourne's environs.

"He is just coming now" Sir Richard Crowthorne, the distinguished head of the Intelligence Service more commonly known as MI5 confirmed as he joined the two officers on watch at the edge of the pavement.

"Morning Sir Richard" Tracy responded "Glad you could make it."

"Is there anyone you don't know the location of in these parts?" Fuller asked Sir Richard out of curiosity.

"Not many" Sir Richard had to admit with a wry grin "Except maybe my wife when the sales are on!"

"There they are!" Fuller pointed ahead to where he could just make out the patrol car enter the far end of the road they were and in and weave its way through the traffic before pulling up sharply to a halt in front of them.

"You didn't think I was going to make it did you?" the Commander remarked with a wry smile as he emerged from the car.

"Well let's just say that the odds were not that good" Sir Richard remarked "However I have just won ten quid!"

"I don't know" the Commander responded as he greeted Tracy with a welcoming kiss.

"You've got your business overcoat on" the Commander remarked to Sir Richard "I take it therefore there is an element of business to your presence."

"Well I was here just for the wedding I'll admit" Sir Richard responded with some slight hesitation "Unfortunately I just got a phone call ten minutes ago and we will need a little chat."

"Can it wait until after the wedding?" Tracy enquired with a sense of urgency "Only the bride is approaching" she pointed in the direction of the classic 1930's Rolls Royce that had just turned into the end of the road a short distance away.

"I guess it will have to" the Commander responded "Go on get in there" he ushered Fuller inside the church as Tracy stood by to greet her twin Sister as the car pulled to a majestic and distinguished halt in front of her.

"He hasn't changed his mind has he?" Jennifer Caverner asked as she got out of the car, dressed in a magnificent wedding dress that impressed everyone who saw it.

"Everyone is here" Tracy confirmed "Amazingly that even includes the Best Man" she added as they went inside whereupon the organist duly started up with a organ piece by Mendelssohn, a personal choice of Jennifer's over the more traditional 'Here comes the bride'.

It was a smooth and efficient service with the vows exchanged and the Commander having to make silent mouth movements to the hymns, partially because he could not sing for toffee but mostly because he didn't actually know the words.

It all seemed over so quickly and before they knew it, the newly weds were heading hand in hand out of the ornate main door of the church to where the photographer was waiting.

As the family photographs were being taken, Sir Richard and the Commander went off to one side to have a discrete conversation in the adjacent graveyard, a ironically appropriate location given the nature of the news that was about to be passed on.

"Why do I always get the feeling I need to get my bullet proof vest out of mothballs whenever we have one of these little chats?" the Commander commented as he and Sir Richard walked along the gravel path through the cemetery.

"Hopefully it's not that bad" Sir Richard responded "However I am the bearer of bad news."

"No chocolate cake to be served at Security Service canteens as part of some Government health scheme?" the Commander joked knowing that this was probably where the light heartedness was about to end.

"Your Father had a massive coronary about an hour and a half ago" Sir Richard responded "He's been rushed to the secure unit at Lewisham General Hospital, they've got him stable on life support but I think you ought to go and see him."

"Even though I am officially not supposed to know he even exists of course" the Commander added with a look of deep concern now apparent.

"Sorry to bring this upon you" Sir Richard apologised.

"Not your fault" the Commander responded "I'll make an appearance at the reception and then I think Tracy and I will have to make a discrete exit."

"I have arranged for a couple of the best VIP Protection Division officers to be at the hospital strictly on the QT" Sir Richard confirmed "But if he should pass away, we ought to be prepared for problems."

"And so it begins...." the Commander announced philosophically.

The years had not been kind to David Havelock, a junior minister in the Government's Treasury Department. Despite being in his mid fifties, his thinning grey hair and weather beaten complexion gave him the appearance of someone much older and nearing retirement.

He was walking along the Embankment on the north side of the River Thames in London with the cold wind blustering into his face and making him feel even more miserable than he was normally. On his way to work in the heart of Westminster, he had reached Portcullis house in the shadow of Big Ben when his mobile telephone rang.

"Great..." Havelock responded as he reached inside his overcoat and answered the telephone with a resigned sigh.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Regent's dying" an unidentified voice informed him in a very formal and serious tone "Lewisham District General."

"Oh hell" Havelock responded and paused for a few moments to gather the thoughts racing through his mind at this news "Has the Administrator General been informed?"

"Not officially" the voice responded "but you can bet he knows by other channels."

"Someone had better inform the Minister" Havelock commented "I guess that will be me?"

"Indeed" the voice confirmed "and if Regent dies then I strongly suggest you find every last shred of evidence and burn it as fast as possible."

"Interesting times ahead then" Havelock commented.

"Indeed" the voice agreed "Indeed."

"If your husband is not preoccupied then I am a monkey's uncle" Jennifer commented aside to Tracy as they watched the Commander conclude his required task of the Best Man speech.

"Something is definitely wrong I'll agree" Tracy responded "I think I will investigate further" she added as she rose from her seat and went over to meet him.

"I need a word" the Commander informed her apprehensively as she came over and joined him "Something has come up."

"I figured as much" Tracy responded, accompanied by a cheery smile which managed to raise the Commander's spirits just a little as she took him by the hand and together they disappeared discreetly off to one side where they could talk alone.

"So four pence for them then" Tracy urged as they stood together by a window that looked out over the vistas of sunny Eastbourne.

"That inflation has struck again" the Commander remarked wryly.

"Well I reckoned this was going to be one of those expensive ones" Tracy explained.

"My Father, my real one that is has had a major heart attack" the Commander explained "He's been taken to Lewisham General under heavy guard.

"Ah..." Tracy remarked "What are his chances?"

"From what I understand via Sir Richard" the Commander responded "It would be advisable to get up there fairly sharpish."

"Well come on then" Tracy grabbed her husband firmly by the arm in a typical instance of decisive action and escorted him as far as where the bride was about to take her slightly reluctant groom for their official first dance.

"You have the appearance of two senior officers in a hurry" Jennifer commented with some concern.

"Let's just say something's come up" the Commander responded slightly hesitantly "We are going to have to jump ship and head on up to Lewisham."

"Now there is a coincidence" Jennifer mused "I have just been called about sending two of my officers up that way on some kind of a hush hush job."

"It's a small world" Tracy remarked "I'll fill you in when you get back from honeymoon."

"Can't wait" Jennifer responded.

"I'll see you outside, I need some air" the Commander informed Tracy before taking his leave, an obvious worried stance in the way he shuffled off towards the exit.

Tracy looked around the hall at the party guests, half of which seemed to be Security Service officers in full dress uniform but she soon located the person she required.

"Hey Al!" Tracy called after attracting his attention with a shrill whistle "We need some transport!"

It was with a little reluctance that Roger Field approached the main entrance of Lewisham General Hospital. It had been a long time since he last set foot in this particular building and as before, the reason for his visit was a sad one.

"Roger Field" the distinguished well dressed gentleman in his early sixties introduced himself at the main reception desk of the Hospital "I'm here to visit a friend in the Secure Section."

"Although I expect Security will need to clear you when you get there" the friendly receptionist responded "You can find the section on building 'D' down that corridor, up one floor and then just follow the signs."

"Thank you my dear" Field replied with an old fashioned tug of the forelock.

Turning smartly on the heels of his well polished hand made leather shoes, Field proceeded away in the direction indicated, making his way through the clinically clean hospital corridors past trolleys and stretchers which were being silently guided back and forth between different parts of the complex.

Soon he arrived at the Secure Ward, on the outside seemingly identical to the rest of the hospital, only the two plain clothes officers from the VIP Protection Division of the Security Service and a couple of other discretely positioned officers who Field correctly assumed to be with the Witness Protection Branch who were in and around the area outside the large double doors that led onward.

"Good afternoon" one of the officers greeted Field in a polite manner that normally you would not expect of one with so serious a responsibility "How may I help you?"

"I'm here to see your patient" Field responded as he reached inside his jacket pocket and produced his passport "My identification, I believe I am expected."

"Thank you" the officer responded as he took the passport and passed it to his colleague who consulted it in comparison with a clipboard he was carrying before nodding to his colleague and passing it back.

"All I ask is that you are not too long" the first officer responded as he handed Field back his passport before opening the door to allow him to enter.

"Thank you gentlemen" Field acknowledged and proceeded through the door into the Secure Unit corridor on the other side.

He found himself in a far quieter section than that he had just left behind. A number of well appointed single bed rooms and a higher standard of decoration that was accompanied by a higher level of visible security including CCTV cameras recording every movement, panic alarm call buttons and bullet proof glass in the windows.

Today only one of these single rooms was occupied as shown by the shaft of light coming from its doorway out into the dimly lit corridor and it was towards this door that Field proceeded where he was met by a plain clothes officer who stood aside to allow him to enter.

"Could you possibly give us a moment?" Field asked the officer.

"Yeah, sure mate" the officer agreed "I'll just be outside."

Once the officer had left, Field went over to the bed where the sole patient in the department lay, an elderly man seemingly very quiet, at rest despite the plethora of life support equipment that was attached to him keeping him alive.

"Eddie" Field asked quietly "It's Roger mate."

Slowly Eddie Regent turned his head slightly towards Field and managed a smile "Hello old friend."

"Heard you've been in the wars lately Eddie" Field asked.

"The usual" Regent responded "Overworked ticker decided it didn't want to know anymore."

"I put a call into our mutual friend as soon as I heard" Field replied "He should be on his way now."

"Thanks mate" Regent was clearly in a lot of discomfort and was trying his best to disguise it.

"Whoa there" Field stopped Regent from moving forward upon seeing through his disguised discomfort "You rest easy."

"Do you think my innards are out of warranty?" Regent asked with a cough interrupted chuckle.

"Just a tad" Field replied "Just a tad."

The squeal of tyres as the patrol car braked to a halt outside Eastbourne Railway Station echoed throughout the building and attracted the attention of many passers by, indeed many of them took the wise decision to move swiftly out of the way as Tracy and the Commander alighted from the vehicle, proffered their swift but heartfelt thanks to Commander Longton and headed at speed on foot inside the station.

"Platform three, quick!" the Commander urged as he realised that the next London train was on the verge of departing. Together they ran up to the ticket barriers where the station supervisor, recognising the Commander passed him his sword like a baton in a relay race as he went by.

"Thanks!" the Commander responded as he and Tracy were allowed through and they ran up the platform to the seventh coach which, having the Conductor on board was the only car with the doors still open.

"Afternoon Sir, Maam" the Conductor greeted them as they boarded.

"That was a close one" the Commander remarked as he and Tracy stopped to catch their breath and the Conductor duly closed the door and gave the right away signal to the driver.

"Someone telephoned ahead and told us you were coming" the Conductor explained as the two officers found a seat each in the main saloon "It must be useful having connections."

"Sometimes yes" the Commander responded "However it can also be a burden sometimes as well" he ruefully admitted.

Sir David Perivale, Treasury Secretary for Her Majesty's Government, looked up from the files he was studying on his desk when a firm knock was heard at his office door.

"Come in!" he barked with authority.

"Minister" Havelock announced his presence as he stepped uneasily through the door and closed it firmly but quietly behind him.

"Let me guess" Perivale remarked, barely looking up from his desk as Havelock sat down, clearly nervous in front of him "The Chancellor has lost twenty pence down the back of the sofa again?"

"Worse" Havelock responded apprehensively "Eddie Regent is in intensive care on the critical list with hours left on his clock."

"Ah..." Perivale immediately dropped his pen onto the desk and took a deep intake of breath "I guess we always knew this day would come I suppose."

"As long as we can avoid any formal coroners inquiries and just have him buried nice and quiet like then hopefully various long forgotten skeletons will remain forgotten" Havelock remarked.

"I will have a word with the Regional Administrator General" Perivale remarked "Ensure that this matter is dealt with as discreetly as possible."

"Is he aware of any of the circumstances surrounding this matter?" Havelock asked.

"No" Perivale confirmed with confidence "As far as our beloved Commander is concerned, its just an old man whose time is up that at some point the authorities had a passing interest in. It won't be a problem."

Tracy and the Commander were already standing by the doors as the train pulled into London Victoria's platform seventeen. No sooner had the train come to a halt and the doors were released than they speedily alighted together and headed through the ticket barriers and onto the busy concourse.

"All right then" Tracy remarked as they paused momentarily, "What's the fastest way to Lewisham then?"

"Well when I were a lad" the Commander responded "you either braved half an hour in a slam door train with no corridor, heating or toilet or alternatively you took a number 185."

"Mind if we make an alternative suggestion Sir?" the familiar voice of Commander Cassini asked as he came up to them with his trademark smile that rarely slipped even under the most trying of circumstances.

"Where did you pop from?" Tracy asked.

"It comes of being in the undercover game" Cassini explained "I've been following you since East Croydon."

"That was sneaky" the Commander remarked.

"All part of the job description and with the compliments of our mutual friend Sir Richard Crowthorne" Cassini explained "He telephoned ahead and informed me you were on your way and requested that I provide secure escort for you. I have one of Miss Caverner's fast cars waiting for us out the front."

"Lead on" the Commander responded whereupon Cassini proceeded to escort the two senior officers across the busy concourse and out of the Wilton Road exit of the station.

As soon as they appeared on the pavement outside, a dark coloured saloon car of the VIP Protection Division pulled up where Tracy and the Commander quickly got in the back whilst Cassini, after a quick look around to ensure there was no one observing or following them, got in the front passenger seat and signalled to the driver to proceed.

The paper shredder in Havelock's office was hot to the touch as he continued to feed the contents of the old files from his personal safe into it.

Despite the Treasury Minister's assurances earlier, Havelock was not going to take any chances and was making sure that any evidence was thoroughly destroyed.

Three floors above Havelock's office in Portcullis House, a much calmer atmosphere could be found in Perivale's own office as he clipped and then lit a fresh cigar before reaching over to the telephone on his desk and pressing the button that connected him directly to the House of Commons main switchboard.

"Yes Sir?" the switchboard operator responded.

"The Security Service Regional Administrator General urgently please" Perivale requested "Although don't actually make it sound urgent if you understand what I mean."

"It's been a while since I was last in this part of town" the Commander remarked as the car headed into Lewisham.

"Memories love?" Tracy asked.

"Something like that yes" the Commander confirmed as the in car telephone rang and Cassini answered it.

"It's for you Sir" Cassini confirmed as he passed the telephone back "Lord Perivale no less."

"The Chief Secretary to the Treasury?" Tracy responded "what the hell does he want?"

"I can hazard a vague guess" the Commander responded as he took the telephone and answered it.

"Lord Perivale" the Commander responded as he put the call on speakerphone in the car "How may I be of assistance?"

"I have received a report that the man who gave the evidence in the Lewisham trial is dying" Perivale responded "and I wanted to consult with you about our response as a joint Security Service and Governmental team."

"News to me" the Commander convincingly lied "Has this been confirmed?"

"Just civil service chatter at the moment" Perivale responded "However if this report is correct then we need to ensure that the case information is secure and does not go to the public, in the National interest of course you understand."

"But of course" the Commander agreed even though his facial expression clearly indicated his feelings on this matter were somewhat different.

"I don't suppose you are free by any chance?" Perivale enquired "I feel this is a matter that perhaps we should discuss at an early opportunity."

"I am on my way to a meeting in Shoreditch" the Commander responded, evading the possibility of Perivale finding out how relevant his actual destination was "I can probably drop by sometime later today or early tomorrow if that is convenient?"

"Fine" Perivale confirmed "My door is always open. Until later then."

"Well that was interesting" Tracy remarked once the call was over and the telephone handset replaced "What do you suppose all that was about?"

"Some good old fashioned political back saving" the Commander confirmed with a grim expression "It would appear that already, certain natives are becoming restless."

"Just coming up on Lewisham General Hospital Sir" the driver announced.

"Go around the back" the Commander advised.

The car went largely unnoticed as it proceeded into the hospital grounds and across the site to the rear entrance where Tracy, the Commander and Cassini got out and together headed inside.

"Get yourself a cuppa" the Commander told Cassini, passing him some money and nodding in the direction of the WRVS canteen nearby.

"All right" Cassini conceded reluctantly "If you need me I am on the radio" he indicated.

"Thanks" the Commander responded as he and Tracy departed arm in arm together off down the corridor.

A few minutes later they had reached the quiet confines of the Security Corridor where the familiar figure of Roger Field was with the two duty Security Officers on guard.

"Hello old friend" the Commander greeted him as they met and warmly shook hands.

"You're looking well" Field commented "I just wish this reunion was under better circumstances though."

"Agreed" the Commander responded as a doctor emerged from the single bed private room to be faced by the two officers.

"Can I see him?" the Commander asked the doctor.

"You are....?" the doctor enquired.

"Friends of the family shall we say" the Commander responded.

"Ten minutes, no more" the doctor advised "Realistically he doesn't have long now."

"Thank you" the Commander responded as he and Tracy proceeded inside.

"Oh my..." Tracy remarked quietly, a feeling echoed by the Commander once they had entered the room to see its only occupant, the patient Eddie Regent, the Commander's father lying on a fairly standard hospital bed extensively wired up to a multitude of monitoring and life support devices.

"Why is everyone whispering whenever they come in here?" Regent asked in a clearly weak voice as he beckoned the two officers over.

"I see your sense of humour is still working" the Commander remarked as he and Tracy went up to Regent's bed, one each side.

"Anyone know you are here?" Regent asked.

"Only Dickie Crowthorne and my undercover guy" the Commander confirmed "Did get an obscure phone call from a certain high ranking political no neck though."

"Figures" Regent responded before heading into a weak coughing fit.

"Steady there" the Commander supported Regent as he attempted to sit up.

"I'm glad you are here" Regent responded "There are a couple of things I need to tell you."

"Take your time" the Commander reassured him.

"I don't have that luxury I am afraid and for that matter neither do you two" Regent advised, his voice becoming progressively weaker.

"Sounds ominous" Tracy responded with concern.

"Believe me my dear" Regent confirmed "When I am gone, there will be certain individuals who will be more than anxious to ensure that certain facts remain firmly buried."

"Such as a certain Treasury Minister for example?" Tracy asked.

"How the hell did you know about that?" Regent asked.

"I've been invited to tea with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury over at Portcullis House" the Commander explained.

"He doesn't know about...?" Regent asked.

"This little meeting?" the Commander responded "He hasn't a clue."

"He's a politician" Tracy remarked "I thought being clueless was part of the job description."

"Oh very good" Regent remarked with a chuckle only to suddenly claps his chest in severe pain as the heart monitor began to sound alarms.

"Quickly..." Regent beckoned the Commander to lean closer as medical staff arrived in response to the alarms.

With Tracy stood back, the medical staff frantically tried to stabilise the patient only for the urgency of the life support alarm to grow in intensity as the battle began to be lost.

Amid the activity, Tracy observed Regent in his last conscious moments of life whisper something to the Commander before slumping back, finally surrendering to death, a fact confirmed by the single continuous tone being emitted by the monitor.

"I'm sorry Sir" the Doctor responded as the medical staff shut off the monitoring equipment.

"You did you're best" the Commander remarked before with Tracy holding his arm for comforting support, he turned to back to the bed "Rest now" he pattered Regent's arm gently before he and Tracy departed.

"I assume its bad news?" Roger Field asked as he met them out in the corridor.

"Yep" the Commander confirmed whilst keeping his chin up as best he could "He's gone."

"I'm sorry" Field responded "He was one of the good old guys."

"That he was" the Commander agreed as the doctor emerged from the room and joined them.

"Sorry to interrupt" the Doctor apologised, "We have no next of kin recorded for the deceased."

"My colleague from Witness Protection will be in touch shortly" the Commander responded, "Do you have his effects?"

"Err yes" the Doctor replied "I'll just go and get them for you" he confirmed as headed back inside the room.

"Too late?" Sir Richard Crowthorne asked as he joined the group.

"Just a couple of minutes ago" Tracy confirmed.

"I think you and I need a drink" Roger Field suggested to Sir Richard.

"Get them in on me" the Commander passed across a twenty pound note "Raise a glass of finest to the old man."

"Coming?" Field asked.

"I believe my husband and I have something to do first" Tracy responded.

"I'll catch up with you two later" the Commander confirmed.

Tracy watched as the two gentlemen departed off down the secure corridor and disappeared from view as the Commander met the Doctor as he re-emerged from the room with a plastic bag containing Regent's belongings and a clipboard.

"Here you are Sir" the Doctor handed over the bag to the Commander and then proffered the clipboard and a pen "You will need to sign for them here please."

Tracy looked over her husband's shoulder and raised a surprised eyebrow as she saw the name the Commander used to sign the form.

"Thank you" the Commander responded before he and Tracy, arm in arm, departed.

"Interesting choice of name you used back there" Tracy commented.

"Yes it was wasn't it?" the Commander grinned.

"Geoff Winters and his guys from Witness Protection are going to go ape when they see that name" Tracy responded.

"Well with Eddie Regent senior now gone" the Commander explained "I think its time that Edward James Regent junior found out exactly what is going on."

"What did he whisper to you?" Tracy asked as they left the Secure Unit corridor.

"All in good time my love" the Commander reassured her before he approached the two officers on guard duty either side of the doors.

"Call your boss" the Commander instructed the first officer "Tell him that your charge is dead and that I will be in touch."

"Yes Sir" the first officer responded and departed.

"Your name lad?" the Commander asked the second officer.

"Lieutenant Issac Sir" the second officer confirmed.

"Join the party" the Commander instructed "I want you to take us to where Regent was living."

"Yes Sir" Issac confirmed as together they all headed for the exit to the car park where they were met by Cassini with the car ready to take them all onwards.

"Can I have a word with you?" the Commander asked Cassini after he had seen Tracy safely into the back of the car.

"Yes Sir" Cassini confirmed and together the two officers moved over to the side out of anyone else's earshot.

"I need your special skills for a little job" the Commander explained.

"And I take it this 'little job' of yours Sir is of the unofficial variety" Cassini responded.

"Now what could possibly make you think that?" the Commander grinned.

"Oh I don't know" Cassini remarked "Years of experience perhaps?"

"Officially I want you to take a few days off" the Commander instructed "Get some rest and stay off the grid for a while."

"And unofficially?"

"I want you to find two or three of your most trustworthy colleagues and keep an eye on someone for me" the Commander explained.

"Anyone I know?" Cassini asked.

"Lord Perivale" the Commander responded in a quiet whisper.

"Jesus Christ!" Cassini exclaimed.

"No, not Jesus Christ" the Commander responded somewhat amused "Just the Chief Secretary to the Treasury."

"I have a couple of people in the Political and Civil Service Division who may suit the purpose" Cassini responded with some thought.

"Whatever you do" the Commander warned "Only report to me, watch your back and don't let our friends at MI5 know what you are up to, especially Sir Richard Crowthorne."

"I'll get right onto it" Cassini confirmed as he reached for his mobile telephone and began to make a call.

"See you later" the Commander responded as he went back to car and got in the back.

"All right Lieutenant Issac" the Commander called forward "You're navigating. Tell us where to go."

Lord Perivale looked at his watch before putting on his overcoat and collecting his briefcase, he then left the office, firmly locking the door behind him.

A few minutes later he was leaving Portcullis House and heading out amongst the heavy early rush hour pedestrian traffic towards the bus stop in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament.

Nearby, Cassini was keeping a close but casual eye as requested and looked on with interest as Perivale let two route 211 buses pass before he boarded a third, swiping his Oyster Card pass across the reader and proceeding to the seats across the rear of the lower deck.

Cassini discreetly signalled with his newspaper to the driver of an off duty black cab who was parked nearby and proceeded across the road where Cassini got in the back and set off to follow the bus south across Westminster Bridge.

"Give me good news" Lord Perivale asked Havelock as he took the seat alongside him.

"Our old friend died around about an hour ago" Havelock confirmed as he fiddled uncomfortably with his newspaper.

"And so a chapter ends" Perivale commented "May he rest in peace."

"I took the liberty of destroying my files on this matter" Havelock confirmed "That should put an end to it."

"I spoke to the Administrator General earlier" Perivale continued as the bus began to negotiate its way around the crowded traffic system that surrounds the now partially demolished 1960's concrete remains of the former GLC overflow office building "He gave me the impression that the Security Service would not be taking any interest in the matter, however I have invited him to the office for an informal chat at some point which should throw him off any possible scent that may be about."

"Could be risky" Havelock expressed his concern "If the Commander is worth one tenth of his reputation..."

"Trust me" Perivale calmed his associate's obviously frayed nerves "The last witness to the Lewisham evidence was that twelve year old with the excellent talent for poker and mostly thanks to your talents, no one has seen sight nor sound of him since 1969."

"So when do we cash in?" Havelock asked as Perivale got up to alight with the bus now pulling into its final stop outside Waterloo Station.

"All in good time my old friend" Perivale confirmed "We've waited thirty years, a few extra days won't matter."

"This the place?" the Commander asked Lieutenant Issac as they stood outside the door to a flat in one of the well appointed modern apartment blocks in Canary Wharf in the heart of London's Docklands area.

"Yes Sir" Issac confirmed.

"Ah..." the Commander remarked as he looked through the bag of Regent's possessions that he had received from the hospital "no keys."

"Shall I do the honours?" Tracy asked as she produced her lock picking kit from her inside tunic pocket.

"If you would be so kind my dear" the Commander confirmed with a smile.

"But that's a full Witness Protection high security special lock system" Issac pointed out as Tracy knelt down and began to work on the lock.

"Standard Government issue, assembled and supplied by the lowest bidder" Tracy commented wryly as with a click, the lock released.

"But what about the al..." Issac began only to be interrupted by an ear splitting siren emanating from inside.

"Bloody hell!" the Commander exclaimed as he entered the apartment and sought out the source of the siren alarm which he discovered to be a box mounted on the wall in the entrance hall.

A few moments later the alarm was silenced and as the last echoes died away, Tracy looked around the door frame.

"How did you know how to switch it off?" she asked as she entered the apartment.

"I used an old technique from my early days" the Commander explained as he casually tossed the remains of the alarm into a waste basket where it landed with a loud crunch.

"Whisky Papa Six One" Issac called into his radio as he looked on with some bemusement "Disregard alarm activation at Greyhound's home, authorisation six one five zero."

"Keep an eye out in the corridor" the Commander asked.

"Nice place" Tracy commented as she and the Commander looked around the well appointed modern apartment "What exactly are we looking for?" she asked.

"A message from beyond the grave" the Commander explained as he started to look through the room "Check the kitchen."

Tracy headed through into the kitchen whilst the Commander having found no more than an old copy of the Racing Post, headed into the bedroom.

"Well the kitchen is spotless" Tracy confirmed a couple of minutes later as she joined the Commander.

"Not surprising really" the Commander confirmed as he sat on the edge of the bed and looked around puzzled "He was never a very good cook, I do believe that between me and him, we managed to keep the chip shops and takeaways of Lewisham afloat almost single handed."

"That's odd" Tracy remarked as she looked at the bedside table where alongside an antique pocket watch was an old picture frame which contained a photograph of a greyhound racing dog.

"Good grief" the Commander exclaimed "Its Winston."

"Who?" Tracy remarked.

"He was an old retired greyhound which my father and I saved when I was about ten" the Commander explained as he picked up the photograph in its frame as well as the pocket watch "However I do agree love, it sure is a strange thing to have on your bedside table."

"And the watch?" Tracy asked as she saw her husband open the front case lid of the pocket watch and wind it up.

"Well this is mine" the Commander explained with a look of someone getting reacquainted with an old friend after a lengthy absence before passing it to Tracy to have a look at it.

"And it still works" Tracy remarked.

"Should do" the Commander responded as he gave the photograph frame a closer look "It went through quite a journey once.

"Found something?" Tracy asked seeing the Commander look closer at the photograph frame with a look of revelation.

"Ah ha!" he declared as a key and a slip of paper fell out from the back of the frame and landed on the bed between them.

"Interesting" Tracy remarked as she picked up the key and looked it over with an expert eye "Looks like a safety deposit box key to me."

"And here is the location and box number" the Commander confirmed as he read the piece of paper that accompanied the key.

"Well what do you know" Tracy remarked wryly "Looks like it's back to Lewisham then."

"Eagle two to Eagle One" one of Cassini's undercover surveillance officers spoke discretely into his concealed radio as on the opposite side of the residential street near Richmond, he observed Lord Perivale alight from the back of a taxi that had brought him from Richmond station.

"Eagle One, go ahead" Cassini responded.

"Target one has returned to his nest" the officer confirmed.

"Ok then" Cassini responded "Wait until Eagle Three relieves you and then come back to the office, I want to take a look at the surveillance video footage."

"I'm on the way boss" the officer confirmed.

With the call over, Cassini relaxed back in his chair during a rare moment when he was actually in his office on the eighth floor at New Scotland Yard.

He contemplated one of the sweets in the jar on his desk before remembering what his wife had said to him that morning about putting on weight.

As it turned out, he was saved from his confectionary deliberations by the mobile telephone in his pocket ringing.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Cassini?" the Commander called from the onboard a southbound Docklands Light Railway train "It's your boss."

"Oh, evening Sir" Cassini responded.

"Have you caught up with our ministerial friend yet?" the Commander enquired.

"He left his office, boarded a route 211 bus to Waterloo and then a South West Trains service to Richmond" Cassini confirmed "Then it was a cab to his rather pricey Edwardian three up two down house in glorious suburbia."

"Any other interested parties around?" the Commander asked.

"One of my guys noted a couple of flunkeys, probably the usual MI5 political watchers hanging around outside Portcullis House but apart from that, all is quiet" Cassini confirmed "I have one of my followers with a surveillance video heading back in now which I will check just to make sure."

"All right then" the Commander replied "Keep close tabs on him and call immediately if anything crops up."

"Will do" Cassini responded.

"Good chap is Cassini" Tracy remarked as the train continued southwards, approaching the next stop at Elverson Road.

"No doubt about that" the Commander agreed "I've never regretted recruiting him."

"Where the hell is Elverson Road when it's at home?" Tracy remarked as the train stopped and various passengers alighted and boarded.

"Deride it not love" the Commander remarked "I went to school around here, admittedly it was more of an experience than an education mind."

"Why do I get the impression that the early years of your life were a lot more interesting than you have ever let on?" Tracy remarked as the train's doors closed and it commenced the last leg of its journey to Lewisham.

"Let's just say it had its moments" the Commander responded ever so slightly evasively.

The train continued south on its rapid journey to its destination, only slowing down as it pulled into the modern recently built part of the station.

"It's been a while since I was last here" the Commander remarked as he and Tracy left the station "It's changed a fair old bit though."

Outside near the adjacent bus station area, a Security Service patrol car with one officer was parked having finished dealing with an incident.

The officer was seated in the drivers seat writing up his notes when he was interrupted by a knock at the window.

"Oh great, now what?" he remarked as he pressed the button to lower the window, only to look on with some surprise to see Tracy and the Commander standing there.

"Afternoon Lieutenant" the Commander announced to the slightly stunned officer in the car "Are you Busy?"

"Err no Sir, Maam" the young officer responded as he quickly got out of the car "Can I be of assistance?" he asked.

"Do you know where this place is?" the Commander asked, showing him the piece of paper.

"Oh yes Sir" the officer confirmed as he looked at the address "It's just on the outside of the town centre, about two miles away."

"No chance of a lift by any chance?" Tracy asked.

"Hop in the back Maam" the officer confirmed "I can have you there in a jiffy."

Tracy could see from the look on her husband's face as they were driven through the centre of Lewisham that he was studying carefully the surrounding buildings and features trying to recognise something from the past that was familiar.

"Memories?" Tracy asked as they stopped at some traffic lights opposite a row of shops.

"Well there would be love if I actually managed to recognise anything" the Commander remarked turning back to look at her "Trouble is the place has been ripped apart and redesigned an awful lot in the intervening years."

"Town planners and traffic schemes shall inherit the earth my dad always says" Tracy remarked "I guess he must have seen this place."

"Hold it a minute!" the Commander suddenly exclaimed causing the officer driving to slam on the brakes.

"Would you bloody believe it?" the Commander gestured to their left "My favourite chip shop has become a trendy wine bar!"

"Oh those things are popping up all over the place" the Lieutenant remarked "Can't get a decent bag of chips for love or money around here these days."

"All right" the Commander responded "Lets get moving" he indicated whereupon the Lieutenant resumed their journey.

Two minutes later they were arriving outside the apparently modest looking premises of the Endeavour Secure Storage & Security Company, a distinctively unimpressive looking building in the midst of one of those seemingly numerous modern industrial estates that had cropped up across the Greater London area in the last ten years.

"Oh very classy" Tracy remarked sarcastically as she and the Commander got out of the back of the patrol car.

"Do you want me to wait here Sir?" the Lieutenant asked.

"If you wouldn't mind" the Commander confirmed "We should not be too long in there I would have thought."

Tracy and the Commander watched the patrol car pull over to a parking space a short distance away before they turned and together they headed inside.

The receptionist behind the desk in the spartan modernistic entrance area of the building looked up as she saw the two high ranking uniformed Security Service officers enter and approach.

"Good evening officers" she responded slightly nervously "Can I help you?"

"I need to see your manager my dear" the Commander announced.

"He is just about to finish for the day" the receptionist confirmed.

"Not any more" the Commander replied, proffering his identification "You had better get him out here pronto."

"Mr Wendle?" the receptionist called over the intercom "There are two officers to see you out front."

"Can't they come back tomorrow?" the obviously tired voice of the manager responded "What lowly rank are they?"

"Err Regional Administrator General and Divisional Chief Superintendent" the receptionist confirmed with a nervous smile towards the two officers.

"Ahh..." the manager responded after a short pause of silence "I'll be right there."

The Commander could hear the sudden panic laden footsteps overhead as the manager rushed from his office, along a corridor and down the stairs, only changing his pace to a more normal one as he came into sight and greeted them.

"Hello" he announced "Germaine Wendle, general manager, how can I be of assistance?"

"I need to get into one of your safety deposit boxes" the Commander explained.

"Yours?" the manager.

"Not exactly but I do have a key" the Commander held up the key to emphasise his point.

"How about a warrant then?" the Manager asked.

"Now I am sure we don't want to complicate this issue with such trivial niceties as paperwork" the Commander explained "Besides, I am sure that a firm such as yours that rents out safety deposit boxes to well known former hoodlums must have a plethora of hidden skeletons you would rather were not dragged into the public arena so I suggest we get on with it, don't you agree?"

"He has quite a way with words doesn't he?" Tracy remarked wryly.

"Err yes" the manager conceded "I'll take you to the vaults, follow me please."

With some trepidation, the manager led the two officers through the ornate double doors from the reception area to the depository department where a large steel security door and two burly guards were to be found.

"Your key please?" the manager requested which the Commander duly handed over "I'll be just a couple of minutes" he confirmed before disappearing through the huge vault door out of sight.

"What are you hoping to find in this box?" Tracy asked aside "Assuming that there is actually anything in it of course."

"I have no idea" the Commander was forced to admit as he held Tracy by the hand for support.

A minute later the manager duly reappeared carrying a large metal case which he brought to the Commander.

"Would you care to view the contents in private?" the manager asked.

"I do believe that would be a good idea" the Commander agreed whereupon the manager duly escorted them to a private side office, set the large case on the desk and left them alone, politely closing the door behind him.

"Mmm" the Commander remarked as he stood back on one side of the table and contemplated the box with Tracy stood opposite him doing the same.

"How about I open it?" Tracy suggested.

"Its all right love" the Commander calmly responded, "I'll do it" he confirmed as he stepped forward and put his hand on the securing catch and released it.

"Let's see what we have here" the Commander announced as he tentatively lifted the lid and looked inside.

"Good grief" Tracy exclaimed "That's a lot of junk."

"Let's see now" the Commander remarked as he started to go through the items and put them out onto the desk "Couple of family photographs, a letter or something addressed to me, some of what looks to be my mothers jewellery and dear oh dear" he remarked as he pulled out a rather tatty looking garment that had been lining the bottom of the case "My old school blazer."

"Look's like it has had a nasty case of moths" Tracy remarked seeing some of the holes in the front of the blazer as she looked at it.

"Err trust me, that wasn't moths" the Commander confirmed with a hint of a wince as he took the blazer from Tracy and began to go through the pockets.

"Anything interesting?" Tracy asked.

"Sixteen shillings and four pence in old change, the rotted remains of a chocolate bar" the Commander commented.

“Nothing new there then” Tracy remarked.

"One copy of the Evening Standard dated March 7th 1969" the Commander extracted the slightly yellowed old newspaper "Various old railway and bus tickets" he continued "including a platform ticket for Lewisham dated March 1969 and a leaflet about the opening of the Victoria Line central section, probably worth a few quid on EBay now!"

"And finally one of Barry's brother's infamous twenty pound notes" the Commander produced the neatly folded banknote from the front pocket and showed it to Tracy.

"What's infamous about it?" Tracy asked as she looked at it.

"Barry was a school mate of mine who had an older brother who was dyslexic" the Commander explained with a chuckle "Trouble was he also had a criminal side line in printing high quality forgeries of anything you wanted on paper."

"Ah" Tracy realised what was wrong with the note as she looked more closely at it "Bank of Eglan" she read from it.

"Exactly" the Commander confirmed "Whenever I see a forgery case, I always think of him and those dodgy notes that started turning up everywhere. Trouble was some people were too dim to notice the error and still accepted them as the genuine article."

"This is the whole family then?" Tracy asked looking at one of the two photographs which was a slightly faded black and white image of a man, his wife and three children, the youngest of which was looking up at the steam locomotive that was behind him on the unidentified station platform.

"That would be them" the Commander confirmed "The other picture is me and my father on the footplate of a locomotive at Christ's Hospital Station" he showed her the other picture "I think I was about four at the time, not long before the branch closed."

"What about that letter?" Tracy motioned towards the envelope which the Commander had clearly been deliberately leaving until last.

"All right then" the Commander conceded "Let's see what the old man had to say for himself."

With trepidation, the Commander picked up the letter, sat down at the desk with Tracy alongside him and opened it. Before taking the letter out of its envelope, however he put on his small square framed reading glasses and took a deep breath.

"Do you want me to read it?" Tracy asked.

"Would you?" the Commander asked even though he did not want to impose "I think it would be better if I heard it rather than read it."

"All right" Tracy confirmed as she took the letter from its envelope, opened it and after a quick scan of the hand written contents, began to read it out loud.

Dear Son

It's an old cliché I know but if you are reading this then I am dead. My only hope is that by now I will have lived a decent enough life and that you are doing well with your wife, enjoying good health and generally making yourself a right nuisance for the bad guys.

Now that I am gone, there are things that need to be told, wrongs that need to be righted and a couple of people who need to be given a firm kick up the arse, a skill I know you are more than adept at.

In 1965, not long after your mother died, I was recruited to the occasional services of Her Majesty's Government by a certain young Richard Crowthorne and in my capacity as his, how shall I put it, representative, I was asked to infiltrate certain well known parts of the south east London underworld crime scene of which I was already a well known and respected part.

What seemed to be a fairly simple task however started to go horribly wrong in early 1969 when I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and asked to be the wheel man on the Lewisham Diamond Heist.

You know better than anyone what happened that day so I will not bother to repeat it here but there were still a number of key facts that were never revealed either to the public or the old Metropolitan Police and today remain hidden thanks to certain people with power, influence and financial interests.

Sure the robbery was spectacular, made all the headlines and the Mannerie boys were duly sent to jail for it but in the end those diamonds were never found were they? So apart from the pitifully small number conveniently found for evidential purposes and the four which your wife wears on her wedding ring, the question I want you to find the answer to is where did those damm diamonds go?

The answer I am certain is not as obvious as it may first seem but they did exist and thirty five million in ice is an awful lot of merchandise to shift especially at 1969 prices.

I leave you with this thought son, you were always meant to be one of the good guys as far as I was concerned and by God you have not let me down! Now you have the power and control to find out what really happened and bring the true culprits to justice so go and kick some backside for the old man and don't forget to raise a glass to me when its all done, Sir Richard can get the drinks in.

Until we meet again on the other side, take great care.

Dad.

“Well” Tracy remarked as she finished reading the letter and passed it to the Commander who responded initially only with silence “Are you all right?”

"I don't know" the Commander responded "It's all a bit odd really, like a voice from beyond the grave confirming something I have always long suspected."

"So where do we go from here?" Tracy asked "I assume you are definitely not going to let this one lie?"

"I think its time to head home with this collection of memorabilia and take stock" the Commander responded as he gathered the objects from the table and put them in his tunic pockets leaving Tracy to pick up the old blazer which she put underneath her arm before they left the room.

Outside in the patrol car, the waiting Lieutenant put down his newspaper and started the engine when he saw Tracy and the Commander emerge.

"Caterham Road please lad" the Commander requested as he opened the back door before following Tracy inside.

"Aren't we going to the station love?" Tracy asked.

"I want to take a slight diversion first" the Commander explained as the Lieutenant pulled away and drove on, "Just something I want to show you first."

"Oh blast" Cassini remarked as he realised he had managed to make a muck up of the Suduko puzzle on the back of his copy of the Evening Standard.

"You screwed the puzzle up again boss?" one of Cassini's officers asked as he entered the office.

"Too many blooming threes" Cassini confirmed as he tossed the paper into his in tray "Did you bring the surveillance tapes?"

"Got them here" the officer confirmed as he produced a miniature camera and digital recording system from his inside jacket pocket.

"Lovely" Cassini responded as he took the unit and plugged it into his computer terminal "Let's see what we have got then."

"This equipment is pretty specialised" the officer remarked as Cassini began to run the footage on his computer "How did we manage to get our hands on this stuff?"

"You mean on our pathetically meagre budget?" Cassini responded "Well I did a couple of jobs for our friends over on the south side of Vauxhall Bridge in exchange for a dip into their spare parts bin."

"Nice" the officer responded.

"Ok" Cassini commented as the footage began on the screen "That's Portcullis House, along with our ministerial friend as well as the usual shadowing goon squad."

"Our friends from MI5 are getting sloppy" the officer remarked.

"Don't be so sure" Cassini warned "Sometimes they put a couple of fresh junior officers somewhere blindingly obvious" he explained. "It reassures the political no necks whilst the real watchers lurk in the background."

"Why does Lord Perivale let two buses go by and then get on the third?" the officer wondered as they continued to watch the footage on the screen.

"I thought that was a bit odd as well" Cassini remarked before another thought occurred to him "Pass me that Tube map will you?"

"Yeah sure" the officer reached over and passed the small card Underground network map to his boss.

"Ok, now I'm suspicious" Cassini remarked as he tapped the tube map with an insistent motion "Why the hell did Perivale get on a crowded bus and then take a slow train from Waterloo to go to Richmond when he could have travelled direct, for free on his Government issue Oyster card on the District Line?"

"I would then ask who else was on the bus that we may want to take an interest in?" the officer remarked.

"Put the kettle on and pull up a comfy seat" Cassini suggested, "We are going to pull every bit of relevant CCTV we can find which means it is going to be a long evening."

"What are we doing here?" Tracy asked as she and the Commander stood by the side of the street, looking across at a row of buildings on the opposite side of the road.

"You see that bank over there" the Commander gestured ahead, "That there used to be the Lewisham Diamond Exchange."

"So this is where it all happened then" Tracy looked around "Not exactly the most picturesque of historical locations is it?"

"Well I somehow doubt English Heritage are going to set up a souvenir stand with postcards and National Trust tea towels" the Commander remarked.

"So where was the star witness then?" Tracy asked.

"My now late old dad was the wheel man" the Commander explained "He was parked up over here in a Transit van waiting for the off."

"Hang on a minute" Tracy remarked "Your dad was the guy who gave Queen's evidence at the trial for the prosecution right?"

"Yes..." the Commander confirmed with a knowledgeable nod of the head.

"So if he was in the van outside" Tracy continued "How did he manage to give the entire story of what happened inside the building as part of his evidence then?"

"Congratulations my love" the Commander responded, giving Tracy a congratulatory peck on the cheek "You managed in less than a minute to spot the huge great flaw in the prosecution evidence which no one in number one court at Bow Street managed to spot in over six months."

"So if he did not see the entire event" Tracy remarked "Then he must have been told by someone what to say."

"All good so far" the Commander confirmed as he showed Tracy back into the car before following in himself.

"So whose evidence did he present then?" Tracy asked.

"You'll work it out eventually" the Commander remarked "I don't want to give all the surprises away just yet."

"Back to the station Sir?" the Lieutenant asked.

"Yes please" the Commander confirmed.

It was slow progress through the early rush hour traffic that was starting to build up around the town centre but still a few minutes later the Lieutenant was dropping off his two important passengers outside the main entrance of Lewisham Railway Station.

"Thanks" the Commander called to the Lieutenant before he and Tracy headed into the station, passing through the ticket barriers and onto the London bound platform number one, the Commander picking up and paying for a copy of that days Evening Standard as he passed the seller at the entrance.

"You want a look love?" the Commander asked Tracy.

"Oh its all right dear" Tracy responded "I'm still catching up on the news from 1969" she indicated the vintage newspaper that had been found in the safety deposit box earlier.

"We regret to announce that the 17:56 South Eastern service to London Victoria is delayed by approximately eighteen minutes due to a fault on the train" the tannoy announced on the platform.

"Nothing much changes then" the Commander remarked wryly.

"Looks like the 7th of March 1969 was a busy day by the looks of it" Tracy commented as she looked through the old newspaper "Stolen! Daring raid nets largest ever diamond haul" Tracy read from the front page "Meanwhile the Queen was

opening the central section of the Victoria Line whilst in the late news box there is an unconfirmed report of a shooting incident outside New Scotland Yard."

"Mmm yes" the Commander remarked as he looked around the station as a train arrived on the opposite platform.

"Something wrong dear?" Tracy asked.

"Oh nothing" the Commander responded "I was just thinking it has been a long time since I was last stood here."

"How long just out of interest?" Tracy asked.

"The aforementioned day in March of 1969" the Commander responded "I still have the ticket here" he proffered the old Edmondson style card ticket, one of those found in the box earlier.

"So what happened then?" Tracy asked slightly reluctantly, having to raise her voice over the sound of the departing train on the opposite platform.

"Well back in 1969" the Commander began "I was a slightly bemused entrepreneurial twelve year old and the world was a very different place."

"I can imagine" Tracy remarked "Although I am having some trouble imaging you were ever young."

"Thanks" the Commander responded "Anyway, the whole sorry tale begins two weeks earlier in the private bar of the Black Dog near Caledonian Road and a rather intense, not to mention legally questionable poker game."

-o-o-o-o-

"Interesting" young Eddie Regent remarked as the stranger sat opposite him put a raise that was twice the pot.

"Aren't you a bit young for this game?" the stranger asked the serious looking twelve year old.

"Never confuse age with experience or intelligence my friend" Eddie responded calmly as he checked his two cards again before reaching for his chips "I'll call."

"Oh hell..." Roger Field, sat to Eddie's left responded at this turn of events "I'm passing" he duly chucked his two cards in.

"Too hot for me and all" Edward Regent Senior, Eddie's father responded, joining Field in throwing his cards in as well.

The rest of the players around the table, consisting of a couple of Field's employees, the senior figure of old man Mannerie and his two sons had all already passed which left just the young Eddie and the stranger in the hand.

"Two players" Field as the dealer announced before dealing the three cards forming the flop. "King, ten, ace, all clubs" he declared.

"Check" Eddie responded, not taking his eyes off his opponent who was also being closely observed by everyone else in the room who unlike him, were well aware of Eddie's reputation at the poker table.

"Raise" the stranger announced, pushing almost half of his entire remaining stack of chips into the centre of the table to stifled gasps from those present.

"Well, well" Eddie sat back a bit "Either you have something like a flush or are feeling confident with pocket aces."

The stranger said nothing, merely attempted to maintain a confident composed look.

"Of course the only way I will ever find out is to pay up" Eddie concluded "And seeing as I have you covered, I'll call."

"Bloody hell son" Regent remarked "are you sure you know what you are doing?"

"Always" Eddie responded as he counted the required amount of chips and methodically placed them in the centre.

"The turn card is a king of diamonds" Field announced before turning to Eddie.

"Check" he announced, accompanied by a double tap on the table in a manner that he could tell slightly unsettled his opponent.

"Check" the stranger duly agreed, whereupon Field dealt the final river card.

"Nine of diamonds" he announced.

"All in" the stranger declared confidently as he moved the rest of his stack into the centre of the table.

"Call" Eddie swiftly responded, the rapid nature of his reply clearly catching his opponent unaware.

"Show down gentlemen" Field declared "Lets see what you have got."

"Good guess my young friend" the stranger announced as he turned over his two cards to reveal a pair of aces "Full house, aces and kings."

"I thing you may have finally met your match son" Regent commented.

"Not necessarily" Eddie responded as he duly turned his cards, revealing a suited queen and jack of clubs "I do believe that is a royal flush" he declared to gasps of disbelief from the audience.

"Lucky for me we were only playing for fun then" the stranger responded with an astonished expression.

"Indeed" Eddie agreed "Otherwise I really would have taken you to the cleaners and back again."

"Playing with kiddies are we?" a middle aged gentleman commented as he entered the room and placed his briefcase on the table before taking a seat alongside the first stranger."

"A little fella who sure knows his poker" the first younger stranger was forced to admit ruefully.

"Well seeing as we are all relaxed" the elder stranger continued "Then perhaps it is time we got down to the main business of the evening."

"Off you go son" Regent called to Eddie "Go and count your winnings."

"Right" Eddie responded, gathering all his chips up as best he could and leaving the table "I know when I am not wanted."

"Here Terry" Eddie called as he climbed up onto a bar stool and called the barman "Give us an R Whites lemonade please."

"Wiped the board with the guys again I see" Terry the barman commented as he passed a bottle of lemonade and a glass to Eddie "If this is what you can do at twelve years old, what are you going to wind up doing by the time you hit forty?"

"Ten to one a train driver" Eddie worked out the odds in his head "fifteen to one on in jail, one hundred to one a politician and ten thousand to one, Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police."

"I'll have a fiver on that last one" Terry joked "What's going on over there?" he indicated the meeting just getting under way over the other side of the private saloon bar.

"Some big job on apparently" Eddie confirmed "I guess dad is up for the wheel man job again."

Over at the table, it was clear that there were two distinct groups present, the two strangers were the clients in the as yet unspecified deal, the others consisted of the expert cream of the East London organised criminal community, each bringing a different specialism or talent to the table.

"Ok then Mr Smith or whatever your name may be" Field began "You two gentlemen have assembled the most talented team in the City so I guess whatever it is you want lifting isn't cheap."

"Very astute Mr Field" the elder stranger who Field had referred to as Mr Smith confirmed "Tell me gentlemen, what do you know about diamonds?"

"Well I know them when I see them" old man Mannerie remarked as he inhaled another breath from his seemingly permanently present huge cigar.

"Eddie?" Field called over to the bar.

"Hardest substance known to man" Eddie responded "Form of carbon, cuts glass and very expensive, especially in uncut form as well as industrial use."

"Where did you get this kid?" the younger stranger asked.

"Oh he has his uses" Regent admitted.

"The United Kingdom Government as you may or may not be aware has a bit of a financial crisis on at the moment" Smith continued to explain "Industry is going down the pan and the economy is a complete and utter mess at the moment."

"That's not what it says in the papers" one of Field's men commented.

"Try reading the ones that don't have small pages and big print once in a while" Eddie suggested from the bar "Unless there is something of a financial miracle in the next eighteen months, the Government is very likely to be bankrupt and that means you humble taxpayers will be charged through the nose."

"Good thing I don't pay tax then" Field remarked with a wry smile.

"At the moment the public line is that all is well" Smith continued "also the prospects for oil and gas revenue from the North Sea are still being touted around as the big solution."

"Nice bit of old political flannel" Eddie remarked as he finished his lemonade "They won't see a penny of that revenue if anything before the mid seventies."

"Hence the belt and braces plan" Smith continued to explain "In order to better secure the financial security of the economy, the UK Treasury is diversifying into alternative investments in an attempt to spread the risk."

"Hence the diamonds" Field remarked "One of the few commodities in the financial markets that is actually making money for the foreseeable future."

"I see I and my associate came to the right people" Smith declared "Now here gentlemen is where it gets interesting."

"I think it's safe to say we are listening" Field confirmed, casting a good glance around the room at everyone else.

"In two days" Smith continued as he opened his briefcase and extracted some documents which he laid out on the table "the Treasury will be purchasing thirty five million pounds worth of cut and uncut diamonds which it will deposit at a high security depository in Lewisham."

"Thirty five million?" old man Mannerie responded, sufficiently stunned by the size of the sum involved to take his cigar out of his mouth.

"What's the numbers on that lad?" Field asked Eddie.

"I'd reckon anywhere between ten and fifteen percent gross annually" Eddie remarked.

"That's a serious chunk of dough" Regent agreed.

"And you want us to liberate it shall we say?" Field asked.

"Exactly" Smith confirmed "My associate Mr Jones here" he indicated the younger stranger to his left "will be your liaison on this project, you will not be seeing me again."

"What is our cut on this deal?" Mannerie asked.

"Twenty percent of total value stolen in cash" Smith confirmed "That should be about six million pounds if my sums are correct."

"When?" Regent asked.

"To a certain extent that is up to you" Smith confirmed "It should be noted that in order to gain as much positive publicity for the Government, the diamonds, well at least a selection anyway are to go on public display in the main reception area at the Security Depository."

"Incredible" Regent remarked with a bemused shake of the head.

"That would mean that any operation attempt ideally should take place no later than sometime during the week commencing 3rd of March" Field suggested.

"Well the details I will leave to you gentlemen and your young friend over there" Smith announced as he got up from the table, leaving the various documents on the table "Anything you need, contact Mr Jones and he will arrange it."

There were various murmurs from around the table as the two men prepared to depart.

"Well that concludes our business for this evening" Smith declared, "I bid you all farewell and good luck."

With that sign off, the two men duly departed and it was not until some moments after they had left the room that anyone spoke.

"Well that was interesting" Field remarked "Thoughts anyone?" he asked around generally.

"What day are we thinking of?" the Regent asked as he extracted a pocket diary from his jacket pocket and flicked through the pages to the week of the third to the ninth of March.

"Whatever day is fine by my boys" old man Mannerie marked "Just tell me where, when and how heavy you want your muscle and I'll provide."

Over at the bar, little Eddie had the appearance of someone to whom a thought had just occurred as he started to look through his school blazer pockets furtively, obviously in search of something specific.

"Ah here we go" Eddie declared as he pulled out a small card leaflet with predominantly blue print and held it aloft "Can I suggest Friday the seventh, around about lunchtime?"

"Where the hell did that one come from?" Field asked with a surprised expression.

"Two reasons that spring to mind" Eddie explained "One, shift change of the old bill is at twelve thirty when they all rush off for lunch and the minds of the boys in blue are firmly affixed on thoughts of coffee and doughnuts."

"And the other reason oh wise one?" Mannerie asked.

"That afternoon, the attentions of the Metropolitan Police's finest will be diverted by the Queen opening the central London section of the new Victoria Line which means an almost certainly reduced overall Police presence elsewhere" Eddie explained.

"Well it looks like we have a venue and a date" Field declared "All we need to come up with now is a plan."

-o-o-o-o-

"Who were the mysterious Mr Smith and Mr Jones then?" Tracy asked as a London bound service pulled into the station and came to a halt.

"Never found out" the Commander replied as he and Tracy boarded the four car train of Class 465 Networker stock and took a seat alongside each other.

"So what happened then?" Tracy asked.

"Over the next couple of days the plan came together and three days before the heist, I was picked up from school by my dad" the Commander continued.

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"Good day at school son?" Regent asked as Eddie came out of the school gates and climbed into the passenger seat of his fathers Transit van.

"Not bad Dad" Eddie admitted "Looks like I might have some trouble with one particular assignment though."

"Oh yes, what's that then?" Regent asked as he drove off, having to weave his way around various London Transport AEC Regent type double decker buses that were loading up their usual late afternoon heavy load of school children.

"Mr Thomson, our maths teacher wants two tickets for the West Ham match on Saturday up at Nottingham Forest" Eddie explained "A pity Uncle Brian is in jail at the moment as he had all the right contacts."

"You'll think of something son" Regent reassured his son "You're the cleverest fella I have ever met."

"A rather unexpected compliment" Eddie responded "What are you after?" he asked.

"You have a suspicious mind son" Regent remarked.

"Given the nature of the family business" Eddie commented "I find I live longer that way."

"All will be revealed" Regent explained, "Don't worry, you will be fine."

"That is usually the point when the boys in blue come around for tea and to ask you to 'help with their enquiries' whilst providing you with the dumbest duty solicitor they can find" Eddie retorted.

Fifteen minutes later, Regent pulled the van off the main road and down a rough gravel track which after a short distance, ended in front of a tired looking old warehouse with big heavy wooden doors guarding its main entrance.

"Charming little backwater" Eddie sarcastically remarked "I take it this is mission control then?"

"Yep" Regent confirmed as he sounded the horn twice whereupon the heavy doors of the warehouse opened and he drove inside.

The interior of the warehouse was a hive of activity with a number of vehicles being worked on including a dark blue van and a number of fast cars.

"The old fake security van trick I see" Eddie remarked as he saw the van which was in the process of being converted from a standard Transit van into a replica of a high security transport vehicle of the type often used for the transportation of money and other high value commodities.

"Well that's the theory son" Regent confirmed as they both got out of the van.

"So what is it you want me to do?" Eddie asked.

"The diamond depository is opening its doors to the public tomorrow" Regent explained "And we need someone who isn't known to the old bill to give the layout a look over."

"Let me take a wild guess" Eddie responded with a hesitant intake of breath "That is going to be my contribution to this little exercise?"

"Correct" Regent confirmed "Sorry son."

"What happens if I run into any old friends if you know what, or should I say whom I mean?" Eddie asked after having checked around to ensure that their conversation was not being overheard.

"I'm sure you will use your usual charm and wit" Regent remarked wryly.

"Charm and wit?" Eddie responded "Me?"

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"Charm and wit?" Tracy exclaimed "You?" she giggled as the train they were on passed the semi derelict shell of Battersea Power Station.

"Surely you could admit I have my moments?" the Commander responded.

"Occasionally I suppose" Tracy relented "So I take it you paid a visit to the depository then?"

"The very next day" the Commander confirmed.

-o-o-o-o-

The last lesson for that day was mathematics with the almost professor like Mr Thomson. During the space of an hour in which Eddie would have to admit he retained very little about trigonometry other than it had something to do with triangles, his mind wandered to an assignment of a very different sort.

Indeed his mind was so distracted that he almost missed the bell signalling the end of school for another day.

"Young Mr Regent!" Mr Thomson called sternly as his class was filing through the door.

"Good afternoon Sir" Eddie responded, reaching into his inside jacket pocket.

"Not preparing to offer me a bribe for your lack of attention this lesson are you?" Mr Thomson asked.

"Would I stoop so low?" Eddie responded knowingly "Besides, I knew most of it anyway."

"That's the trouble with you" Mr Thomson remarked "You have an extremely mature and grown up head on those significantly younger shoulders."

"And a highly resourceful one too" Eddie added as he handed over a small brown envelope "I believe you will find these useful."

"How the hell did you get these?" Mr Thomson asked with stunned delight as he looked inside the envelope to see a pair of tickets for that Saturday's football match with West Ham playing away at Nottingham Forest.

"A friend of a friend of a friend" Eddie sort of explained "It seems I have more contacts than a telephone directory."

"Well thanks for these" Mr Thomson replied.

"Anytime Sir" Eddie confirmed as he left.

Outside the classroom, Eddie's friend and classmate Barry was waiting for him with an eager look.

"All right mate" Eddie responded as they walked down the corridor together "Either you've finally got Laura to go out with you on a date at last or you are in the money."

"Check this out" Barry extracted a banknote from his front blazer pocket "They are real fresh."

"Nice bit of print work" Eddie commented as he held it up to the light "Watermark as well."

"Didn't I tell you they were great" Barry responded excitedly.

"Barry" Eddie asked with a slightly apprehensive tone having turned the note over to examine the other side "Did your brother print these?"

"Yeah" Barry confirmed.

"Your dyslexic brother?" Eddie added.

"Yes..." Barry responded now with a more worried expression "Why?"

"There's no such thing as the Bank of England" Eddie pointed out the horrific error that up until now had gone unnoticed "Just exactly how many of these has your brother run off dare I ask?"

"About five grand's worth" Barry confirmed. "It was a contract for Peter Briney's gang."

"Oh dear" Eddie concluded "Well if I was your brother, I'd cash in whatever I could down the travel agents, preferably a blind one I should add, and then make a swift exit from the country before Briney and his heavy boys catch up with him."

"You're probably right" Barry agreed "Perhaps I had better go and tell him."

"I'll see you tomorrow then" Eddie remarked.

"Bye!" Barry called as he rushed off out of the school gates.

Eddie duly headed out of the school gates himself and made directly for the nearby bus stop where he boarded a London Transport red AEC Routemaster bus.

"Any more fares?" the conductor called as he entered the lower deck saloon having given the starting bell signal.

"Half to Caterham Road please" Eddie called proffering his fare.

"Here you go lad" the Conductor handed Eddie his ticket from the machine.

"Thanks" Eddie responded as he took the ticket and added it to the collection of similar stuff accumulating in his blazer pockets.

The bus continued on into the centre of Lewisham, stopping at Eddie's stop where he got off.

He watched the bus pull away before making his way up the road towards the diamond depository where he quickly noted two members of the local Police CID discreetly parked in an unmarked car across the street.

Even though it was a weekday late afternoon, there was quite a queue of people waiting to get in to see the exhibition of some of the diamonds inside and it was several minutes before Eddie found himself at the front of the queue and paying his one shilling admission fee before entering the building.

Eddie had to smile when he took a look at the guide that had issued by the Government office who had organised the exhibition as whoever had put it together had reused an official plan of almost the entire building, just the information he had been sent to find and much more.

"Whoa" he remarked as he entered the rear part of the main foyer where there were several display cases containing the diamonds, protected by bullet proof glass and guarded either side by two security guards.

Inside the main case, sparkling in the spot lights being shone upon them were a set of eight beautifully cut large diamonds and below them a tray of smaller ones, still only a tiny fraction of the Government's holding lodged at the depository but still none the less impressive.

"I wonder what you are doing here young Mr Regent?" a voice called from behind Eddie making him turn around to see a distinguished looking gentleman in a neatly tailored suit and overcoat standing there.

"Why am I not surprised to bump into you here?" Eddie asked Richard Crowthorne.

"Me, I was just in the neighbourhood" Crowthorne responded casually, "Did you know some bloody cab driver gave me a dodgy bank note in my change?"

"Welcome to Lewisham" Eddie wryly responded.

"I mean look at that" Crowthorne showed Eddie the five pound note "Bank of England, I ask you."

"Nice diamonds you have to admit" Eddie remarked as he and Crowthorne admired the gems in the cabinet "Must be worth a few bob."

"Not thinking of nicking them are you?" Crowthorne asked knowingly.

"What would I do with thirty five million quids worth of diamonds?" Eddie asked "Besides your paymasters would be horrified if the Government's nest egg suddenly disappeared."

"Don't believe everything you read lad" Crowthorne responded suggestively.

"You can't be serious" Eddie looked up at Crowthorne.

"They are insured" Crowthorne responded "and according to one report for a damn sight more than their real value."

"So just hypothetically speaking" Eddie commented as they walked around the exhibits "If they were to publicly disappear then you and your betters would actually be happy?"

"Hypothetically yes" Crowthorne confirmed.

"Does MI5 employ twelve year olds just out of interest?" Eddie asked as they left the building "Only hypothetically I think I am going to be looking for alternative accommodation a long way from here some time very soon."

"I am sure we can come up with something" Crowthorne responded with a chuckle "See you around Eddie and take care."

With that, Crowthorne tugged his forelock and disappeared off into the crowds of early rush hour pedestrians as if he had never been there.

An hour later, Eddie returned home, heading straight for the kitchen where he found Elizabeth, his older sister preparing a hot milky drink for their brother Richard who was upstairs in bed with a severe case of the flu.

"Hello sis" Eddie called "Dad in yet?" he asked as he hung his school bag up on the coat hook by the back door.

"Oh there you are shorty" Elizabeth responded with a giggle "He's in the shed. Do you want any tea?" she asked.

"Oh usual thanks" Eddie responded by which time he was already heading out of the back door.

It was a short walk down the narrow suburban garden, lined either side by well tended vegetable plots to the garden shed at the bottom where inside, with his pipe in his mouth and wearing his old favourite flat cap, Eddie found Regent his father working away on some bedding plants.

"Hello son" Regent greeted him as he entered "How did it go?"

"Well the place is quite well guarded" Eddie confirmed "Two rent a bobby guards in the main entrance and display area and a grey rover with two CID plod parked across the street."

"Sounds reasonable" Regent remarked "What about the layout?"

"That's the best bit" Eddie responded as he pulled the guide leaflet out of his blazer pocket "Some wally at the Treasury has only gone and used the entire floor plan of the place in the literature haven't they?" he showed his father the leaflet.

"Remarkable, anyone would think they wanted the diamonds to be stolen" Regent looked at the leaflet with astonishment.

"That wasn't all I found down there" Eddie added apprehensively, the change of tone being quickly picked up upon by Regent.

"Do go on son..." Regent urged.

"I ran into an old err friend of the family shall we say" Eddie responded, the apprehension growing even more obvious.

"Uncle Richard Crowthorne by any chance?" Regent asked.

"Yeah..." Eddie reluctantly confirmed.

"I'd heard he was in town" Regent responded knowingly "Nothing to worry about there son."

"How do you know that dad?" Eddie asked, understandably curious by his father's reaction to his news.

"Friends in low places son" Regent confirmed with a wink "Friends in low places."

-o-o-o-o-

"That explains why you wanted Sir Richard kept largely in the dark" Tracy remarked as they headed down the escalator to the Victoria Line where the updraft from an arriving train below blasted into them.

"Indeed" the Commander confirmed "I want to have a few words with him at some point as I am sure he knows something that was never disclosed."

"So where were you on the momentous day then?" Tracy asked as they boarded a southbound Victoria Line service.

"That's where things get really complicated" the Commander was forced to admit.

-o-o-o-o-

It was the morning of the planned heist, Friday March 7th 1969 and as Eddie was leaving the house to go to school, the customary slice of burnt toast in his mouth, his father called to him.

"Eddie!" his distinctive voice called from inside the house, a sense of urgent importance apparent in his voice.

"Yes dad?" Eddie responded, his voice muffled a bit by a mouthful of toast.

"Something important I need to tell you" Regent began "Make sure you are not in school this afternoon, in fact I strongly suggest that you put some distance between yourself and Lewisham."

"Well" Eddie thought for a moment "I could nip off at lunchtime and watch the Queen opening the Victoria Line I suppose."

"Nice legitimate sounding excuse" Regent remarked "That should do nicely."

"Dad" Eddie asked, his concern obvious "What happens if this all goes pear shaped?"

"It will be all right son" Regent assured him "If anything does go badly wrong, go to Richard Crowthorne and ask him for help, he has the power to fix almost any situation."

"If you say so" Eddie responded "I'd better get going, see you later."

It was clear to anyone who knew him that Eddie had something worrying on his mind as he was clearly not his usual quick witted and quirky self throughout the first two lessons that morning.

At break time, Barry caught up with Eddie in the canteen to see what was wrong.

"Morning mate" Barry called as he joined him "Shilling for them?"

"Oh it's nothing" Eddie tried unsuccessfully to dismiss any apparent problem but Barry knew him better than that.

"I'm as apprehensive about the job as you are" Barry tried to reassure him "My brother is driving one of the cars."

"It's just that there is something about this whole setup that doesn't seem right" Eddie responded "I mean for example my dad advised me to get out of town by lunchtime, doesn't that strike you as a bit odd?"

"Weren't you planning on heading into town to see the new trains or something anyway?" Barry asked.

"Oddly enough yes" Eddie confirmed.

"Well there you go" Barry reassured him "What have you got to worry about?"

The next lesson was double science and it was with of sense of irony, maybe even fate that the topic was crystal structures and in particular the properties of diamonds.

"As you are no doubt aware" Mr Threnfall the head of science announced from his customary position of authority in front of his fleet of black boards "We are privileged here in Lewisham to be hosting an exhibition of diamonds of international quality."

"Not for much longer..." Barry murmured.

"...and I have arranged for this class to go and see them." Mr Threnfall explained.

"He had better hurry up then or there won't be any diamonds left" Eddie whispered aside to Barry.

"With the special permission of the headmaster we shall be leaving here in the school coach in ten minutes" Mr Threnfall continued which immediately caused Barry to mouth silently an expletive and Eddie to extract his pocket watch, open the front case, note the time and then with an understandably worried expression, do some quick mathematics.

"Oh dear..." Eddie commented with a very worried expression as the class began to filter out of the classroom.

"Look it will be all right" Barry reassured him "They are not planning anything violent for this job so if we are there when it happens, we just stand back and enjoy the show."

"I'm under instructions to be well clear of the place when it happens" Eddie responded "Trouble is if I disappear now, its going too look decidedly suspicious isn't it?"

"You have a point there" Barry agreed as the both climbed the rather steep entrance steps of the school's coach, a rather elderly looking old Bedford that the headmaster had picked up cheap some years ago.

"We will be lucky to get there at all in this rust bucket" Eddie remarked as they took their seats and the engine reluctantly spluttered into life, rattling the panelling both inside and out.

Some miles away, final preparations were being made as the collective members of the heist crew got into various vehicles, overlooked in the yard outside the old warehouse by the mysterious Mr Jones.

With Mr Jones were four heavily built men who he had brought with him and at his insistence were to be on the crew for the heist.

Regent and Field were over by the Transit van which was now complete with its authentic looking security transport markings, and together they observed the new arrivals with some concern.

"Who are those four jokers?" Regent asked from his position in the drivers seat of the van.

"Some of our employers herd apparently" Field responded "I don't like the look of this."

"Me neither" Regent agreed "This is supposed to be a non violent snatch and disperse but those thugs look like they are here for a fight."

"That's what I am afraid of too" Field confirmed the same suspicions "The last thing we need is any gatecrashers giving the Mannerie boys the chance to get their guns off."

"Time to go" Regent confirmed as he started the engine "Do me a favour, if this all goes wrong, look out for little Eddie will you?"

"I will" Field confirmed with a firm shake of the hand "It'll cost me a fortune in poker chips most likely though!"

"See you around" Regent confirmed as he shut the door and accelerated away out of the yard, down the rough track and out onto the main road.

Driving along on his own, Regent had some time to think as he headed into the centre of Lewisham where he parked up in the end of a side street.

From there he could see up and down the road and across to the Diamond Depository where, just as Eddie had reported a couple of days earlier, there were a couple of undercover detectives on duty in an unmarked car just across the street.

Indeed Regent was concentrating so much on what was happening just down the road he almost missed the arrival alongside of the battered old school coach which stopped directly opposite his van.

"Can you get life insurance if you are twelve?" Eddie asked aside to Barry as they were the last to get off the coach before slightly reluctantly following the rest of the class down the street the short distance to the Depository.

As they passed in through the main entrance, Eddie noted out of the corner of his eye two of the fast cars pulling into the top of the street and he knew that two more would at that moment be doing exactly the same from the other direction.

"Oh hell!" Regent exclaimed as he saw the school party head inside the Depository including what appeared to be possibly Eddie towards the back of the crowd.

"You all right mate?" Richard Crowthorne asked Regent as he appeared at the side window of the van.

"School party just went into the Depository" Regent confirmed with an understandably worried look "I think I saw Eddie in there with them."

"Right" Crowthorne confirmed "I'll see what I can do" he reassured Regent before heading off across the street.

As Crowthorne entered the Depository, across the street the two detectives in their car suddenly found their doors being opened and before they could either call for help or offer resistance, they were rendered unconscious by swiftly applied chloroform.

Inside the Depository, Eddie and Barry both knew what was coming and although they had the supposed reassurance that there was no violence planned, it was still an uncomfortable feeling as they went around the exhibits at the back of the class.

Although Mr Threnfall was exalting to the class about one of the smaller exhibits, Eddie was not actually paying any attention, instead he was using the reflection in the glass of the main exhibit case to keep a watch on the entrance whilst alongside him, Barry was watching the backs of the rest of the class and in particular Laura, the girl he fancied.

"One minute" Eddie confirmed quietly aside to Barry as he checked his old pocket watch "If this goes pear shaped, grab your girl and hit the deck."

"Right" Barry confirmed, not taking his eyes off Laura who had by now noticed him watching her as well as the pensive expression both he and Eddie were displaying.

Outside in the street, in front of an Evening Standard sellers stand, Richard Crowthorne walked smartly up to and stopped alongside a very worried looking Roger Field.

"Jesus Christ!" Crowthorne exclaimed as both he and Field looked on in horror. The first four men to deploy from the cars were the over eager goons that Mr Jones had brought along and as they approached the main Depository entrance, the hooded men produced powerful weapons including sawn off shot guns and semi automatic pistols.

"This wasn't in the script" Field agreed as they looked on, the initial four men now being followed inside by the rest of the gang, the most enthusiastic of which with their baseball bats were obviously the Mannerie brothers.

The first thing anyone inside the depository knew about the raid was when the large group of armed men came bursting in through the main entrance and pushed immediately on through to the display area beyond.

Immediately upon entering the display room, the leading goon promptly started to open fire without hesitation or remorse, his first shot sending one of the security guards backwards into one of the display cases and his next shot swiftly taking care of the second and only narrowly missing Eddie alongside.

"Get down!" Eddie called to his classmates just as further random shots were fired around the room in response to the arrival of more security guards, one of which struck Laura in the arm as Barry brought her to the ground, if he hadn't, she would most likely have been killed.

Eddie helped Barry with Laura before ushering as best they could their terrified classmates over to the relative safety of a side room whilst the main goon, still randomly firing shots all over the place, watched over the rest of the gang as they proceeded into the depths of the building.

Cowering on the floor on the other side of the room was a young mother and two men, obviously terrified as gunshots and shattered glass rained down on them.

It was just then that a further security guard appeared right in front of them from a side entrance and the most prolific of the shooters turned his gun in their direction.

"Stay here and keep down" Eddie instructed Barry who was helping to bind Laura's wound with his handkerchief.

"What are you going to do?" Barry asked amidst the noise, chaos and confusion.

"Whatever I can" Eddie confirmed as he picked up part of a broken case frame off the floor and headed off across the room.

One of the gunmen was bringing his gun to bear on the security guard and the three visitors immediately behind him when he was brought crashing to the floor by the impact of a heavy object being brought down with some force upon his back.

"No way are you a local lad" Eddie remarked as he threw down the piece of metal and administered a swift kick to the head of the gunman "Let's have a look at you" he remarked as he bent down and pulled off the balaclava of the unidentified man only to reveal the bloodied face of the mysterious Mr Jones.

"Hey!" the lead gunman called "You want some as well?" he asked Eddie aggressively as he took aim with a sawn off shotgun.

"Not really!" Eddie exclaimed as he threw himself out of the way as the gunman fired, missing him by a fraction and shattering the remains of the display case behind him.

It was at that moment that the rest of the gang began to emerge from the vaults with large steel cases in their hands.

Thankfully this distracted the lead gunman from Eddie who was on the floor covered in diamonds and glass, indeed it was difficult to tell which was which.

"Come on" Crowthorne suddenly announced as he appeared from a side doorway into the room and lifted Eddie up off the floor "You've done your good deed for today, let's get the hell out of here!"

"Wait" Eddie responded "The others" he turned away to the far side of the room where he found Barry with Laura who had now passed out due to loss of blood.

"Where's everybody else?" Eddie asked when he realised the rest of the class and indeed everyone else had gone.

"They all left out of the fire exit whilst you were doing your John Wayne impersonation over there" Barry explained "but I wasn't going to leave Laura like this with these trigger happy nutters around."

"Time to go" Crowthorne urged as he looked back to see the gang gathering back together in the room and preparing to leave.

Barry and Eddie together carried the unconscious Laura out of the side exit with Crowthorne following watching their backs.

Outside in the street there was a scene of utter chaos as the gang, led by the trigger happy gunmen burst outside, sending passers by running for cover amid the sounds of screams and shrieking.

Hearing the commotion, Regent looked down the street and seeing it was time, accelerated away to the roadside immediately outside the Depository where he sounded the horn twice.

It was only as the gunmen appeared from inside the Depository with their cases which they proceeded to load unceremoniously into the back that Regent noted with some horror a short distance away, Eddie, Crowthorne, Barry and the injured Laura on the pavement.

"Go!" one of the gang shouted as soon as the last case had been loaded and the back doors slammed shut.

Regent gave an apologetic look towards his son before quickly accelerating away amid the squeal of tyres and approaching sirens.

Swiftly following were the four powerful cars containing the gang members that all set off in different directions, sending traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular scattering in all directions with a number of collisions directly resulting.

"Well they are away" Eddie commented as a number of Police vehicles came through with sirens and bells in full cry and continued on through in vain pursuit of the

getaway vehicles although their quarry's superior horse power advantage meant realistically they had little chance of catching them.

"You had better get out of here as well" Crowthorne strongly advised Eddie as Laura regained consciousness and the Police began to seal off the scene.

"Well I..." Eddie seemed at a bit of a loss as to what to do.

"Damm it Eddie" Crowthorne responded "You saw the guy, you can identify him and believe me, if you hang around here you will be killed."

"He's right mate" Barry agreed "If you hang around here, you'll be fish food or a concrete reinforcing rod by the end of the day."

"Where did you tell your father you were going this afternoon?" Crowthorne asked.

"Erm London Victoria" Eddie responded "I was going to see the opening of the new Victoria Line."

"Perfect" Crowthorne remarked "The Queen is doing the opening which means plenty of public and security around so you should be safe."

"Then what?" Eddie asked.

"Make yourself scarce for an hour or two" Crowthorne instructed "Ride up and down the new line a bit, then at five o'clock, go to New Scotland Yard, go in to the reception desk, show them this" Crowthorne handed Eddie a business card "and ask for David Forrester, the Chief Commissioner of The Metropolitan Police."

"The average twelve year does not go calmly swanning into Scotland Yard asking for the Chief" Eddie correctly pointed out.

"Don't worry" Crowthorne reassured him "I'll ring on ahead and explain everything, he will meet you in the reception area at exactly five o'clock, you understand?"

"I think so yes" Eddie confirmed before turning back to Barry and Laura "See you guys in the next life" he called to them as he pulled a five pound note out of his pocket and pressed it into Barry's hand "Here, you two have a nice romantic dinner on me."

"Be careful mate" Barry responded.

"And thank you" Laura added as Eddie nodded in acknowledgement before rather reluctantly leaving them to melt away into the crowds and disappear from sight.

It took quite a bit of effort to escape the thronged crowds that were now flocking in their droves to the scene of the crime, all of them of course surging in the opposite direction to that in which Eddie wanted to go.

Eventually he managed to make it out of the melee and into Lewisham High Street where after briefly stopping to buy a bag of sweets, he continued on to the main railway station.

"Hello" the ticket office clerk commented on seeing the rather short even for a twelve year old school boy at his window "School finished early today."

"Well it's a long story" Eddie admitted.

"All right then" the ticket clerk responded "Where to today?" he asked.

"Half single to Victoria please" Eddie confirmed as he handed over the correct money for his fare, this being a journey he had done before on a number of occasions but never under these sort of circumstances.

"There you go lad" the ticket clerk duly passed the small card ticket out through the slot at the bottom of the window.

"Thanks" Eddie responded as he took his ticket and headed towards the subway that led to the platforms, pausing only briefly to show the inspector on duty his ticket. A few moments later he ascended the steps and emerged onto the curved platform one.

"Stand clear of the platform edge please!" the platform supervisor called generally causing Eddie to look up momentarily to see what was coming.

A few moments later a parcels train came rattling through the station, Eddie making a mental note of the newly repainted Class 73 locomotive number E6043, its glistening British Rail blue livery contrasting markedly with its train of assorted vans of varying vintages, designs, condition and liveries.

"Fast London Victoria next train in three minutes" the platform supervisor called as he changed the wooden board which advised intending passengers of the stops for the next service due at that platform.

An almost brand new slam door train formed of a four car Class 421 unit in its blue and grey colours departed from the opposite platform with a service bound for the Kent coast as Eddie looked around to see if anyone might be following him but apart from a few members of railway staff on the platforms and a couple of intending passengers down the other end, it appeared he was alone there.

The old style Southern Region green totem style station sign suspended from the platform canopy above Eddie creaked a little as it moved in the breeze but soon this distraction was drowned out by the approach of his train, a four car formation of Southern Region classic EPB type slam door stock, the leading two car unit in very tired green livery whilst the rear two car unit of the train wore the new all over blue livery which did little to enhance the drab appearance of this type of train.

Eddie boarded at the front, finding an empty compartment immediately behind the drivers cab. Once the guard at the back had sounded his whistle, the characteristic

two bell starting signal was heard coming from the drivers cab and the train moved off.

The only intermediate stop before London Victoria was Peckham Rye where Eddie remained undisturbed in his compartment with his bag of sweets which he was already half way through by now, unsure whether he was eating because he was actually hungry or because he needed the comfort.

The squeal of the wheels as the train passed over Factory Junction and alongside Stewart's Lane Engine Shed heralded it was nearly journeys end, a fact confirmed as Eddie went up to the droplight window in the door, lowered it and looked outside at the industrial magnificence of Battersea Power Station, its four famous enormous chimneys belching out smoke as it generated power for the city that it dominated the skyline of.

A couple of minutes later, the train weaved its way through the complicated point work at the south end of London Victoria Station to arrive in platform four where it braked to a stop with a large characteristic release of air.

Eddie duly got out, being careful to ensure that the train compartment door was firmly and properly closed behind him before making his way across the concourse and then outside where an extremely busy scene of people and Police awaited him.

Checking his old pocket watch, Eddie noted the time as just gone three o'clock and ahead of him, people were now about to be allowed down the entrance steps into the new ticket hall built directly beneath the bus station for the new Victoria Line.

Being small Eddie found it easy to get to the front of the crowd just as the gates were opened meaning he was one of the first members of the public to enter the new section of the station.

At the bottom of the staircase, Eddie paused to look at the newly unveiled ceremonial opening plaque, its curtains still mounted around it from where it had been revealed by Her Majesty the Queen not an hour earlier.

Of course Eddie was going no further without a ticket and so found himself one of the first to use the new self service machines which thanks to having read the leaflet he had acquired a week earlier, he found fairly easy to use and duly purchased a return to Warren Street.

The ticket barriers, back then a very new invention, proved to be a little daunting for the unwary, indeed Eddie was stuck behind two people who failed to master it so much so that the station supervisor let him through the side access gate instead.

Heading down the brand new escalators to the platform level, Eddie became partially aware that one of the people a short distance back up the escalator as he headed down was similar to one of the intending passengers he had noted at the far end of the platform back at Lewisham.

Yes it could just have been a coincidence but Eddie decided he wasn't going to take the chance so at the bottom, he pretended to follow the crowds heading towards the northbound departure platform but at the last possible moment, he ducked off to one side and onto the empty southbound arrivals platform, at that point the southern terminus of the line until the fourth phase to Brixton was completed a couple of years later.

"Whoa where are you going mate?" one of the Underground staff asked as Eddie headed down the platform.

"Oh just having a look around" Eddie responded as positively as he could "It's all rather nice isn't it?"

"That it is lad" the member of staff agreed with a proud smile "However if you actually want to catch a train anytime before 1971, then you need the other platform" he explained indicating the cross passage to the opposite platform.

"Oh right" Eddie confirmed, trying his best to look like he was genuinely lost as he knew full well exactly where he was supposed to go "Thanks a lot" he added as he headed on down the platform and then through the cross passage to the other side.

The crowds of waiting passengers on the platform were quite heavy around the entrance at the top end but where Eddie was at the north end, it was still quiet.

He couldn't see any sign of the person that had triggered his suspicions so instead sat down in one of the tiled alcoves that was decorated with a silhouette motif of Queen Victoria and retrieved a Milky Bar from his blazer pocket of that unique thick rectangular shape that was produced exclusively for railway station vending machines, the sort of device Eddie frequently frequented.

The time according to his pocket watch was three fifteen and at exactly that moment, Eddie got up when he heard a tube train's whistle. Slowly into the platform came the brand new six car train of 1969 type tube stock, its unpainted aluminium finish positively gleaming, and on the front marking this as the first public run on the main section of the line, a special 'Victoria Line' headboard which proclaimed the date of 7th of March 1969.

Man had not even landed on the moon by that point but that was the pioneering sort of feeling Eddie felt as he became the first passenger ever to board that carriage where he sat down in one of the plush new seats and sat back to enjoy the ride, this being the perfect distraction from the troubles of the day's earlier traumatic events.

Eddie turned to look out of the window as the train then arrived at the brand new platform at Green Park where a small number of passengers boarded the car he was travelling in, each one of them carefully but discreetly observed as they took their seats but none registering with Eddie as any form of potential problem.

It was however as the train doors closed and the train moved off that Eddie caught a glimpse of someone standing behind the connecting doorway in the next car looking through into the carriage that he was in.

Discretion was probably the best part of valour, Eddie thought to himself as he chose not to alert the potential problem person to the fact he had been spotted but turning his attentions to reading the Victoria Line opening leaflet.

Oxford Circus station came and went without the mysterious stranger moving, instead he continued to discreetly observe the interior of Eddie's car through the windows in the connecting doorways.

Eddie decided to bail out as planned at Warren Street, the next stop and northern extremity of this newly opened section of the line but deliberately did not get up from his seat or show any signs of his intentions until the train had come to a halt and the doors had already opened.

Just moments before the doors closed however, Eddie suddenly got up and left the train, the doors closing immediately behind him as he stood on the platform.

On the opposite platform visible through the cross passage, a southbound train could be seen arriving, prompting Eddie to jog over and board the rear car the moment it stopped and its doors opened.

Satisfied that he had managed to evade any potential followers, Eddie relaxed a little on the journey back to Victoria where the platform supervisor he had met earlier looked on with some surprise to see Eddie back again as he alighted from the train.

"Enjoy your trip?" the supervisor asked as Eddie went by.

"Very much thank you" Eddie confirmed with a wry smile as he left the platform and headed up the shorter flight of escalators that lead up to the older District and Circle Line platforms.

As a District Line train formed of vintage CO type stock left the platform, Eddie checked back behind to doubly ensure that he wasn't being followed before using the exit up the fixed stairway to the older north ticket hall and then out into the bustling surroundings of Victoria Street.

"Standard! Standard!" the newspaper seller immediately outside the station entrance called, causing Eddie to turn and look at the headline posters.

"Major diamond theft in Lewisham!" the seller continued as Eddie duly reached inside his trouser pocket, extracted the correct change and with a nod of thanks, purchased a copy.

It was obvious to Eddie as he scanned the front page that the press were splashing the news across the pages in some significant detail despite the fact that these events only occurred a matter of a few hours earlier, indeed it was almost as though someone was feeding a pre-prepared official line on the incident as he read the details whilst walking across and up Victoria Street towards Westminster.

The pictures were mostly standard stuff, views of parked Police vehicles, sealed off streets and an archive shot of the Treasury Minister with the diamonds from a press briefing some two weeks earlier.

Needless to say the press made much of the extreme violence that had been used and was careful to go into nauseating detail about the fact that there were women and children present who were put in extreme peril during the incident but curiously no mention of any injuries to them, only the mistakenly reported death of five security guards, a fact that Eddie knew to be wrong as there were only ever four on the premises and of those only three were shot.

Turning to the inside pages, the reports continued on the already extensive manhunt and an appeal for witnesses but as yet no reported comment from anyone in the Government oddly, it was their diamonds after all.

Eddie closed the paper and tucked it under his arm before looking around the busy Victoria Street, back in those days dominated by red London Buses far removed but yet seemingly possessing far more character than the low floor plastic modern vehicles of the modern day.

To anyone else passing by he was just a young lad standing there by the side of the street but what Eddie was unaware of was that there were now at least three different parties looking across the city for him and most importantly for the knowledge he had about what really happened a few hours ago in Lewisham.

Just up the road, a short distance away from the concrete edifice of Westminster Town Hall was an electrical shop around whose front window was gathered quite a crowd which made Eddie wonder what could possibly be attracting their attention.

As he approached, all became clear as the crowd were watching the televisions in the windows which were broadcasting the BBC News report of the diamond heist. This of course was not the days of twenty four hour news and the internet, you had to wait until one of but a few prescribed times during the day for a news bulletin which was always delivered in a truly old fashioned authoritative yet reassuring tone for which the BBC was well known.

Pushing his way discreetly to the front of the crowd, Eddie looked in the window and watched as the black and white television showed the special news bulletin on the unfolding events back in Lewisham,

Much of the report was as you would expect with sweeping views of the surrounding area and an interview on the scene with the local Chief Inspector from Lewisham CID whom Eddie knew well from past encounters mostly ironically of the poker playing variety.

As he watched the television, Eddie thought of his father as well as Barry and Laura and wondered if they were all right. He knew realistically that it would be extremely unwise to attempt any communication but he simply had to try so looked around for a telephone box.

Nearby was a row of the classic red telephone boxes that back then were just a normal everyday part of the streets of central London but are now all but a distant memory.

Struggling with the heavy cast iron door, Eddie managed to get inside and then extracted a couple of coins with which to make the call.

Back in the suburbs of Lewisham, Barry looked up from the sofa as the telephone in the hall of his house rang. Quickly he left Laura who was resting on the sofa having now been released from the hospital only a short time earlier and went into the hall to answer it.

“Lewisham 3121” Barry answered.

“Barry?” Eddie called “It's Eddie, are you all right?”

“Eddie?” Barry was surprised by the call “What are you doing?” he asked, cupping his hand over the receiver as if he was being overheard “Half the Metropolitan Police are looking for you, apparently you are their star witness!”

“Well they're not doing a very good job of it then” Eddie remarked wryly as he looked around from inside the telephone box “Anyway, I knew it was a risk but I wanted to know if you and Laura were all right?”

“Oh we're fine” Barry confirmed with a wry smile “Laura was released from the hospital about twenty minutes ago and she is resting over at my place until her parents come home.”

“Cosy” Eddie commented “Listen, any word on my dad?” he asked.

“Nothing yet on the usual grape vines but I have been busy taking care of my girl” Barry confirmed “The old bill are kicking in the doors of anyone in a five mile radius with a criminal record though, even if its just an unpaid parking ticket.”

“Listen” Eddie responded “I had better get off this line just in case so I'll see you around some day. Take care of yourself ok?”

“Yeah” Barry confirmed “You too mate, next time we meet, the drinks are on me.”

“I hear that” Eddie smiled for the first time in hours “See you” he concluded before hanging up. Once again, Eddie had to struggle with the solid cast iron door of the telephone box to get out but soon found himself back out in the street again, looking up and down to ensure no one was watching him.

It was difficult to see anything in the busy pedestrian traffic but to Eddie, no one really stood out in the crowd. There were a couple of uniformed police men walking away from him on the opposite side of the street but that was not at all uncommon with Westminster, Buckingham Palace and New Scotland Yard all within a few minutes walking distance.

However Eddie certainly had not managed to evade total detection as his call to Barry had been monitored by someone who even as he sat on a seat in front of Westminster City Hall reading the Evening Standard, was closing in on his likely location through the services of a telephone trace.

In a darkened office somewhere in Westminster, a communications technician picked up the telephone and dialled a number using the then common rotating dial.

"Your package was in a call box in Victoria Street three minutes ago Mr Smith" the technician announced "That puts him five minutes away from New Scotland Yard."

"Thank you" the voice of the mysterious Mr Smith was heard to confirm "Have Mr Jones eliminate the problem immediately, he must not be allowed to be taken in by the authorities and remember it is essential we maintain full deniability on this matter."

Deep in the heart of the offices of MI5, this call was being recorded and monitored and as soon as it finished, Richard Crowthorne removed his headphones and turned to his section head and superior Frank McGregor who was behind him where he had also been monitoring this foreboding development.

"Oh my God, they are going to kill him" Crowthorne responded.

"If Eddie Regent dies" McGregor confirmed "Any chance we have of nailing these bastards dies with him" he commented as he picked up the telephone and dialled a single digit for the secure switch board.

"David Forrester, Chief Commissioner at New Scotland Yard and quickly please" McGregor requested of the operator as soon as his call had been picked up.

Whilst waiting clearly with some impatience to be put through, McGregor called to Crowthorne "Get a fast car downstairs in two minutes and wait for me" he instructed.

"The Yard?" Crowthorne asked as he picked up his coat and was about to leave.

"Yes" McGregor confirmed "Lets just hope we are not too late" he added "I may have to speak to the Director General about this job, I think we are going to have to pull all the family silver out for this one."

"There goes the overtime budget Sir" Crowthorne wryly remarked as he left.

McGregor smiled in agreement at Crowthorne's amusing but probably very true remark only for his expression to return to one of seriousness once again as his call was finally answered.

"Forrester" the Metropolitan Police Chief Commissioner responded from his desk in the well appointed office on the top floor of then very new New Scotland Yard building, the very same office that would ironically become the Commander's some years later.

"Dave" McGregor replied "It's Frank over at Five."

"Oh afternoon Frank" Forrester responded "You haven't seen any diamonds around by any chance he asked wryly, reflecting just how poor his day had been up until that point.

"Not on me sorry" McGregor responded "Anyway, related reason for calling as it happens, in this case Eddie Regent."

"London's most wanted twelve year old?" Forrester responded "Your chap Crowthorne called about him earlier, no sign of him yet though which is a pity. If what I hear about the young man is correct I have a good mind to offer him a job!"

"Yeah well one slight problem" McGregor explained "He's about five minutes away from you in Victoria Street and unless you go and get him pretty damm quick we could lose him."

"Something I should know?" Forrester asked as he pressed the intercom call buzzer on his desk.

"We just intercepted a call from some slippery bastards we have an eye and ear on and they have some unfriendly gentlemen on their way right now to eliminate Eddie by whatever means necessary."

"Right" Forrester responded as he got up from behind his desk "We'll go and get him now, I'll call you back."

"You called?" Forrester's Deputy asked as he came into the office in response to the intercom call only to find his superior office retrieving his Police issue handgun from the wall safe.

"Get on the telephone, radio, carrier pigeon, whatever" Forrester instructed as he grabbed his uniform cap and left the office hurriedly with his deputy following, understandably confused "Find Harry and the armed response boys and get them down to main reception by yesterday."

"Something wrong Sir?" the officer asked after Forrester as he rushed away up the corridor towards the lifts.

"Ask me again in five minutes" Forrester responded as he reached the lifts and was fortunate to find an arriving lift car opening its doors allowing him to board quickly.

"I don't know" Forrester remarked to himself about his slightly slow on the take up deputy as he descended alone in the lift "It's a miracle he made it past the rank of traffic warden."

Less than half a mile away, Eddie got up from the bench and continued slowly onwards in the direction of Westminster, pausing only briefly to consult his pocket watch which informed of the time which was now almost exactly four o'clock, a fact confirmed as the chimes of Big Ben began to ring out.

Despite his heightened sense of his surroundings at that time, Eddie failed to register the black Rover saloon car that had suddenly pulled out of the traffic flow nearby and into the opposite side of the street adjacent to the pavement.

As Eddie approached the junction for Broadway, in the shadow of the imposing buildings of New Scotland Yard, three men got out of the car with a clear sense of purpose and proceeded across the road in his general direction.

In the reception area of New Scotland Yard, Forrester arrived to find just two officers waiting for him.

"Is this it?" Forrester asked with some astonishment.

"Most of the card carrying members of the force are down Lewisham way" one of the officers explained "I'm afraid Sir that we are it."

"Better than nothing I suppose" Forrester remarked with a resigned look "Come on" he encouraged them as they headed for the door "Follow me."

Outside in the street, the three officers paused on the pavement in front of the famous three sided revolving sign and looked up and down Broadway.

"There he is!" Forrester called upon sighting Eddie coming down the road towards them, only then to realise that coming up behind Eddie were three rather determined looking men who appeared to be drawing weapons as they got closer to their quarry.

"Eddie, get down!" Forrester shouted as he and the two officers ran towards him.

However Eddie barely had time to react, managing to just turn around to see his pursuers catching up with him before a gunshot was heard.

It took a few moments for Eddie to register what had happened, only realising he had been shot when looking down to see blood starting to soak through his uniform.

The second shot from the gunmen sent Eddie collapsing to the pavement in agony and shock just as Forrester and his officers reached him, fearing it was too late.

"Armed Police, don't move!" the two officers called with their guns drawn as Forrester bent down to cover Eddie.

Resisting arrest was the preferred choice of the gunmen as they opened fire generally whilst beating a hasty retreat back to their vehicle.

In the midst of intense gunfire, Forrester tossed his gun to another Police officer who arrived on the scene in response to the sound of gunfire.

"Shoot the bastards" Forrester ordered as he wrapped his uniform tunic around the lifeless and badly bleeding Eddie before scooping him up off the ground and with

another officer watching his back, running quickly back to the relative safety of the foyer of New Scotland Yard.

"Out of the way quickly please!" Forrester called as he carried Eddie inside and lay him on the soft chairs in reception "Someone call a bloody ambulance!" he called urgently.

Outside, the armed officers had shot dead one of the gunmen but the other two were by now bundling into the back of their car which was already speeding away.

"Seal this entire area off" one of the officers called as more officers arrived on the scene and proceeded to move the public back behind hastily put up tape barriers stretched across the street.

In the midst of the confusion and the wail of sirens, the car transporting Richard Crowthorne and his superior arrived where it was allowed through the tape barrier once they had proffered their identification.

"Oh hell" Crowthorne remarked as they got out of the car and immediately saw both the dead gunman and the blood where Eddie had fallen "Looks like we may have been too late."

Quickly they made their way down the road and then inside the main entrance where they found Forrester and one of the receptionists frantically trying to keep Eddie alive.

"Oh my God" Crowthorne exclaimed with a look of shock.

"He's stopped breathing!" Forrester called out "Where the hell is that damm ambulance?"

"I'll go and have a look" McGregor responded as he turned and went outside whilst Crowthorne joined in the recovery effort which by now had reached the point where the receptionist was performing mouth to mouth whilst Forrester pumped the chest in an effort to keep Eddie alive.

"Get your arse in here!" McGregor called to the ambulance crew as they pulled up outside and disembarked.

"What have we got?" the ambulance crew asked as they arrived on the substantially blood soaked scene.

"Twelve year old male" Forrester responded "Two gun shot wounds to the chest and heavy blood loss. We just got his pulse back but he's a mess."

"All right" the lead ambulance man confirmed "Is there a doctor on site?" he asked as he and his colleague took over Eddie's care.

"Doctor Morison is on his way down from the top floor" the Receptionist confirmed.

"Good thinking" Forrester remarked.

"I'm here!" the tall white coated figure of Doctor Morison, head of the forensic science division called as he came running in from the direction of the lifts and was allowed through the now considerable crowd that was gathering around the scene "Bloody hell!" he exclaimed at his first sight of the mess.

"Just keep him alive" Forrester ordered as he and everyone else moved back to allow the medical experts to do their job.

"Now what do we do?" Crowthorne asked.

"We nail a lid on this" Forrester responded "Assuming he survives, we issue a press release saying he's dead and then we have to hope those who did this get relaxed and careless."

"I can have my best close protection team watching around the clock from the moment he leaves here" McGregor confirmed "Crowthorne, put our special secure unit at Guys Hospital on alert and extend every courtesy, asset and service at our disposal to ensure our young Mr Regent here stays alive."

"Yes Sir" Crowthorne confirmed before going around to the reception desk where he began to make a series of telephone calls.

"Who is your man on the Lewisham heist investigation?" McGregor asked.

"Erm new chap, Jim Edwards from the Flying Squad" Forrester confirmed.

"Good" McGregor responded "Get him over here as fast as possible, I want a meeting with everyone involved in this investigation including our young friend here."

"We've got the patient stabilised" the ambulance officer confirmed, probably the first piece of positive news for a while "We can move him but I suggest we don't hang about."

"Arrangements made" Crowthorne confirmed as he rejoined the discussion "The Prime Minister just returned to Downing Street so I have arranged to borrow the Diplomatic Protection Team for escort."

"Well that probably makes young Eddie here the best protected twelve year old in London" McGregor remarked "Just a pity we didn't get to him five minutes sooner."

"I'll go and see that we are ready outside" Crowthorne commented.

"Aye" McGregor confirmed "Go in the ambulance to the hospital, once he is safely there, get his father on the QT there as fast as you can."

"Yes Sir" Crowthorne confirmed as he headed outside where he was met by a number of his MI5 colleagues and the uniformed and armed officers of the Diplomatic Protection Group of the Metropolitan Police.

"Ok ladies and gentleman" Crowthorne briefed the others "We have a critically injured twelve year old witness who we are going to move very fast to the secure treatment unit at Guys Hospital in about two minutes."

Forrester and McGregor watched from the doorway as Crowthorne continued his briefing.

"Good officer that chap of yours" Forrester remarked.

"Indeed" McGregor agreed "One of my protégés, some say he will wind up in the top seat one day."

"Doesn't that worry you?" Forrester responded.

"Hope not" McGregor remarked "I stand to win fifty quid if he makes it."

"We're ready" Doctor Morison called.

"Right let's get this show on the road: McGregor declared as he signalled to Crowthorne who acknowledged with a nod of the head.

"Right people" Crowthorne declared "I want this kid better protected than the Queen."

With Eddie now loaded on a stretcher, two Police officers lifted him carefully up with the Doctor and ambulance crew continuing to carefully monitor his condition.

With the stretcher surrounded by four members of the Diplomatic Protection Group, they moved out into open and up to the back door of the ambulance.

"What the hell happened?" Eddie quietly groaned as he regained some consciousness and looked around although pretty much everything was a bit of a blur.

"Steady now lad" Forrester comforted Eddie "Try not to move or talk, you're a bit of a mess at the moment."

"Who's this guy?" Eddie weakly nodded towards one of the plain clothes close protection officers who got in the back of the ambulance with him and Crowthorne.

"He's the Prime Minister's bodyguard" Crowthorne explained with a wry smile.

"Nice" Eddie barely responded before slipping back into unconsciousness again.

"You hang in their mate" Forrester called before closing the ambulance doors and walking up to the leading Police patrol car where he got into the front passenger seat and firmly closed the door.

"Right" he called over the radio set in the car "Everyone keep an eye open for any uninvited guests. Let's go disturb some traffic."

With the intense sound of sirens, bells and revved engines, the convoy of patrol cars and the ambulance with its critical and valuable passenger, moved off.

Turning left into Victoria Street, heading towards Westminster, the convoy was permitted quick passage towards and then through Parliament Square thanks mainly to a combination of co-operative traffic and numerous Police officers along the route guiding them through.

A couple of minutes after a majestic sweep across Westminster Bridge, the accompanied ambulance arrived at the main entrance to Guys Hospital where Eddie under a carefully watching guard of officers, was unloaded and quickly taken inside.

"Right" McGregor announced as soon as he and Crowthorne had ensured Eddie had been safely delivered to the emergency treatment room prior to receiving urgent surgery "Go and round up the family" he instructed "I want everyone involved in this case here in one hour."

"Yes Sir" Crowthorne determinedly responded before leaving.

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"So I take it you lived then?" Tracy remarked wryly as she brought in two cups of tea into their front room and joined her husband on the sofa.

"It was touch and go for an hour or two though" the Commander admitted ruefully.

"You were right about this then" Tracy looked at the old school blazer "It wasn't moths was it?"

"Only the Smith & Wesson variety" the Commander confirmed with a wry smile.

"So what happened to your father then?" Tracy asked.

"Well that is where it started to get really complicated" the Commander explained.

-o-o-o-o-

"Hello?" Crowthorne called as he cautiously entered the back door of Regent's house.

There was no apparent response, the only sound being the ticking of a clock in the hall way that lead off the kitchen.

Quietly, Crowthorne closed the door behind him and looked around the kitchen, running the palm of his hand across the kettle on the stove to see if it was warm and indicative of possible recent occupation of the house.

It was cold and so was the coal burning stove in the corner, so after a cursory look in the kitchen drawers, Crowthorne proceeded through the house, checking each ground floor room of the modest four bedroom semi detached house.

There was nothing on the ground floor that gave Crowthorne any indication of where Regent might be so, returning to the front hallway, he proceeded up the stairs, wincing a bit when he put his foot on a creaky stair tread two thirds of the way up.

Standing still for a moment, Crowthorne listened for any sounds of anyone there but again only the sound of the clock in the hall disturbed the silence.

Moving to the upstairs landing, Crowthorne examined the bedrooms, the master, all neat and tidy, Elizabeth's bedroom, dominated by pink décor.

There was no mistaking who owned the next bedroom that Crowthorne checked either, where various items of railwayana including one of the recently replaced signs from Lewisham station graced the walls and various items of model railways dominated the room.

The stack of poker chips and deck of cards on the bedside table merely confirmed that this was very much Eddie's room.

"Don't move" Regent announced as he moved forward from the shadows behind Crowthorne, leading with his antique wartime revolver which he kept handy for just such an occasion.

"Hey it's me" Crowthorne reassured Regent, raising his hands and turning around slowly.

"Thank God for that" Regent relaxed with a sigh of relief and returned the gun to his jacket pocket "You alone?"

"Yes" Crowthorne confirmed as Regent went over and sat on the bed, Crowthorne sitting on the chair in front of the desk but having to momentarily get up again to remove a section of model railway track on which he nearly became impaled.

"Where is he?" Regent asked.

"Eddie is in Guys Hospital under secure guard" Crowthorne explained "Some sod decided to put two bullets in him he is in a hell of a mess."

"How bad?" Regent's clear heartfelt concern for his son was obvious.

"There is a hole in him the size of my fist" Crowthorne confirmed "If it wasn't for the Chief Commissioner grabbing him off the street, he would not have made it, as it is he stopped breathing in Scotland Yard's foyer."

"So where do we go from here?" Regent enquired.

"My boss McGregor is taking charge of the whole mess" Crowthorne explained "He wants me to bring you in as a matter of urgency."

"Will I be under arrest?" Regent asked.

"No" Crowthorne confirmed "At the moment he feels and I agree with him that the number one priority is for you to see Eddie. I won't lie to you, it's highly likely he won't survive the night."

"It was your guys who got me into this you know" Regent semi accused with a directed finger but more through grief for his son than anything else.

"You were the best asset we had" Crowthorne tried to explain by way of mitigation even though he was well aware it would be of little if any comfort to Regent "We knew someone with connections was planning to lift these diamonds, indeed it was obvious something was fishy the moment the Government announced they were buying the damm things in the first place."

"So you give me a call..."

"Well I knew whoever was behind this was likely to put together the best crew in the city" Crowthorne continued "You are the best wheel man there is bar none and you've done jobs for us before so it seemed logical."

"And I recall you saying something about their being no violence involved" Regent remarked.

"There wasn't supposed to be" Crowthorne defended himself and his employer as best he could under the circumstances "This was supposed to have been a simple snatch and grab, maybe a couple of security guards rendered unconscious but nothing more, except it would appear someone invited some hired thugs to the party."

"And my son is dying in hospital right now because of this" Regent firmly reminded Crowthorne even though it wasn't necessary.

"You don't know do you?" Crowthorne realised "Have you read the final edition of the Standard yet?" he retrieved the newspaper from his inside overcoat pocket and passed it to Regent "Your son is a hero, he saved lives today."

"What?" Regent responded, clearly confused.

"He single handily took on one of the gunmen in the depository, saved two lives and bought enough time to allow his classmates to escape" Crowthorne explained "The trouble is in the process he managed to identify one of the goons which is why he is now on the critical list."

"Well I see the Chief Commissioner is making the most of this" Regent commented as he read the paper.

"All part of the plan" Crowthorne explained "However the Commissioner's passionate speech to the press and TV with his uniform still covered in blood was all from the heart."

"I want to see him" Regent insisted as he closed the paper and got up "I packed a few things of his in a case" he handed over a suitcase "I don't know what will happen about the rest of his stuff."

"I'll see it gets to him" Crowthorne confirmed "In the meantime, we need to get you very publicly arrested."

"I noticed the local plod and the Flying Squad were kicking in everyone's doors" Regent remarked "Except mine oddly."

"You are on the special green list" Crowthorne explained "But you are right in that if you are not seen to be arrested like everyone else, someone is going to smell a rat."

"You think you can arrange something appropriately public and chaotic?" Regent asked.

"Organised chaos is my speciality" Crowthorne confirmed with a wry grin.

Ten minutes later, the Police arrived at the front door en masse in numerous vehicles and in a matter of minutes, Regent was led very publicly out of the house and shown into the back of a waiting patrol car before being driven away at some speed with a full accompaniment of sirens, lights and bells.

"Well that was fun" Regent remarked as in the back of the patrol car, Crowthorne removed the hand cuffs and tossed them aside.

"Best I could arrange with such short notice" Crowthorne was forced to admit before tapping the driver on the shoulder "Guys Hospital please and don't spare the horses."

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"Well they operated on me for two hours" the Commander continued "It was late evening before I came around and when I did, I discovered my bedside was playing host to the who's who of law enforcement."

"Bet that was a bit of a shock" Tracy remarked "Did your dad make it there?"

"He came in with Crowthorne about ten minutes before I came around" the Commander confirmed "I've never seen him look so concerned as he was that evening."

"Wait a minute" Tracy commented as she realised something "Your father didn't give his evidence, he couldn't have done, he gave yours didn't he?"

"Well done love" the Commander congratulated his wife with a loving kiss.

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"Welcome back" Chief Commissioner Forrester announced as Eddie came round following his extensive surgery.

"With all due respect Sir" Eddie quietly remarked upon seeing the blood stained state of his uniform "You're a mess!"

McGregor burst into giggles in response which was soon reflected by the rest of the room including Forrester himself who had to admit this was far from what he had been expecting Eddie to say.

"Did someone declare a party without telling me?" Eddie asked as he looked around the room to see the formidable company he was keeping.

"We are here to discuss the future" McGregor informed him "In particular that of this investigation, a large quantity of missing diamonds, and your good self, all of which are inextricably intertwined."

"Oh" Eddie responded "So what did I miss?"

"Your death actually" McGregor explained as he passed across a copy of the final edition of the Evening Standard which contained the news headline 'LATE BREAKING NEWS - LEWISHAM SCHOOLBOY HERO GUNNED DOWN' accompanied by quite a decent picture of Eddie taken by a photographer who earlier that day had been recording the opening of the new Victoria Line at Victoria Station, Eddie being pictured standing by the commemorative opening plaque in the booking hall.

"Well it was nice of you to ask me in advance!" Eddie responded but his indignation only caused him to aggravate his injuries and make the doctor intervene.

"Don't do that again" the doctor warned those present as he checked Eddie to ensure he was all right "He is still in a very delicate condition following the surgery."

"So noted" McGregor agreed.

"Hero?" Eddie asked slightly bemused as he vaguely scanned the pages but with his injuries and general state of health his eyesight wasn't really up to the task.

"You saved lives today" Forrester explained "I just wish I could have been quicker to have stopped what happened to you."

"You've received tributes from the families of those in the depository at the time of the heist, the Mayor, the Queen and the Prime Minister" McGregor commented.

"Now that's a selection around a poker table I would like to see" Eddie remarked wryly between coughs.

"Sir" a Police officer knocked at the ward door "Messer's Crowthorne, Regent and Edwards are here."

"Send them in" McGregor confirmed.

“Son, are you all right?” Regent demanded to know with obvious concern as soon as he was let into the room with Inspector James Edwards and Crowthorne following in behind him.

“Hi dad!” Eddie weakly responded with a raised arm but his strength had all but gone now “Apparently I am dead.”

“Eddie” Forrester stepped in to make an important introduction “This is Inspector Jim Edwards, Flying Squad” he introduced the officer who had just entered the room “He is heading up the Lewisham Heist Inquiry and I thought you two should meet.”

“Evening” Eddie responded “You’ll excuse me if I don’t get up.”

“Pleased to meet you at last” Edwards stepped forward and shook Eddie’s hand “Heard a lot about you.”

“Really?” Eddie responded with a slightly quizzical expression.

“Mr Crowthorne here kindly loaned me a copy of your file” Edwards explained “You’re a popular little fella it would appear.”

“What?” Eddie responded “MI5 have got a file on me?” he added which once again aggravated his injuries and caused the doctor to calm him down once more.

“I told you not to do that!” the doctor reminded everyone.

“Much as I appreciate that I am being protected by the cream of the UK’s law enforcement agencies” Eddie remarked “Can we possibly get down to brass tacks or failing that a decent game of poker as it’s been a hell of a day.”

“All right” McGregor agreed as he pulled up a seat and sat down alongside Eddie with his father on the opposite side “In case you had not realised, you are the key witness in this whole sorry mess.”

“No kidding” Eddie responded.

“I won’t lie to you” McGregor continued “There is a hell of a lot more to the whole matter than meets the eye. With the violence shown by the heist team and your shooting being spread all over the press, the public are crying out for justice and quickly.”

“I bet there are certain Government ministers at the Home Office who are just loving the thought of a nice juicy press conference” Eddie responded much to McGregor’s surprise at his mature knowledge of political goings on “I read the quality papers” he explained seeing McGregor’s expression.

“Won’t the Treasury be going bananas over their missing diamonds?” Regent remarked.

“Publicly they will weeping crocodile tears for the next couple of weeks but privately they will be laughing all the way to the insurance company where thanks to the wonders of the money and commodity markets, they will wind up claiming 10% more than they originally paid for the god damn diamonds in the first place” McGregor explained.

“Now I come to think of it” Eddie asked “Where are the diamonds, bar the one in my pocket that is?”

“Eh?” Edwards responded with some surprise as Crowthorne instinctively passed him Eddie's school blazer.

“When goon number one, the guy who was referred to as Mr Jones shot at me and shattered one of the display cabinets” Eddie explained as after rifling through the myriad of stuff in the pocket, Edwards produced a diamond with the remains of a partially melted chocolate bar stuck to it “that fell on top of me so I grabbed it to stop it getting pinched.”

“Well congratulations” Forrester responded “Edwards and his boys have been tearing half of south east London apart for the last eight hours and came up with absolutely nothing.”

“What about my van?” Regent asked “You did find it where I told you?”

“Twenty six armoured cases full of gravel” Edwards responded “And not a print on them.”

“What the hell is going on around here?” Crowthorne asked.

“I'd say gentlemen” Eddie commented weakly “Someone has played a classic double bluff on all of us and made off with the entire lot, oh bar that one” he nodded towards the diamond in Forrester's hand off which he was trying to remove the melted chocolate without much success.

“This is an official letter from the Director General of MI5” McGregor extracted a letter from his inside pocket which was sealed with an old fashioned red wax seal and personally addressed to Eddie himself.

“Can I get this framed?” Eddie asked as with some assistance from McGregor, he managed to break the seal and extract the immaculately hand written letter which he proceeded to look at.

“He sends his apologies for not having come in person” McGregor continued “He wanted to meet you as well.”

“I can't read a thing” Eddie added, giving up after having attempted to read the letter, his medical condition simply wasn't going to allow it.

“Allow me” McGregor responded as he took back the letter and after having donned his reading glasses, began to read to a hushed room.

To Mr Eddie James Regent Junior,

Sir.

It is with deep sorrow that I in my role as head of the Security Services for Great Britain and Northern Ireland as well as my own personal self as a parent and human being that I find myself writing this to you with you in your current condition.

This nation salutes your outstanding bravery and heroism that you selflessly showed earlier today and together we are with you in spirit as you struggle to recover from your terrible injuries. I feel a certain amount of personal guilt that when it came to a head, we were too late to stop you receiving terrible life threatening injuries from which many a lesser mortal would have passed away.

I pledge to you that we will do everything to help you so this is what I propose to you at this time. As it currently stands you are the only key witness we have in this investigation, one which encompasses more than just a diamond heist and your attempted murder but goes far far deeper than that.

What you know and who you can identify could make the difference in so many far reaching ways for a number of powerful people we have had under surveillance for a number of months, indeed their power is so far reaching that they could even organise a callous cold bloodied shooting right in the heart of the city of an innocent heroic twelve year old boy and think they can so easily get away with it.

Having consulted with my colleagues, the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, we have all unanimously agreed to offer you and your family full witness protection and relocation in exchange for your testimony.

Unfortunately due to the nature of this case and its surrounding events as well as the nature of those involved, it will be necessary to split your family up, in addition we will need to maintain the illusion that your father was merely a member of the gang for which he will appear to go to prison.

We have also taken the liberty of making your shooting appear fatal, an act for which I deeply and heartfully apologise but we simply had no choice. By making those who 'killed' you think they were successful, we may be able to make them relax, without this, they would continue to come after you until you really were dead and no one, least of all myself wants that to happen.

Your first and most important task at this time is to make a full recovery. To this end I am allocating Richard Crowthorne from my staff and Inspector James Edwards from the Metropolitan Police as your liaison officers who will be charged with the responsibility for looking after you until such a time as this matter has been settled whereupon we will need to discuss your future with regard to being fostered into an approved and vetted family environment.

Hopefully one day you and I will meet and when we do, the drinks will be on me and maybe we could have a game of poker together, from what I have been told I gather you would rather enjoy that!

With best wishes for the future and please get well soon

Regards

*Sir David Camberwell MBE
Director General
MI5*

“Ok” Regent was the first to speak after what seemed a fairly length pause whilst everyone in the room took in the extraordinary nature of the document that had just been read out “Eddie gets full witness protection as does the rest of my family and I will give my son's evidence in court as if it was my own.”

“Risky” Forrester remarked “You could wind up becoming a target yourself.”

“I am sure that our witness protection division can ensure your safety” McGregor assured Regent “We can say you turned Queens Evidence and then spirit you away whilst running a story about you dieing in jail or something.”

“I am not worried about me” Regent responded “It's the safety of my children and especially this one here that is my top priority.”

“Well if Eddie wants a place to stay” Edwards remarked “He is more than welcome to stay with me and my wife, we've always talked about adopting a child and we are fully vetted by the security boys.”

“What do you think Eddie?” McGregor turned back to the bed only to see that Eddie had fallen asleep, finally surrendering his tired self after probably the most traumatic day of his life.

“Let's leave the lad be” Forrester remarked “He needs his rest and we have much to do.”

“Agreed” McGregor responded “Rest easy lad” he remarked to the sleeping Eddie who for the first time looked content and peaceful “You've done your bit for king and country.”

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“Ah here it is!” the Commander called as he continued to rummage through an old trunk in the bedroom which he had brought out of the spare room where it had laid undisturbed for some time.

“What's that love?” Tracy asked as she came into the bedroom now dressed in her nightie and ready for bed where the Commander joined her and proffered the elderly looking piece of paper with part of a broken red wax seal still attached.

“It's the letter from Sir David Camberwell” the Commander showed it to Tracy
“Admittedly I never got around to getting it framed mind” he added as Tracy looked at the letter and read it with some sense of awe.

“Oh by the way” Tracy added as she continued to read the letter and the Commander started drinking the mug of cocoa that she had brought in for him “Cassini called from his all nighter session” she informed him “Asks if you could pop in and see him first thing, I think he has something to show you.”

“Did he mention what it was?” the Commander asked.

“He muttered something about the District Line and that the Treasury Minister is a bit of a muppet I think” Tracy confirmed “At least I think that was the general gist of it.”

“Sound's like Cassini is picking up some of my bad habits” the Commander remarked with a smirk.

“Impressive” Tracy commented as she finished reading the letter and returned it to the Commander “So did you ever meet up with Sir David then?”

“Sadly not” the Commander admitted with a hint of regret “He retired from MI5 some time back.”

“So what happened to everyone else then?” Tracy asked.

“Well as befits someone's agenda, the various members of the gang with the exception of the gunmen were all arrested whereupon they very conveniently were found to have a small amount of the diamonds in their possession” the Commander explained.

“That was convenient” Tracy remarked.

“Yes indeed” the Commander confirmed “Someone planted it I reckon but of course back then what with all the public outrage over the violence and my supposed death, the Home Office wanted heads on a plate and they were not too bothered how many rules of evidence were either bent or broken by the Judiciary in order to get it.”

“Governments change, the lies stay the same” Tracy remarked.

“Very poetic” the Commander responded “Well anyway, the jury as far as they were concerned were happy that if someone had one diamond from the heist in their possession then they must have been responsible for stealing the rest, guilt by association, case closed.”

“Even though the amount recovered amounted to how much?” Tracy asked.

“About ten grand at 1970 prices” the Commander admitted “Not including the Western Star that was in my blazer pocket and the four small diamonds in your wedding ring courtesy of part of my father's compensation, by my reckoning there

was about thirty five million and change unaccounted for, none of which has ever seen the light of day since.”

“Bloody hell!” Tracy called out as the Commander calmly reached down to the chest alongside the bed and from it produced the diamond that all those years earlier had been found in his school uniform blazer pocket.

“They let me keep it” the Commander explained “Actually” he remarked as he looked closer “I think it still has some chocolate stuck on it.”

“What about you?” Tracy asked “Where did you go from there.”

“I remained in hospital for the best part of four months under tight security” the Commander continued “Then with a new identity, I went to live with Jim Edwards as his adopted son.”

“So who knows you are really the late much lamented Eddie Regent then?” Tracy asked as she snuggled up to the Commander and put her arms around him, a move he much appreciated.

“From MI5, McGregor who is now Director General himself, Sir Richard Crowthorne obviously but not Camberwell who apparently is still alive, in his nineties now though” the Commander confirmed “Edwards well you've met him of course, Forrester died about ten years ago and then there is you and Roger Field who is my God Father and that is about it.”

“So I take it whoever Mr Smith and Mr Jones were” Tracy commented “They were never identified or found?”

“Nope” the Commander responded “and neither were any of the gunmen involved either, it was as if they never existed.”

“So what would happen if suddenly Eddie Regent was to rise from the grave once again?” Tracy asked “Would that make someone come out of the woodwork?”

“It's possible” the Commander admitted “I tell you one thing, I would dearly love to get my hands on the original MI5 paperwork for this whole affair.”

“You are the Regional Administrator General of the Police, Security & Civil Defence Service” Tracy reminded him “Surely that gives you the power to inspect any file you want?”

“If I could find it yes, well in theory anyway” the Commander admitted “Perhaps I should have that chat with Sir Richard and ask him about file 9906753.”

“Isn't that the file number that info lunatic Renquist mentioned?” Tracy asked “The one even he could not find anywhere?”

“That would be the one” the Commander grinned knowingly “I think it's time to shake a few trees, kick over a few rocks and see what crawls out from beneath.”

“Oh I love it when you talk all determinedly” Tracy responded kissing her husband passionately.

“I should do it more often” the Commander responded happily as they lovingly embraced.

“You know perhaps it's a good thing I can't have children” Tracy remarked wryly
“With the amount of times we make love, we would have had about a thousand babies by now!”

“Hey I did it!” the Commander remarked with joy from the kitchen as for the first time in months managed to make the toast for his breakfast without either burning it or setting off the smoke alarm for the umpteenth time.

“Did what love?” Tracy asked with a loving look as she watched from the kitchen doorway, dressed only in a towel wrapped loosely around her.

“Didn't burn the toast” the Commander held aloft the slice of bread in triumph as if he had won the FA Cup “You are not going in to work like that are you?” he asked with an amused smile at the sight of Tracy's state of undress.

“I'm not due in until nine today” Tracy explained “I thought that perhaps we could enjoy a lie in together?”

“Oh I wish” the Commander admitted ruefully as he went up to her and they hugged and kissed warmly “There is nothing I would like more than to be in your arms for all time but I am afraid work calls” he was forced to concede.

“Be careful love” Tracy urged the Commander as he reluctantly let her go and grabbed his uniform tunic from the kitchen table along with his gun holster.

“I will” the Commander confirmed as he headed for the door, only to pause for a moment “Come up to my office for lunch later” he invited her “Maybe we could finish that promised lie in on the couch I have up there” he added with a cheeky wink.

“Bye love” Tracy responded with a beaming smile as the Commander departed.

“Wow!” the Commander remarked to himself with a short deep breath as he thought to himself just how lucky he was to have Tracy as his wife, confident, lover and friend.

Ironically given what he and Tracy had spent much of the previous day talking about, the Victoria Line was to be the Commander's method of transport into the work that morning. It was still only a quarter to seven and the major part of rush hour had yet to begin as he headed into the entrance of Vauxhall Underground Station where the station supervisor on duty acknowledged the Commander as he passed through the ticket barriers before heading off down the escalators down to the platform.

A slightly tired looking train of 1969 type refurbished tube stock, eking out its final few years of service prior to retirement, pulled into the northbound platform and came to a halt allowing the Commander to board the front carriage where once inside, he picked up a discarded copy of that morning's Metro newspaper and took a seat.

The next stop Pimlico passed with barely a mention as no one appeared to either get on or off before the train then pulled into the Commander's intended destination of Victoria, specifically the northbound Victoria Line platform from which he had made that journey to Warren Street and back as a twelve year old on that fateful day back in March of 1969.

The Commander thought back to that day as he stepped out onto the platform. Looking around as the train departed, he took in the sight of the platform area, still recognisable from that day when it opened even though since then much of the wall tiling and signage had been replaced.

The tiled Victoria silhouette icons were still there though in the seating alcoves but the distinctive illuminated roundel signs were long gone, replaced by standard enamelled metal ones whilst the originals were probably gathering dust in a forgotten corner of the London Transport Museum's storeroom somewhere.

The early rush hour crowds were starting to build up now as the Commander made his way via the escalators to the ticket hall where having passed through the ticket barriers, he realised as he approached the exit steps that the ceremonial opening plaque in front of which he had stood all those years ago had moved in the intervening time, now located on the staircase wall rather than its original position on the ticket hall south wall.

The Commander exited up the steps and outside, crossing the bus station and over into Victoria Street.

Normally he would have taken the District Line to St James's Park but instead in light of the previous day's reminiscences, he decided to recreate his original fateful journey.

Unlike that time however, he walked briskly into Victoria Street, a very different place than that along which he walked all those years ago. Many of the old concrete post war buildings had been swept away, impressive modern glass structures such as the Cardinal Place building now taking their place.

Indeed it was outside the impressive sloped nose shaped main entrance that the Commander bumped into Commander Cassini.

"Morning Sir" he called as he joined the Commander and together they continued up the street "I was just coming to see you."

"Great minds think alike then" the Commander mused.

"Something on your mind Sir?" Cassini inquired seeing his senior officer was clearly distracted and deep in thought about something.

"When isn't there something on my mind?" the Commander jokily remarked as they approached Westminster City Hall, one of the few buildings in the street still largely unchanged.

"I wanted a word about our mutual friend Lord Perivale" Cassini explained "We took a look at some footage we took of his journey home last night."

"Anything interesting?" the Commander asked.

"At first glance no but then after restocking on fresh coffee it occurred to me that something just didn't add up" Cassini explained.

"Surely you are not seriously suggesting that one of this country's most prominent politicians is doing something naughty?" the Commander remarked with a distinctively sarcastic tone.

"Well there is definitely something slippery about him" Cassini responded "Check this out, he has a Government issued Oyster Card pass right?"

"Yes, standard issue" the Commander confirmed "The mayor has been giving them away like confetti of late" he commented as they turned and entered Broadway where the Commander momentarily looked down at the spot on the pavement where he had been gunned down all those years ago.

"Something wrong?" Cassini asked seeing the Commander pause to look at what was to him just another section of unremarkable pavement."

"Old memories and a long story" the Commander remarked "You were saying about the Oyster Card business?" he asked as they resumed walking towards New Scotland Yard.

"Oh yes" Cassini continued "Well it occurred to me that if I was travelling from Westminster to Richmond and had a free Oyster Card in my pocket, I'd take the District Line direct."

"Sounds reasonable so far" the Commander agreed as they crossed the road and approached the main entrance.

"So anyway it suddenly occurred to me last night that if that was the case, then why on earth did he take a bus, having let two similar ones go by and then travel from Waterloo by national rail, coughing up his money in the process" Cassini explained.

"You have a point" the Commander was forced to agree as they entered the main entrance of Scotland Yard, acknowledging the friendly greeting from the receptionist as they passed through.

"So then I decided to check our Mr Perivale's Oyster card records" Cassini continued "A little trick I learnt from Fuller by the way."

"Spreading around those bad habits of his again I see" the Commander mused as they entered the lift where he pressed the button for the top floor.

"Well not only does Perivale regularly take the District Line to and from his extremely expensive looking pad in the suburbs of sunny Richmond" Cassini continued as the lift ascended "He actually paid cash into the machine at the bus stop before boarding."

"He could have lost his card" the Commander commented.

"All good in theory except he was quite happily using it at Richmond Station not twenty minutes ago" Cassini confirmed.

"So" the Commander summarised as the lift doors opened and they exited out into the corridor and walked to his office "We have the man who was originally responsible for investing thirty five million quid of the Government's money in a shed load of diamonds all of sudden acting all out of character on the very day the last witness and participant in the theft of the aforesaid rocks dies."

"There is definitely something slippery about him that's for sure" Cassini agreed as they entered the Commander's office.

"Help yourself to a drink" the Commander indicated the decanter and glasses on the side table which was kept for visitors to his office.

"Oh, looks like Fuller was right" Cassini remarked as he poured himself a drink and sampled it "You really have got the good stuff up here Sir."

"I take it you didn't let it rest there then?" the Commander continued.

"Correct Sir" Cassini confirmed as he sat down at the desk, facing the Commander "So I pulled as much CCTV footage as I could find and with the surveillance tapes my boys recorded, we noticed something very interesting."

"You have it with you?" the Commander asked.

"Right here" Cassini confirmed as he produced a DVD disk from his pocket, "May I?" he indicated the large flat screen television over on the side wall.

"By all means" the Commander confirmed "I just hope you know how to operate the thing!"

"Here we go" Cassini announced once he had managed to load the disc and started the footage.

"Do you think you could get the cricket coverage on that thing while you are about it?" the Commander asked wryly.

"I'll see what I can do" Cassini agreed as his surveillance footage began "Here we go" he confirmed.

"That him coming out of Portcullis House then" the Commander remarked as he put his reading glasses on and watched the footage.

"Correct Sir" Cassini confirmed "Needless to say the two usual on duty guys from MI5's political division are fairly obvious."

"They usually put their fresh ones straight out of training on that job as it's so utterly tedious" the Commander explained.

"As you can see" Cassini continued as the camera viewpoint followed Perivale around the corner into Parliament Street "Initially we thought he was heading for the Underground as normal but just as I was about to alert my guys and girls in the station, he suddenly sails past the entrance and once he buys his Evening Standard, goes to the bus stop."

"You're right" the Commander observed "He actually buys a ticket."

"Then just to add a little more to the mystery" Cassini continued "He lets not one but two service 211 buses go by, both fairly empty I add, and then as you see here, he boards a third."

"Please tell me you got one of your guys on that bus" the Commander remarked.

"But of course Sir" Cassini confirmed as the view on the screen changed to covert surveillance footage taken by one of his team on the bus.

"Its a meet up" the Commander exclaimed as they both watched Perivale seated at the back of the lower deck "Can we hear what they are saying?"

"Not with my equipment sadly" Cassini responded with regret.

"Who is he talking to?" the Commander asked "The damm seat headrest is in the way."

"I have got a shot of the second guy when they all get off at Waterloo" Cassini confirmed as he wound forward the footage to the point where the bus stopped at its final destination and its passengers began to pile out.

"Hold it there" the Commander called out whereupon Cassini paused the footage.

"Now who is that?" the Commander asked as he went up to the screen and looked closer at the slightly blurred image of the mysterious stranger on screen "Do you think we can get anything done with this, sharpen it up a bit?"

"I think I know someone who can help" Cassini "I'll give him a call."

"Good" the Commander responded "As soon as you get something call me directly" he instructed "I should point out all this is strictly unofficial."

"Understood Sir" Cassini confirmed as he left.

"And thanks" the Commander added.

"You're welcome" Cassini responded before leaving.

"What are you doing here?" Perivale asked, barely looking up from the newspaper he was reading on the desk in his office.

"I think we may have a little problem" Havelock announced, a statement that caused Perivale to stop reading and look up quizzically.

"I'm sorry?" Perivale responded "Do I pay you enough to do such high brow things such as thinking?"

"Sorry Sir" Havelock apologised "I just thought..."

"There he goes again..." Perivale commented under his breath.

"...that after thirty years as your civil service lackey and bag man" Havelock continued "Not to mention handler of enough dirty washing to fill the laundry of the Titanic, I might just have made some form of promotion by now?"

"Do shut up" Perivale calmly remarked "If you have a point to make I would appreciate it if you actually got around to it."

"Yes Sir" Havelock responded "Erm their may be a problem with the Edward Regent issue."

"Such as?" Perivale enquired as he casually removed his reading glasses in a picture of absolute calm that contrasted with the obviously nervous Havelock.

"The Commander visited Regent in Lewisham General Hospital just before he died" Havelock informed "I think he sniffs something may be wrong."

"So much for a meeting in Shoreditch" Perivale remarked "What the hell would the Regional Administrator General of the National Security and Police Service be doing visiting an old lag in darkest Lewisham?" he wondered.

"The Commander doesn't have any connection to the Lewisham matter does he?" Havelock asked.

"Nothing at all" Perivale confirmed "Renquist and I went through all of the files related to him two years ago, besides he was only a kid back then."

"Maybe it was just professional courtesy?" Havelock commented "After all Regent was the last person still alive who was connected with the whole sordid affair."

"Best to err on the side of caution though" Perivale remarked as he folded his paper neatly and laid it precise and flat upon his desk "I know of the Commander's fondness for digging up old cases so perhaps a friendly visit is in order, you know just to put the last memories to rest, we cannot afford any uninvited guests so close to the point where we realise our investment."

"What are you going to say to him?" Havelock asked.

"Oh this will just be a friendly interdepartmental visit" Perivale explained as he acquired his overcoat from the coat hook and put it on "I in my position as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, concerned with the loss of Government property and he as the representative of those highly over rated ideals of peace and justice."

"What do you want me to do?" Havelock asked as Perivale prepared to leave.

"Act perfectly normal" Perivale confirmed as he put on his hat "If there is any need for your more forceful talents, I'll contact you in the usual manner."

With that Perivale left the room, firmly but quietly closing the door behind him before heading to the lifts down the corridor. Two minutes later he was exiting out into Victoria Embankment before turning right and then right again into Parliament Street.

Watching from the opposite side of the street, one of Cassini's undercover officers spoke discreetly into a hidden radio before following at a distance the Treasury Minister as he headed across Parliament Square, clearly making towards the St James's Park area.

Cassini was heading out of the main entrance of New Scotland Yard when he noticed Perivale out of the corner of his eye approaching down the road from the St James's Park Station end of the street and then head inside.

"Hello" Cassini commented to himself as he double backed and headed back to the main entrance "Bandits at ten o'clock."

Inside the main reception area, Cassini was just in time coming inside to see Perivale disappear into the lifts whereupon he went over to the reception desk.

"Hi!" Cassini smiled at the receptionist and flashed his warrant card in identification "Can you get the Chief on the phone for me please?"

Up on the top floor, the Commander was reading through a huge pile of briefing notes on various operations that the Service was dealing with when the telephone rang on his desk.

"Whoever this is, this had better be good" the Commander responded, barely looking up from the files.

“Sorry to disturb you Sir” Cassini called from the reception desk “I thought you had better know that you have a certain Treasury Minister on his way up to see you now, he should be knocking on your door in about two minutes I reckon.”

“Much obliged” the Commander responded before hanging up and looking around to ensure there was nothing lying around that he did not want the Minister to see. He never trusted politicians in pretty much any size, form or political affiliation so always adopted the policy that they were to be treated like mushrooms at all times.

As well as hiding anything he thought might be of interest, the Commander also quickly swapped over the whisky decanters from that containing the expensive stuff to the one with the cheap and cheerful blend, he was not going to waste the good scotch on a politician.

“Lord Perivale to see you Sir” the Commander's Personal Assistant called over the intercom from the outer office.

“Send him in” the Commander calmly responded “Oh and see if you can track my wife down would you please” he added “We are supposed to be meeting up for lunch.”

“Yes Sir” the PA confirmed as the double doors that led from the outer office opened and Lord Perivale arrived in the room.

“Good morning Commander” Perivale announced warmly as he entered the office “I do hope I am not disturbing you.”

“Oh no” the Commander responded, lying more than convincingly “Anything that distracts me from these quite frankly tedious reports is more than welcome.”

“I know the feeling” Perivale agreed as he casually surveyed the paperwork that was piled high on the Commander's desk to see if he could glean anything of interest amongst the files visible.

“Help yourself to a drink” the Commander indicated the decanter and glasses on the side “Never say I am anything less than sociable.”

“Thank you” Perivale responded as he went over and poured himself a drink before taking a seat and sampling the scotch.

“Oh dear” he remarked.

“Yes sorry about that” the Commander admitted “I'm on a tight budget which means we can only afford the cheap stuff I am afraid.”

“Better than nothing” Perivale responded “Still, it's better than the imported muck they serve at the House of Commons bar.”

“Sorry I could not get to see you yesterday” the Commander continued “I got tied up with important matters and some other urgent business.”

“Not to worry” Perivale confirmed casually “Indeed I hear you went to Lewisham yesterday afternoon?”

“Your sources are very well informed” the Commander responded.

“Ironically that was what I wanted to discuss” Perivale continued “As you are no doubt aware I was the Minister who was responsible for the Government's purchase of a large investment of diamonds in 1969 and the presumably now late Mr Regent was the last surviving eyewitness.”

“That he was as far as I know” the Commander confirmed, still lying very convincingly and wondering where Perivale was heading with this line of enquiry.

“I know that the whole business was done and dusted the best part of thirty years ago of course” Perivale remarked “and the Government got their money back thanks to the insurance.”

“On which they made a bit of a profit I was once told” the Commander cut in.

“Indeed” Perivale confirmed “However I have always held out some hope that maybe one day someone would find the diamonds, purely for my own peace of mind of course you understand.”

“Well the late Mr Regent never said anything on his death bed” the Commander responded “If he did know anything more than what he said at the trial, I am afraid he took it with him to the grave.”

“Pity” Perivale responded with a well faked tone of sadness “I guess that is the end of that then, may he rest in peace.”

“I'll drink to that” the Commander confirmed.

“Well I won't disturb you any further Commander” Perivale confirmed as he rose from his seat and they shook hands across the desk “Good day.”

The Commander watched with an amused smile as Lord Perivale left. As soon as the door closed, he picked up the telephone and pressed the button for the main reception desk.

“Front desk” the receptionist responded in that cheery manner that all in her profession seem to do as if on some sort of auto pilot.

“Hello, it's the boss” the Commander called “Is Commander Cassini still there?” he asked.

“It's for you Sir” the receptionist passed the telephone handset to Cassini.

“Cassini” he confirmed.

“Lord Perivale is on his way down to you now” the Commander confirmed “Have him watched like a hawk” he requested “And while you are at it, lets put a tap on his telephones as well.”

“Consider it done Sir” Cassini confirmed.

The Commander got up from behind the desk and observed the city skyline out of the window before looking over at the briefcase that he had brought in with him that morning. He picked it up and put it on his desk and then opened it. After looking through the contents which included some of the items from his childhood that he had recovered from the safety deposit box the day before, the Commander looked at the copy of the final edition of the Evening Standard from the seventh of March 1969.

It was the first time in almost thirty years that he had read the front page story, that of the shooting of himself as Eddie Regent in the street outside the very building he was now sat in, indeed in the office that once was that of Chief Commissioner Forrester who that day had saved his life when by all rights his life should have ended right there in a pool of blood in the reception area of New Scotland Yard.

He thought back to the events of that evening when he was lying on a hospital bed, surrounded by what was back in 1969, a veritable who's who of law enforcement in London and in particular he remembered the letter that McGregor had read from the then Director General of MI5.

Indeed that letter was in the Commander's inside uniform tunic pocket and with this in mind, he extracted it and opened it where he read it through once again. Of all those involved in the operation to ensure that the twelve year old Eddie Regent stayed alive that fateful day, he was the only one who did not know what became of the lad to whom he wrote that heartfelt letter.

“Fifteen quid for them?” Tracy asked as she entered the office, making the Commander almost jump out of his skin as his thoughts had been so thoroughly concentrated on other matters far removed from there.

“Fifteen quid?” the Commander remarked “That inflation never stops does it?”

“I see you have had a politician in here” Tracy looked over at the decanter on the side table “That looks like the cheap stuff.”

“No lesser mortal than Lord Perivale my love” the Commander confirmed “What an amazing coincidence.”

“You don't believe in coincidences” Tracy reminded her husband as she sat down alongside him and they kissed.

“Is it lunch time already?” the Commander asked.

“It is indeed” Tracy confirmed with that wonderful smile that the Commander loved so much and seemed to light up even the darkest room.

“I just need to make one telephone call love” the Commander called “Then I am declaring lunch” he announced as he reached across for the telephone and dialled a number which he read from an old address book that he always carried with him.

“Oh yes hello” the Commander responded as soon as he was connected “Sir Frank McGregor please, it's the Regional Administrator General of the National Security and Police Service.”

There was a pause as the Commander waited to be connected to McGregor, after a few moments a voice he had not heard for many years came on the line.

“Hello old friend” McGregor announced “I've been expecting this call.”

“How's retirement treating you?” the Commander asked.

“Well the garden is looking pretty good and my golf swing is definitely improving” McGregor responded with a chuckle “but I guess you didn't call to discuss how my petunias are doing?”

“Correct old friend” the Commander confirmed “I take it you have heard the old man has died?”

“Via some old sources yes” McGregor confirmed with some regret in his voice “I'm sorry son.”

“Well I did manage to see him a few times in later years” the Commander admitted “and I was there at the end so at least I have that.”

“He was a good man” McGregor remarked “We were always proud of him and also of you.”

“Thanks” the Commander responded “Listen, I wondered if you know where David Camberwell might be?” he asked.

“Oh he's still around” McGregor confirmed “He's in his nineties now but still as fit as a fiddle, we usually meet up for a drink now and then to discuss the old times in the service.”

“Can we meet?” the Commander asked “I think we need to discuss certain matters and also I think it's about time Camberwell and I finally met, the invitation in his letter is long overdue a response don't you think?”

“Do you know the coffee shop in Russell Square Gardens?” McGregor asked.

“Yes” the Commander confirmed.

“All right” McGregor responded “Meet us there at about two o'clock, I believe it's your turn to buy!”

“I’ll be there” the Commander confirmed as he returned the elderly letter back to his inside uniform tunic pocket “See you later.”

“Not inviting Sir Richard then?” Tracy asked as she and the Commander left the office together hand in hand.

“I want to keep him out of this for the moment” the Commander confirmed as they headed down the back stairs to the next floor down where the canteen was to be found “He is still a serving member of MI5 and was deeply involved in the original case so I want to keep that particular part of the powder dry for the moment.

“Oh I heard from Jennifer” Tracy confirmed as they entered the canteen which was bustling “Apparently poor old Simon nearly had a heart attack on the wedding night, I don’t think he was quite prepared for the whole thing.”

“I was half expecting a telephone call from him last night” the Commander admitted with a wry smile as he picked up a tray and they joined the back of the queue at the servery area “Something along the lines of ‘All right, we are in bed, what do I do now?’”

“He’ll get the hang of it” Tracy mused as the Commander examined the hot food counter in search of anything that did not contain vegetables, fruit or indeed anything remotely classified as healthy “After all you did.”

“Thanks” the Commander responded “I think....”

“Will you be wanting chips with that Sir?” the lady behind the servery asked, being new, she was unaware that she had just asked probably the world’s most pointless question.

“You’re new here aren’t you?” the Commander asked with a wry smile.

“Oh err yes Sir” the lady behind the servery responded with some embarrassment as she duly heaped a pile of chips onto the Commander’s plate.

“Thanks” the Commander duly took the plate and moved on whilst Tracy looked on with amazement that despite all her best efforts, she had still yet to change her husband’s diet in the direction of anything remotely healthy.

“Now you’re talking” the Commander remarked with a grin of satisfaction as he picked up the largest slice of chocolate cake on offer and enthusiastically added it to the tray.

“You know I am amazed the Government haven’t used you in one of their healthy eating advert campaigns” Tracy remarked as she looked at her tray with its salad and healthy low fat yoghurt and then at her husband’s which had almost no nutritional value whatsoever.

“Where’s the salt?” the Commander asked in a slight panic as he realised there was none there.

“Government policy to reduce salt consumption” the lady behind the till at the end of the servery area explained “All agencies of the Government are no longer allowed to serve salt in their canteens.”

“Are you trying to tell me my dear” the Commander remarked with more than a hint of indignation “that some no neck agenda waving civil service muppet at the Food Standards Agency actually outranks the Administrator General of the Security Service?”

“I’m afraid so Sir” the cashier confirmed “Four pounds fifty five please.”

“Here you go my dear” the Commander passed over the correct change for both his and Tracy’s lunch.

“Why is the Government so god damn obsessed with how much salt I eat?” the Commander asked generally as he and Tracy sat down at a table by the window overlooking the busy thoroughfare of Victoria Street some eighteen storeys below.

“Well they have got to give all those middle managers and consultants something to do I suppose” Tracy remarked as she started on her salad whilst the Commander munched his chips with gusto “That way they can justify all those dodgy expenses claims and fact finding missions to whichever country just happens to be hosting the cricket or the World Cup.”

“Oh no” the Commander remarked as he looked at his old pocket watch and realised that time was not going to be a friend today “The damn joint security committee weekly briefing is in fifteen minutes” he confirmed.

“Makes me glad I just have the simple task of keeping the city safe” Tracy remarked with a wry smile.

“You get all the interesting cases” the Commander remarked “Bank robbers, murderers....”

“Ticket touts, drunk and disorderlies, pick pockets” Tracy added.

“And I get all those terrorists, international criminals and whichever group is the subject of the Home Office’s bandwagon of the week” the Commander mused.

“So what is going to be the Home Secretary’s big thing this week?” Tracy asked “I’m only asking because my Department Heads are running a book and being their boss I got first pick.”

“Will it won’t be asylum seekers” the Commander confirmed “That was last week.”

“There goes twenty quid” Tracy remarked.

“I know there is some potential problems with some international faces coming up” the Commander confirmed between mouthfuls of chocolate cake that he was wolfing

down in a hurry "Word is some people in the Foreign Office are getting very jittery about something, more so if all the briefing files I keep receiving are anything to go by."

"That means it'll be in the News of the World on Sunday then" Tracy remarked.

"You know love" the Commander replied with a sense of realisation "You've just given me an idea!"

"Oh dear..." Tracy responded "The last time I gave you a big idea you nearly drowned in the Thames."

"Don't panic my love" the Commander got up hurriedly and kissed her "It's all under control."

"Will you be home on time tonight dear?" Tracy asked as her husband was about to leave.

"In theory yes" the Commander confirmed with a wink "You know me."

"Don't forget to call" Tracy called after him.

Tracy watched until her husband had disappeared from sight before getting up herself and leaving the canteen. She headed downstairs to the Central London Control Room and after surveying the plethora of screens to ascertain the current status of events, took her seat at the main console desk, reliving her Deputy.

"Go and get some lunch" Tracy insisted as she put on a headset.

"Thank you Maam" the Deputy responded as he was relieved.

"Oh whilst you up and about" Tracy suggested "Put the Department Heads on yellow alert standby, my husband has had an idea."

"Oh dear..." the Deputy responded with a worried frown.

"Hello Terry" Cassini called as he walked into the office of Commander Terry Brent, one of the Customs and Excise Division's foremost experts in technical wizardry.

"Long time no see old friend" Brent responded as he stopped working on the job he had been stuck with for the last three days and, more than glad of the distraction, greeted Cassini "Pull up a pew and help yourself to a biscuit."

"Oh thanks" Cassini responded gratefully "It's been my day for freebies what with the Commander's Scotch this morning."

"Partying the night away up at the Yard with the supreme being then?" Brent asked "How is the Commander?"

"Snowed under as usual with endless briefings and policy solutions being showered down from our masters in Whitehall whilst at the same time personally chasing down every villain in the Greater London area" Cassini confirmed in summary.

"Congratulations by the way on getting your own Department" Brent added "Must be interesting work?"

"Just a little too much sitting around in tatty Transit vans in the rain waiting for scumbags to move or at least do something interesting but apart from that" Cassini admitted "Mustn't complain, even if I still can't get through to my mother exactly why I never go to work in a nice neatly pressed uniform with gold braiding!"

"So what can I do for you old friend?" Brent asked "Assuming you didn't just come down here to Heathrow just to plunder the company biscuit tin?"

"Got a bit of an off the record job on" Cassini explained as he extracted a CD case from his inside jacket pocket "I need to have some surveillance footage enhanced as we need to identify a face on a bus."

"This 'we' wouldn't be you and our beloved Commander by any chance?" Brent enquired as he took the disc out of its case and loaded it into the computer.

"Something like that yes" Cassini confirmed as Brent started to play the footage.

"Interesting" Brent commented "Are these those new close surveillance cameras MI6 have been developing?"

"I managed to get them to let me evaluate a couple of units for them" Cassini confirmed "They are damn good so I just hope they don't want them back anytime soon."

"Brian down at the Dover office has got one on loan as well" Brent commented "He absolutely swears by it."

"This is where we meet our first target" Cassini pointed out Lord Perivale boarding the bus at Westminster "This guy of course we already know."

"That Treasury bastard who cut my budget last month" Brent exclaimed "The Government prattles on about enhancing security in the face of so called global terrorism...."

"...which more often than not is four nutters in a flat in Cradley Heath with a bucket of household chemicals and an axe to grind..." Cassini added philosophically.

"...then cuts my sodding budget" Brent finished.

"So I can safely assume any opportunity to put the wind up this gentleman" Cassini assumed indicating Perivale on the screen "Would be warmly welcomed?"

"Oh yes" Brent confirmed with a knowing grin of satisfaction.

"It's the guy who Perivale talks too on the bus that we want to identify" Cassini explained.

"Looks like a classic off turf meeting to me" Brent remarked as he watched the footage intently.

"We see our mysterious friend when everyone piles off at Waterloo" Cassini confirmed.

"I'll fast forward it a bit then" Brent responded, "Ah here we go" he announced as the footage reached the crucial point and he slowed it right down.

"Hold it" Cassini called out whereupon Brent froze the image "That's him right there."

"All right then" Brent declared as he selected the image and transferred it to some sophisticated image enhancing software that he had available "Lets see what we can do with this shall we?"

Gradually over the next twenty minutes as the image was put through a myriad of processes, most of which were far beyond Cassini's knowledge to comprehend, Brent produced a near as possible clear picture of the mysterious contact.

"There you go" Brent announced as he extracted the print out of the finished picture from the printer in the corner of the office and passed it across "Here's you guy."

"That's terrific" Cassini commented "Thanks a lot."

"Don't mention it" Brent confirmed.

"Now all I have to do is find out who this guy is" Cassini added.

"Sorry I can't help you with that" Brent responded with regret "However, do you know of the Icarus system?"

"The face recognition and cross referencing software?" Cassini replied "Yes, its one of Fuller's little toys."

"He actually invented it" Brent confirmed "Oh hang on he's on his honeymoon isn't he?"

"Two weeks in Switzerland with the lovely Jennifer" Cassini remarked "Just can't see him on a pair of skis somehow."

"You had better do some good fashioned breaking and entering then" Brent remarked "Unless you have friends at MI5 that is the only way you are going to find out who Mr Mystery here is."

"As you can see from your briefing notes on page twenty three" the Commander announced to the Joint Security Committee "Detection levels for category two, three and four crimes rose by some eighteen percent in the last quarter."

"Very impressive Commander" the Secretary of State for National Security announced as he noted the figures.

"Well my officers always try their best under continuing difficult circumstances" the Commander responded "Which with our meagre budget is probably something of a miracle given the number of bandwagon powered objectives the Home Secretary keeps throwing around on a weekly basis like confetti."

"Have you considered raising this point with him?" the Prime Minister, seated at the head of the large ornate conference table asked.

"Probably not a good idea really" the Commander remarked wryly "Every time I go into the Home Office building, all the staff start genuflecting and cowering beneath their desks."

The room echoed to the sound of agreeable laughter at the Commander's comments, he always did manage to bring a bit of levity and light relief to what would otherwise have been a tedious weekly meeting of all the major players in the City's law enforcement business.

"Sir Richard" the Prime Minister turned to Sir Richard Crowthorne who was present representing MI5 at the meeting in the absence of his superior, the current Director General who was away on annual leave.

"Oh right erm" Sir Richard began slightly nervously as he shuffled through his papers, an unusual trait for him which the Commander duly noted.

"As you can see from our weekly briefing notes" Sir Richard continued once he had recomposed himself "It's all pretty much as it was last week, no developments in any of the major terrorism investigations currently under way but there are some whispers on the back channels that a couple of high profile internationals may be in town next month to broker some overseas arms deal."

"Anyone we know?" the Commander asked.

"Not names we have encountered before but apparently our opposite numbers at Israeli Intelligence have flagged them I believe" Sir Richard confirmed.

"I'd appreciate being copied in on that if anything interesting arises" the Commander requested.

"Err yes certainly" Sir Richard agreed but he still seemed unusually ill at ease.

"Well unless anyone has anything to add?" the Prime Minister asked around as nearby the Commander consulted his pocket watch, something that got Sir Richard's attention "Then I declare this meeting closed."

"Isn't that...?" Sir Richard quietly asked the Commander as they left the meeting room.

"My faithful old pocket watch?" the Commander responded "Yes it is" he confirmed.

"What are you doing with it?" Sir Richard asked.

"This I will have you know" the Commander indicated the watch on its chain in his hand "Is the most accurate watch I ever owned and I must say I am rather glad to have it back after all this time."

"Fair enough" Sir Richard conceded "Coming for a drink in the Common's Bar?"

"Another time perhaps" the Commander responded "I have another appointment, besides I have heard the Scotch here is really cheap and nasty."

"How old is that watch?" Sir Richard asked as they made their way down the corridor.

"I think its pre war" the Commander explained "It was my grand fathers, he used to work on the railways hence the SR on the case."

"Oh Southern Railway" Sir Richard realised "It's odd, I just assumed after yesterday that you would be wanting to forget the past."

"Oh on the contrary" the Commander remarked "I think we ignore the past at our peril, don't you."

"Well erm" Sir Richard responded uncomfortably.

"I'll see you later" the Commander informed him as he left.

"I don't doubt it somehow" the troubled looking Sir Richard commented to himself as he watched the Commander disappear through the doors at the end of the corridor.

"Ah got it" Cassini commented in triumph as he successfully managed to pick the lock of Simon Fuller's office and proceeded discreetly inside. Once inside and with the door closed quietly behind him, he went over and sat at Fuller's desk, a rather distressed looking affair with numerous bits of computers spread about all over the place, indeed the only tidy part of it was where the photograph of Jennifer Caverner had pride of place.

"Must be the cleaners day off" Cassini remarked as he started up the computer.

A couple of thousand miles away in a hotel room in the Swiss Alps, the handheld computer in Fuller's jacket pocket started to bleep loudly and ominously which caused him to come in from the balcony overlooking the beautiful view and retrieve the device before looking at it with some surprise.

“Hello” Fuller remarked whereupon he was joined by his new wife Jennifer.

“Something wrong love?” she asked.

“Possibly” Fuller confirmed as he read the information being displayed on the palm top before going over to the telephone.

“This isn't something that is going to spoil our honeymoon is it?” Jennifer asked, clearly concerned having seen the serious look on her new husband's face.

“Don't worry dear” Fuller reassured her as he dialled a number on the telephone “Everything is under control.”

Having managed to successfully log on to Fuller's computer, Cassini almost had a heart attack when the telephone on the desk started ringing. Not wanting anyone to know about his unofficial visit, he just watched the telephone without answering it, hoping that whoever was calling would go away. As it was, the answer machine kicked in instead.

“Congratulations” the recorded message of Simon Fuller announced “You have actually managed to make it through our dreadful telephone system and have now reached the office of Commander Simon Fuller. Unfortunately I am on honeymoon with the beautiful Jennifer right now so you are out of luck. If you are really desperate, leave a message after the rather pathetic beep.”

Cassini chuckled to himself at the recorded message only to be brought back to more serious matters when the caller's voice came through. “Cassini, if you are on my computer” Fuller called clearly “Pick up the telephone quick!”

“Simon?” Cassini answered “How is the honeymoon going?”

“Oh exhausting” Fuller confirmed “But the view is great” he admitted as he looked across not at the vistas outside but his new wife Jennifer and smiled at her “What the hell are you doing in my office if I may be so bold?”

“How did you know I was in your office in the first place?” Cassini asked out of curiosity.

“Little box of tricks hooked up to the thing that calls me if anyone tries to log on to it” Fuller explained “I knew someone was going to try it sooner or later.”

“Any chance you can help me then?” Cassini asked “I've got this photograph I want to put through the Icarus system.”

“Printed or electronic?” Fuller asked.

“Printed” Cassini confirmed as he extracted the photograph from his pocket.

“All right then” Fuller responded “I’ll talk you through it. First double click the icon in the lower left hand corner of the screen marked with the name Icarus.”

“Got it” Cassini followed the instructions and the program duly started “Ok we’re hot, now what?”

“Select scanner from the input menu” Fuller continued “Then feed in your photograph face down top first into the scanning unit on your immediate right behind the biscuit tin.”

“It’s going in now” Cassini confirmed as the scanner unit took the photograph inside and line by line the image began to fill the screen in front of him.

“Ok” Fuller assured him “Let it scan the whole thing, then when it’s loaded, click the recognition button upper right.”

“Recognition button, upper right” Cassini repeated and duly clicked on the button on the screen as instructed.

“What it should be doing now is finding all the key recognition areas of the face in the picture which the program will use to cross reference with whichever database you want to match it against” Fuller explained “When that is done, go to the cross reference menu, put a tick in the box of the databases you want to run it against then just click run and see what the system comes up with.”

“How long will it take?” Cassini asked.

“If you only cross reference it against the NCIS database then about three minutes but if you go for the lot then you could be sitting there for best part of half an hour” Fuller responded “Have fun and don’t wreck my office, I’ve got it neatly organised.”

“Really?” Cassini responded with a bit of disbelief as he looked around his rather chaotic and unkempt surroundings “Anyway thanks for the help, I’ll get you a drink when you get back.”

“No worries mate” Fuller confirmed.

Cassini selected the option to run the photograph against every database there was before clicking the run button and settling back for a predicted long wait. Sure enough it was the best part of fifteen minutes before the first match came up, heading a list of matched files which consisted of just one, a file located in the database of one of the specialist security agencies if the reference number was anything to go by.

Little did Cassini know that his search had attracted the attention of two technical officers in the headquarters of MI5 who as soon as the alert went off at their

monitoring station, were quickly identifying the source of the search and getting on the telephone to alert a higher authority.

In the entrance area of New Scotland Yard, Tracy was talking to a couple of officers who were coming in off routine patrol when the squeal of brakes of a black saloon car outside attracted their attention.

“Who are these jokers?” Tracy remarked as she looked through the window outside and saw four heavily built men in neat designer suits and wearing radio ear pieces get out of the car and in formation head up the pavement and into the reception area.

“Discipline and Complaints” the leading man announced in a very stern voice while flashing a badge before they marched in rigid formation off towards the lifts.

“Toecutters...” one of the patrol officers remarked “Looks like someone is about to get their arse kicked!”

“Oi!” Tracy called after them as she chased them down towards the lifts where she caught up with them as there were no lift cars on the ground floor at that moment.

“You have a problem madam?” the leading man asked as he looked down at Tracy who thanks to his six foot four broad shouldered frame he dwarfed as she was barely five foot six but she did not let that suppress her determination one jot.

“Yes I bloody well do!” Tracy barked back at him, something which surprised the man judging by the momentary uneasiness he exhibited in reaction to her outburst.

“You can't just come bursting in here as if you own the place!” Tracy stated loudly.

“With all due respect madam” the leading man responded calmly but with a hint of subtle menace “Yes we can so if you wouldn't mind?”

“I bloody well do mind!” Tracy retorted as the lift doors opened and in formation the four men got in the car which with their broad shoulders almost filled it to capacity.

“Take it up with my superior” the man responded as the lift doors closed and they began their ascent.

“Officer Malora!” Tracy called back to the two bewildered patrol officers by the reception desk “Am I imagining it or is that black saloon car parked on a double yellow?”

“I do believe it is Maam” officer Malora confirmed with a wry smile “Going to have to put a ticket on it I think.”

“That's the sort of positive policing I want to hear about!” Tracy agreed before reaching for her radio “Lima Mike One to Control.”

“Control, go ahead” the response quickly came.

“I've got four goons from Discipline and Complaints on their way up in number three lift” Tracy informed the Control Room “Find out where they get off and who they are about to give some bad news to.”

“Yes Maam” the Control Room confirmed as Officer Malora returned to the reception area.

“Well that's sixty quid they owe us for a starter” he remarked with satisfaction as he showed Tracy the stub for the parking ticket he had just slapped on the car “They had better hurry up if they don't want it to get any more expensive.”

“You didn't, did you?” Tracy asked knowingly.

“Oh yes” Malora confirmed with a grin “Lieutenant Daniels is heading over right now to clamp it and tow it away to the pound.”

“Hello there” Cassini commented to himself as he looked at the screen and attempted to call up the file which the search had matched to only to be confronted by a red warning screen. After a pause for thought, Cassini reached over to the telephone and hit the recall button, calling Fuller in his hotel room back in Switzerland.

“Jennifer will you get off me for a moment” Fuller requested as she was busy trying to shower him in kisses “I've got to answer the telephone” he added.

“Well don't be too long” Jennifer warned him as he answered the telephone.

“Simon Fuller” he answered.

“Hi mate” Cassini responded “Listen, one more thing. I did the file search and it came up with a match but when I try to access it I get this big red screen saying 'Alpha Zero One Cipher Clearance' or some such nonsense.”

“Oh hell” Fuller's tone suddenly increased in urgency “Disconnect the system now and get the hell out of there!”

“Freeze!!” voices suddenly called out as the door of the office was unceremoniously kicked in and four hand guns were pointedly trained directly at Cassini who held up his hands in surrender.

“Is their a problem officers?” he asked wryly.

“Bloody hell!” Tracy remarked as she arrived on the floor to see the wrecked remains of Fuller's office door distributed liberally all over the hall “Site and Premises Manager is going to go ape when he sees this!”

“Stand clear!” the lead man called as he appeared in the corridor from Fuller's office followed by his three associates, two of which were escorting a handcuffed Cassini whilst the last one brought up the rear of the group.

"I do hope you are paying for the damage!" Tracy exclaimed as the group passed her by in the corridor without so much as a by or leave.

"We don't carry cash madam" the lead man responded as they boarded the lift car at the end of the corridor and the doors closed.

"Going to have a hard job getting your car released then aren't you" Tracy mused with a knowing grin.

"This is Russell Square" the very authoritative automated platform announcer echoed as a northbound Piccadilly Line service arrived and opened its doors "The next station is King's Cross St Pancras. Please stand clear of the closing doors."

Amongst the passengers who had alighted from the service was the Commander who waited until the majority were off the platform before he himself made his way to the lift landing where by chance a vacant car had just arrived. He did not really like lifts but the Commander found himself forced to use them on this occasion as he fancied the prospect of the long climb up the spiral staircase to the surface even less.

Once he had reached the ground level ticket hall, the Commander took a brief moment to look around before passing through the ticket barriers and then turned left to proceed up the street towards Russell Square itself.

As he approached the Square, the Commander had to pause for a moment to retrieve his mobile telephone from the recesses of his tunic pocket as it had begun to ring.

"Hello?" he answered as he crossed the road and entered Russell Square Gardens by way of the entrance on the north east corner.

"Hello darling" Tracy called from the pavement outside New Scotland Yard "I hate to disturb you but their may be a bit of a problem."

"That doesn't sound too good" the Commander remarked as he sat down on a bench "What's happened?"

"Commander Cassini just got his collar felt by four Armani suited gorillas from Discipline and Complaints" Tracy informed him "Apparently he was caught trying to access a file which someone took an exception to."

"Have they left the building yet?" the Commander asked.

"Not yet" Tracy responded knowingly "They are having car trouble" she confirmed as she turned to look behind her where a scene of confrontational chaos was unfolding as the leading man from Discipline and Complaints was remonstrating with three officers as they stood alongside the now wheel clamped car just as the flatbed truck arrived to tow it away to the pound.

"I'm going to be tied up for the next half hour at least" the Commander confirmed "If these gentlemen do get mobile, get Sir Richard on the telephone pronto and tell him what has happened, I'll call him later."

"All right" Tracy confirmed "I'll see if I can sort something out from this mess."

"In the meantime" the Commander instructed "tell Cassini to say nothing until he has got his phone call and spoken to me."

"Got it" Tracy confirmed "I'd better go, it looks like one of the gorillas is about to head butt a traffic warden."

"All right then love, I'll speak to you later" the Commander confirmed before hanging up.

"Right!" Tracy called out as she entered the fray that was continuing to unfold on the pavement "Who wants to be arrested?"

"Well this a pleasure" Sir David Camberwell remarked as McGregor poured the tea whilst they sat around a table outside the café in Russell Square Gardens.

"So what's the occasion?" Camberwell asked. Despite being in his early nineties now and long retired, he still presented a formidable and powerful figure, just that now he was bit more grey on top than he would have liked.

"There's been a development in an old case of ours and I felt we needed to discuss it" McGregor explained "Edward Regent died yesterday."

"Ah, now I see the reason for this informal meeting" Camberwell marked "Natural causes?"

"Oh yes" McGregor confirmed, "His heart finally gave out but he went peacefully."

"Does little Eddie know?" Camberwell enquired.

"Oh yes" McGregor responded "In fact he asked for this meeting."

"You mean to say I will finally get to meet him at last?" Camberwell responded with a combination of surprise and delight "I have always wondered what happened to him."

"Good afternoon gentlemen" the Commander declared as he joined them, shaking hands with McGregor before sitting down at the table.

"Glad you could make it old friend" McGregor responded "May I introduce my old guvnor and mentor Sir David Camberwell."

"A pleasure" the Commander responded as he shook Camberwell warmly by the hand.

"Welcome to the party" Camberwell announced "You are about to be present at an historical meeting" he informed the Commander.

"Really?" the Commander responded "Who are we expecting?"

"An old friend" Camberwell explained "Actually I have never met him in fact but I know this is going to be quite interesting."

"Perhaps I should present my other credentials" the Commander remarked as he extracted the elderly letter from his inside uniform tunic pocket and passed it to Camberwell.

"Well now I am intrigued" Camberwell commented as he took the letter and once he had put on his reading glasses, began to read it whilst both McGregor and the Commander watched knowingly, wondering just what his reaction would be.

"Good God!" he exclaimed with a startled look as he looked up at the Commander "I don't believe it."

"There's the proof" the Commander admitted indicating the letter in Camberwell's hands which he was reading now for a second time to dispel any possibility he had made a mistake.

"You're little Eddie Regent?" Camberwell responded.

"Small world isn't it?" the Commander remarked.

"Well, well, well" Camberwell remarked, still taking in this remarkable revelation "I never thought that I would ever actually meet you, but to then discover that little Eddie became the Commander himself?"

"Fairly logical progression really" the Commander explained "Edwards who was heading up the Lewisham investigation for the Met was looking to adopt a child and there I was in need of a bed, board, somewhere to park my model trains plus of course a new identity."

"So you followed your adopted father into the service and the rest is history?" Camberwell concluded.

"Exactly" the Commander confirmed.

"Which brings us neatly to the other purpose of this meeting I suppose" Camberwell asked.

"Well I wanted to thank you in person for this" the Commander indicated the letter as it was returned to him "Something I have wanted to do since the day I received it. Also I wanted a little off the record conversation about a certain consignment of missing diamonds, the misleading of the press by certain elements of the Government and the current whereabouts of all the evidence."

“Oh not much then” Camberwell remarked wryly “Well after the amazingly staged media led show trial that the Judiciary very kindly put on for the Home Office to make them look good in the popular press, all of the evidence, files, the lot, indeed anything even remotely connected to the matter was seized and impounded in secure storage.”

“I remember when that happened” McGregor added “Poor old Richard Crowthorne threw a right paddy in my office that day, trouble was I agreed with him.”

“Yes, our old friend Sir Richard has seemed a little out of sorts the last day or two” the Commander commented.

“The Lewisham business was his first big case for MI5 you see” McGregor explained “He did all the leg work, spent six months working with contacts and then when the heist actually happened, someone got at the evidence and the whole thing was railroaded through the courts for a nice quick and easy conclusion.”

“Ah yes” Camberwell added “If I recall Crowthorne was not the only one livid by all that, Forrester never did fully let go of the case either despite strong advice to the contrary from higher authorities.”

“What I never understood was how the hell the jury at the trial managed to convincingly convict the entire gang that were arrested on the primary evidence of a few diamonds” the Commander remarked.

“This was the early 1970's lad” McGregor reminded the Commander “No Police & Criminal Evidence Act back then and what with all the public outrage over the violence at the heist plus of course your 'death' as far as they were concerned anyone with a diamond from Lewisham in their pocket was guilty of the whole kit, camp and caboodle by default, case closed, nice positive press briefing to the media by the Home Secretary and a happy Government sitting back and counting the insurance money, not to mention the positive publicity.”

“Conveniently painting over the facts that in the midst of all this, 99.9 percent of the diamonds were never found and none of that actual gunmen or whoever it was who set the whole thing up were ever seen or heard of again” Camberwell added “Someone with a lot of influence somewhere in the chain was manipulating things right from the off, Crowthorne was assigned to the case when he heard whispers on the back channels but we never positively nailed any information on anyone outside of the guys hired to do the job itself.”

“I'll tell you something that my Father said to me just before he died which I think you may find illuminating then” the Commander admitted “His exact words were 'there were never any diamonds', in other words the place was empty bar twenty odd cases of gravel and the few big gems in the display cabinet.”

“Are you saying you think the whole heist was a put up job?” Camberwell asked seriously.

"I'm not saying anything just yet" the Commander responded "That's why I need to find the original files and evidence."

"Well if they still exist" McGregor remarked "Then I expect they will be in the secure facility at Loughton, it's an old World War II bunker, heavily guarded."

"These files wouldn't by any chance have the reference number 9906753 attached to them by any chance?" the Commander asked.

"Interesting" Camberwell remarked "Where did you hear that number?"

"From an information junkie by the name of Renquist" the Commander explained.

"Ah yes I remember him" McGregor recalled "However 9906753 if I am right only refers to yourself as Eddie Regent and your entry and legend under the Witness Protection Program. The files and material relating directly to the whole Lewisham incident itself have the reference number 9906752."

"You're sure of that reference number?" the Commander asked.

"I have a photographic memory for case files" McGregor confirmed "It was the only way back before computers we could ever hope to keep track of everything."

"Your one problem is though" Camberwell commented "The files you seek are buried under various secrets legislation and are not supposed to be released until at least the year 2069."

"I was sort of hoping to get at them a little earlier than that" the Commander admitted ruefully.

"You'll need a form J-62 then" McGregor confirmed.

"A what?" the Commander responded.

"A J-62" Camberwell explained "It's a very old standard form, rarely used if at all these days which is used to release early any classified material stored on Government premises."

"It has to be filled in carefully" McGregor confirmed "You need to state precisely which files you want with their reference numbers which fortunately you have, the exact reason why you require said material and then present it to two of three people."

"Who are the three?" the Commander asked.

"One has to be the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police as it used to be, these days the Administrator General will do" McGregor explained.

"Well's that's easy" the Commander smirked knowingly.

"The other either has to be the Home Secretary..." McGregor continued.

“...probably not the best idea...” the Commander admitted ruefully.

“...or the Prime Minister” McGregor finished.

“Where do I find this form?” the Commander asked.

“There should be the one and only pad of them in your office somewhere” Camberwell explained.

“Have you seen my filing system?” the Commander remarked.

“You'll find it” Camberwell assured him as the Commander's mobile telephone rang which caused him to break off the interesting conversation in order to answer it.

“Hello?” the Commander answered.

“Sir? It's Cassini” came the response “I've been told that my one and only telephone call should be to you apparently.”

“Where are you?” the Commander asked.

“Judging from the standard Government issue magnolia décor” Cassini remarked wryly as he looked around the drab interior of the holding section of the building he was in “I'd say this looks like Sir Richard Crowthorne's place.”

“What exactly happened?” the Commander enquired “That is before the goon squad showed up.”

“I ran an enhanced picture of our suspect on the bus, Perivale's contact through the Icarus system in Fuller's office” Cassini explained “The only match that came up was on a database belonging to my hosts here and when I clicked on it apparently the alarm bells down here went into overdrive and, well you can guess the rest Sir.”

“Listen carefully” the Commander instructed “Is Sir Richard around there somewhere?”

“He's just come in now Sir” Cassini confirmed as he looked around on hearing a door open to see Sir Richard Crowthorne enter the room with a slightly quizzical expression.

“Put him on” the Commander insisted.

“It's the Administrator General for you Sir” the Commander passed Sir Richard the telephone.

“Oh right, thanks” Sir Richard responded as he took the handset “Hello?”

“Richard” the Commander ordered “Do me, you and the country a favour and get your goon squads mucky paws off of my officer.”

“I don't even know what he did yet” Sir Richard responded “All I know is that I got a report of a code violation by one of your lads and was red flashed back to the office.”

“This is vital” the Commander explained “I need Cassini back on the streets now.”

“I can't just do that” Sir Richard responded “The Director General would go nuts if he found out.”

“He's stuck on a golf course in Portugal” the Commander remarked “How the hell is he going to know?”

“Oh trust me” Sir Richard admitted ruefully as he looked around “He has spies everywhere here, no pun intended.”

“Err excuse me Commander” McGregor interrupted politely “May I have a word with Crowthorne.”

“Yeah sure” the Commander agreed “Richard, someone here wants to speak with you” he announced before passing the telephone across to McGregor.

“Richard” he announced “It's your old boss Frank McGregor, having a bad day are we?”

“Oh hello old friend” Sir Richard responded slightly surprised “I've had better days to be honest.”

“Well unless you want this one to get worse” McGregor suggested implicitly “I'm ordering you to release the Commander's officer and also to provide him with your fullest co-operation, that includes releasing to him all files which he was seeking on the Commander's behalf.”

“Well I don't know...” Sir Richard began, clearly unsure as to exactly what to do.

“Listen old friend” McGregor continued “I may be retired now from the service but I still have a lot of influence and contacts in the trade so if you still hanker after the centre seat at Five I strongly suggest you follow my suggestions all right?”

“Yes Sir” Sir Richard finally relented and nodded in the direction of the custody officer to release Cassini from the handcuffs.

“Excellent” McGregor responded “Perhaps at some point you, Sir David and I should meet up for lunch to discuss your future.”

“Indeed Sir” Sir Richard agreed “It's been a pleasure talking to you again.”

“Richard?” the Commander called once he had received the telephone back “You get Cassini those files and we will talk later.”

“What about just out of interest?” Sir Richard asked.

“Oh I don't want to spoil the surprise” the Commander responded with a hint of sarcasm “See you later.”

“Well you haven't changed much have you?” McGregor remarked with a wry grin, a reaction reflected by Camberwell seated opposite him.

“You should see me with a deck of cards and a pile of poker chips” the Commander responded as he dialled a number on the telephone.

“I remember” McGregor confirmed “If it hadn't been for this business, I could well have seen that little twelve year old breaking the bank at Las Vegas by the time he was fourteen.”

“Hello love” the Commander called smiling as Tracy answered his call.

“Hello dear” Tracy responded from her office on the top floor of Scotland Yard next door to the Commander's “How's Russell Square?”

“How did you know that?” the Commander asked even though deep down he knew Tracy always kept careful tabs on his whereabouts at times such as these as she was always worried about him getting into scrapes.

“Oyster Card flashed up Russell Square tube about twenty minutes ago and hasn't appeared again since” Tracy explained as she consulted her computer screen.

“Weather's nice” the Commander admitted looking around at the sunshine filtering through the trees down onto the neatly manicured flower beds and grass of the gardens.

“Have you heard from Cassini yet?” Tracy enquired.

“Yes” the Commander confirmed “He rang a few minutes ago, I spoke to Sir Richard and told him to release him at once and extend full co-operation.”

“I bet he didn't like that” Tracy mused.

“He wasn't exactly ecstatic about it no” the Commander admitted “But let's just say I and a couple of old acquaintances persuaded him otherwise.”

“Oh you've got me intrigued now” Tracy responded, her curiosity well and truly heightened by her husband's slightly evasive responses which told her experienced mind that he was definitely up to something, trouble was his usual exploits usually resulted in him, herself or even both getting shot at before the day is through.

“Listen love” the Commander explained “Cassini should be on his way back to the Yard as soon as he has the files from Sir Richard, as soon as he is there, put him in my office, make sure he gets the decent Scotch and put him to work.”

“Will do dear” Tracy confirmed “Anything else?”

“Yes” the Commander responded “See if you can find a pad of forms with the reference number J-62” he explained “They probably predate the ark so you should find them in my filing cabinet under 'O' for obsolete crap.”

“J-62, right” Tracy confirmed as she made a note of the reference number “Then what?”

“Be in the main reception area with the form at the Yard in about half an hour” the Commander instructed “I’ll pick you up there.”

“Oooh, where are we going?” Tracy asked just in case of the unlikely possibility of a romantic dinner for two but she was not surprised to be disappointed.

“Downing Street” the Commander confirmed “I’ll see you later, I love you.”

“Love you too darling” Tracy responded happily before hanging up.

“Does your good lady wife know about your former life as little Eddie Regent?” Camberwell asked.

“Oh yes” the Commander confirmed “She knows all about it, indeed I don't think I would have been able to get through this business if it wasn't for her support.”

“A supportive and caring lady is a rare thing, especially in our line of work” McGregor remarked admirably “I should know, the service cost me three divorces and a funeral so you make sure you hold on to her no matter what.”

“I fully intend to” the Commander confirmed “In the meantime I must leave you gentlemen to your reminiscing, it’s been a pleasure.”

“Don't forget to fill us in on what happens” Camberwell asked.

“No problem” the Commander responded “Actually, thinking about it” he added almost as an afterthought as he was about to leave “What would happen if suddenly little Eddie Regent, the hero of Lewisham was to suddenly rise from the grave and tell his story to the world?”

“I would say that would make a few people in positions of power rather nervous I expect” McGregor commented with a wry grin “Of course you would have to wait until the time was exactly right, the moment when you wanted whoever you hoped to make nervous come out of the woodwork and do something rather rash.”

“It's an interesting idea” Camberwell confirmed “Of course killing a twelve year old witness in cold blood achieved their original aim of burying the evidence and providing enough shock at the death of a young hero that when the trial came up, it was enough of a show to conveniently whitewash certain facts but to take on Eddie now the Regional Administrator General, the Commander no less with the entire Security & Police Service at his disposal? Well that is a very different ball game entirely.”

“Indeed it is” the Commander agreed with a smile “I’ll be in touch, be seeing you.”

“Ok Commander Cassini” Sir Richard announced as he showed him into his office “Whose files are we trying to find?”

“This guy” Cassini showed Sir Richard the enhanced photograph of the as yet still unidentified contact on the bus.

“Who is this guy?” Sir Richard asked out of interest as he looked at the picture.

“That is what I was about to find out when your goon squad turned up and turned Fuller's office door into matchwood” Cassini remarked “He's going to go ape when he comes back and sees the mess they left.”

“All right” Sir Richard remarked “Lets see who Mr Mystery is shall we?” he suggested as he turned to the computer on his desk and fed the photograph into the scanner.

After fiddling around with the recognition program for a minute or two, the computer beeped and duly listed the same file that Cassini had found during his rather rudely interrupted searching earlier.

“Here we go” Sir Richard declared as he selected the reference number identified and attempted to open the file only to be met with a big red screen.

“That was the same screen I got just before your gorillas showed up” Cassini remarked “Are you insured?” he asked looking back behind him at the office door slightly nervously, expecting it to be kicked in any second.

“Don't worry” Sir Richard confirmed “We don't usually allow them out of their cage above the second floor as a rule except to feed.”

“Oh right” Cassini relaxed a little.

“But this is damm peculiar” Sir Richard tapped the screen with bemusement “I have the highest clearance in the Service, I should be able to access this.”

“Somebody really does not want this to be seen do they?” Cassini asked.

“Indeed” Sir Richard agreed as he reached across his desk to the telephone intercom “Hettie” he called his Personal Assistant located next door “Who is the best file scrounger we have on the books?” he asked.

“That would probably be Simon Fuller Sir but he's away on honeymoon” the Personal Assistant replied.

“Give him a call” Sir Richard requested “He's staying in Switzerland, D Branch monitoring should have the details.”

“Right away Sir” the Personal Assistant confirmed before disconnecting.

“Is there anyone in this business who doesn't hire Fuller's talents?” Cassini asked out of curiosity.

“Not many” Sir Richard admitted “He is the best in the business at file access, management and data security. Not only did he design most of the specialist software that both this Department and our related sister law enforcement agencies use, he also knows all of the ways around them as well.”

“And 'D Section' monitoring?” Cassini enquired.

“With a gentleman of Mr Fuller's knowledge and talent” Sir Richard explained “He could always be the potential target of outside influences seeking to access our systems under duress, that's why we keep a close guard on him. At the moment he has a whole MI6 team watching him in his hotel in Switzerland as we speak.”

“Does he know about this constant watch you have on him?” Cassini asked.

“Oh no” Sir Richard confidently responded “It's all carefully done and very discreet.”

“Mr Fuller for you on line three” the Personal Assistant suddenly announced over the intercom.

“Lovely” Sir Richard responded “Put him through. Simon?” he called.

“Good evening Sir Richard” Fuller responded from the bar of the hotel in Switzerland where he was dressed in his best James Bond style tuxedo and bow tie with Jennifer alongside him in a dazzling dress where they were about to go and have dinner in the hotel's casino restaurant.

“How's the honeymoon going?” Sir Richard asked.

“Oh very well” Fuller confirmed as she smiled at Jennifer “Sharing an entire floor with a team of MI6 agents is a bit of a strange experience though, I thought your lot were devious but these guys are the business.”

“So much for carefully done and discreet....” Cassini muttered Sir Richard's words with a suppressed giggle.

“You're not supposed to notice they are there” Sir Richard remarked quietly.

“Well next time, tell them not to all wear suits by the same London tailor” Fuller suggested “I spotted them a mile off before I even got on the plane at Gatwick.”

“I'll pass it on” Sir Richard remarked “Anyway, the reason I was calling you is that we have a problem with a file.”

“Would this be the same one Cassini tried to access before setting of every alarm in your gaff by any chance?” Fuller enquired.

“Err yes” Sir Richard confirmed “That would be the one.”

“And I presume that my office door is now but the shattered remains of what it once was I assume?” Fuller asked “Its just I know what your company gorilla-grams are capable of.”

“Ah, sorry about that” Sir Richard apologised.

"So what's happened to this file then?" Fuller inquired.

"We can't open it basically" Sir Richard admitted "The damm thing is locked and restricted and that is with my log on and identification."

"Oh dear..." Fuller responded with a definite hint of concern.

"I take its not good news then?" Sir Richard asked.

"Basically yes" Fuller explained "If it has been locked so that even an Alpha Level clearance officer such as yourself cannot access it then someone very high up the food chain has locked it for a very important reason."

"Terrific..." Sir Richard responded, seemingly in defeat.

"Fortunately for you however" Fuller responded, injecting a much needed dose of positive thought into the conversation "You've called the right guy who just happens to know how to get around it."

"Those are words I wanted to hear" Sir Richard responded now feeling far more positive.

"Put in the override username Fuller1964" Fuller instructed "Then the password 'Jennifer' in upper case."

"Right..." Sir Richard responded as he carefully followed the instructions which duly resulted in the screen blocking access to the file clearing "It worked" he confirmed.

"Well of course it worked" Fuller responded as if it were merely a matter of fact "I designed the system didn't I?"

"Thanks for that" Sir Richard replied gratefully "I owe you a drink."

"David Havelock" Cassini read from the screen "Assistant to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and a veteran of forty years in the Civil Service."

"Connected all over the place if this career summary is anything to go by" Sir Richard agreed.

"Anything else lurking in the files about this guy?" Cassini asked.

"If their is" Sir Richard responded "I'll forward it to you care of the Commander's office."

"Much appreciated" Cassini thanked Sir Richard as he departed.

Tracy looked at her wrist watch and then at the clock on the wall behind the reception desk and both agreed it was approaching four o'clock now.

"Lima Alpha One from you darling wife" Tracy called into her radio set.

"Yes dear?" the Commander responded.

"Where are you?" Tracy asked.

"Just coming out of St James's Park station now" the Commander confirmed as he exited out into the street from the main doors of the station situated on the corner of Broadway and in the shadow of the Art Deco style head office building of London Transport.

"I managed to translate your filing system into English and found your J-62 form" Tracy informed him as she headed out of the main entrance and stopped on the pavement.

"Over here love" the Commander called over the radio whilst waving to her down the street.

"Stay there love" Tracy confirmed having sighted the Commander "I'm coming to you."

She fairly skipped down the road the relatively short distance to meet the Commander where they promptly kissed.

"You are a sight for sore eyes my love" the Commander declared.

"That's deep" Tracy responded with a cheeky smile "So where are we going?" she asked.

"The supposed corridors of power that is number ten Downing Street" the Commander declared "You got the form?" he asked as arm in arm, they walked off in the direction of nearby Westminster.

"Don't tell me" Tracy remarked wryly as she passed him the all important form "You went there when you were twelve?"

"No" the Commander responded "But I did get a technically posthumous letter of thanks and best wishes from Harold Wilson plus the George Cross" he added.

"So what is this little trip about then?" she asked as they entered Parliament Square which as usual was packed with traffic and tourists milling about, so much so that the two uniformed and armed officers melted into the crowd almost unnoticed except by a couple of patrol officers who they acknowledged as they passed them turning into Parliament Street that leads directly into Whitehall.

"All of the evidence and related material from the Lewisham case and MI5's investigation prior to the main event was canned by the Home Office in 1970 as soon as the trial ended" the Commander explained, having to raise his voice in order to be heard by Tracy over the constant background din of traffic.

"And I assume this here rather tatty looking form is what you fill in to release it?" Tracy concluded.

"Brains as well as beauty" the Commander confirmed with a smile "In order for it to be validated, the investigating officer requiring the material has to submit the completed form and present his or her reasons for the request to two of three people, the Home Secretary, me and the Prime Minister."

"I take it we are going for you and the Prime Minister then" Tracy concluded "Seeing as every time the Home Office hears you coming they all go off and hide!"

"Precisely" the Commander confirmed "Besides the Home Office has got more spies, leaks and gaffe merchants than pretty much every other department in the Government put together and I do not want to chance the possibility of tipping off whoever we may find is connected to this before I am ready."

"So what's my part in this little drama then?" Tracy asked with a knowing smile as they approached the wrought iron gates that guarded the entrance to Downing Street itself.

"Mostly moral support" the Commander admitted frankly "Quite honestly I don't think I could have got through the last couple of days without you there to support me."

"All part of the friendly service" Tracy responded with pleasure and a cheeky smile "Besides I enjoy your hilarious company and the sex is pretty damn good too."

The Commander just looked around slightly with a bit of embarrassment at Tracy's cheeky comment whilst the officer on duty at the gates who let them through just looked on with eyes wide in surprise as he had caught the end of that particular statement.

"Err don't ask...." the Commander wryly responded to the officer as he and Tracy passed through the gates and into the most famous street in London.

As they walked up the street, it was noticeable how much quieter Downing Street was to the main road of Whitehall at the end behind them, security issues in this modern day and age meant that unlike many years ago, only authorized personnel and vehicles

were ever allowed down there these days with all but the specially invited public kept firmly out.

As ever, a uniformed officer was on duty on the pavement immediately in front of the famous big black door of number ten whilst the ever present members of the press were camped out behind pedestrian barriers on the opposite side of the street.

“Commander!” one of the reporters from the BBC called across the street upon seeing the two well known officers approaching and in hope of something interesting to report on the next news bulletin as so far it had been a very quiet day news wise “Any reason for your visit to number ten?” he asked.

“Me and the missus fancied a cup of tea” the Commander responded smiling as they stopped in front of the door and did what everyone who passed that point always did and paused for the press to take a few pictures of them on the door step of number ten.

“One for the album” Tracy commented before they turned to face the door and the Commander knocked.

The big heavy blast proof door was duly opened from the inside and they were allowed to enter where they were met in the main hallway by the Prime Minister's Personal Private Secretary.

“Administrator General, Divisional Commander” he greeted them formally by their official titles even though they would have been happy with Tracy and the Commander but this was a serious place and they were there on serious business “If you would care to follow me, the Prime Minister can see you in approximately ten minutes.”

As they were shown into a room, Lord Perivale came down the stairs into the hallway and was just in time to see the Commander and Tracy disappear from sight. There was no mistaking who they were either and he paused half way down the stairs as he wondered why they might be there.

“Afternoon Frobisher” Lord Perivale called to the Personal Private Secretary “I see we have some interesting company just arrived.”

“Yes” Frobisher confirmed “Don't know what it's about though but I think it's more than just popping in for tea and sandwiches.

“More is the pity” Perivale remarked “Anyway, is my car ready?”

“Momentarily Sir” Frobisher confirmed as he opened the door for Lord Perivale who exited onto the doorstep just as his ministerial car arrived and he got in the back.

“Back to the office please” he called to his driver who with a Security Service motorcycle escort in accompaniment, duly drove off down the street as in the back, Perivale picked up the in car telephone and dialled a number.

“Oh you are actually there for once” Perivale remarked as he was answered by Havelock “It may be nothing but the Commander and his lovely wife just went in to see the Prime Minister at Downing Street, call up some favours and find out what's occurring then report directly back to me.”

Inside Number Ten Downing Street, the Commander was trying to fill in the form with Tracy's help but was having problems as the official Downing Street pen he had requisitioned for the purpose was playing up.

“Typical” the Commander looked down at the 'Number 10' branded pen with disdain “The bloody thing doesn't work.”

“Welcome to the world of UK politics darling” Tracy remarked with a hint of sarcasm.

“What does that say love?” the Commander asked, showing Tracy the form and indicating one key section “I can't make that bit out as I left my reading glasses in the office.”

"Authorising officer including position" Tracy confirmed although even she had some trouble making out what the fine print said as it was one of those old 1970's style standard forms with poor print quality and even poorer paper.

"That reminds me" the Commander added "In my diary, I've got 'we danv' written, I don't suppose you know what it is do you love? I have been racking my meagre brain and I can't think what it is."

"Try 'Wed Anv' as in Wedding Anniversary" Tracy responded "As in ours dear."

"Oh yes" the Commander realised as if a sudden weight had been lifted from his shoulders although there was plenty left to be seriously worried about in the place of this problem.

"How are you getting on love?" Tracy asked.

"Summary of reason or reasons to be presented for request of files or other material covered by this form and any attached documents" the Commander read from the form.

"You want to know who has been doing lots of naughty things" Tracy suggested sarcastically.

"I like that" the Commander admitted "However I fear something more formal may be required."

"Be imaginative" Tracy suggested.

"I usually try and avoid being anything I can't spell" the Commander wryly remarked.

"The Prime Minister will see you now" the Secretary announced as he appeared, holding open the door through to the cabinet office.

"Thank you" the Commander responded before taking hold of Tracy by the hand for support "Showtime" he announced before together they headed through the door.

"Good afternoon Commander, Ms Caverner" the Prime Minister called as the two officers entered "Whatever it is, I didn't do it!" he joked.

"Why is it" the Commander remarked "that whenever I see a senior politician, they instantly either reach for the speed dial to their lawyer or just deny everything?"

"Experience?" the Prime Minister asked ruefully.

"Don't panic Sir" the Commander reassured him, "Just the matter of a little form with potentially big consequences."

"Blimey" the Prime Minister commented as the Commander handed him the form "Where did you dig this antique from?"

"It's a long story" the Commander admitted ruefully.

"You can say that again" Tracy remarked.

"That there Prime Minister is the rarely seen seldom heard off and hardly ever used form J-62" the Commander explained.

"Files and materials related to original investigation into matters surrounding the Lewisham Diamond Heist (1969) file reference number 9906752" the Prime Minister read from the form "and Eddie Regent (aged 12) same date, file reference number 9906753."

"Correct" the Commander confirmed.

"Now as I understand it this material has been sealed until at least 2069" the Prime Minister continued "So may I be so bold as to enquire about your interest in these files."

"The last publicly confirmed prosecution witness of the Lewisham Heist, Edward Regent Senior, died yesterday under the guard of the Witness Protection Division" the Commander confirmed "He was in their care since he turned Queen's Evidence at the trial in 1970."

"If I recall correctly" the Prime Minister remarked "none bar a few minor examples of the diamonds were ever recovered."

"I have reason to believe that the original heist was carefully orchestrated by an as yet unidentified person or persons" the Commander continued to explain "In order to bring the real people behind this to justice, I need to see the original material that both MI5 and the Metropolitan Police collated before, during and after the heist."

"Who is or was Eddie Regent?" the Prime Minister "I know my memory is murky, was that the young lad killed by gunmen because he was a key witness?"

"The same" the Commander confirmed as he passed over the final edition of the Evening Standard newspaper from the 7th of March 1969 which detailed the whole story of that day.

"Oh yes I remember now" the Prime Minister responded as he read the front page of the faded newspaper "Saved the lives of some of those inside the Depository, but he's been dead since that day, what use would his files and belongings be to this investigation?"

"Little Eddie Regent did not actually die that day" the Commander explained "Although it was touch and go for a couple of hours, he survived and his father gave his evidence as his own, then he was adopted with a change of name."

"You want to track him down?" the Prime Minister asked.

"Not necessary" the Commander confirmed with a knowing shake of the head "I know exactly where he is?"

"Is your husband usually this good?" the Prime Minister asked Tracy.

"He has his moments" Tracy confirmed.

"So if Eddie Regent is still alive" the Prime Minister asked "Where is he?"

"I take it that divulging his location is a condition of the application approval?" the Commander asked.

"If I am to ensure correct judicial procedure then I think so yes" the Prime Minister confirmed.

"You cannot reveal any of what has or is about to be revealed here today to anyone" the Commander emphasised.

"Of course" the Prime Minister confirmed "So where is he?"

The Commander just smiled knowingly leading to the Prime Minister to turn to Tracy for clarification.

"He's standing right in front of you" Tracy pointed from her seat towards her husband with a smile.

"Request approved" the stunned Prime Minister responded with a dropped jaw as he signed the forms.

"Jim, it's Dave" Havelock called upon his mobile telephone as he looked down the River Thames from the parapet of Lambeth Bridge "How have you been?"

"Not too bad mate" Havelock's contact known simply as Jim responded "Yourself?"

"Can't complain" Havelock confirmed "Listen, do you still have that contact in the Data Security Office?"

"Absolutely" Jim responded "Something you need?"

"My boss Lord Perivale has apparently lost some files in the high security system" Havelock explained convincingly "The Administrator General is trying to find them but apparently no one can find the release form."

"Oh yes" Jim confirmed "I saw the Administrator General and his wife head into the Prime Minister's Office about an hour ago bearing some sort of form."

"What type of form requires a Prime Ministerial signature?" Havelock asked.

"There's not many with that kind of clout" Jim was forced to admit "Could be something like a 'J' series one that's used for access to locked files, you know the sort that are sealed for fifty or a hundred years before being released to the Public Records Office."

"Interesting" Havelock remarked "Sounds like the Commander is doing a little discreet digging in the long forgotten corners of the system."

"I'll ask around a bit" Jim confirmed "See if anything floats up, those files your Lord Perivale has lost have got to be somewhere."

"I'd appreciate that" Havelock confirmed "But be discreet OK? Poor old Perivale is a tad embarrassed about these files having gone adrift."

"I'll call you" Jim confirmed before hanging up. Once he put the telephone down, Jim turned in his office chair to Sir Richard Crowthorne and Commander Cassini who were standing behind him in the monitoring office at MI5.

"Looks like our two bus travelling friends are getting nervous about something" Cassini commented

"Indeed" Sir Richard agreed with a smirk "I'll keep this line of inquiry monitored and see if we can make our friends as nervous as possible."

"I'd better get back with this lot" Cassini indicated the wadge of files under his arm, "Also I had better get a team onto this Havelock guy, should be interesting to see where it leads."

"That looks sufficiently sinister" Tracy remarked as she and the Commander came out of the main entrance of Loughton Underground Station and saw waiting for them a ominous black car with smoked out windows.

"And these must be the sense of humour failures from the Data Integrity Office" the Commander remarked as he noticed the dark tailored suits and long overcoats of the two men in front of the car "It's apparently quite a rare occurrence to see them out in daylight" he joked.

"Administrator General, Maam" one of the two men addressed them as they approached "William Fullbright, Office for Data Integrity and Security" he introduced himself as he proffered his official identification which the Commander examined carefully.

"Lead on" the Commander responded once he was satisfied that the two gentlemen were authentic whereupon the second man showed Tracy and the Commander into the back of the car before he and his colleague smoothly got in the front and they drove off.

The two representatives from the Data Integrity Office spoke very little during the twenty minute journey, evidently not used to handling visitors which was not surprising given the fairly reclusive nature of their work.

"Charming place" the Commander remarked sarcastically as the car passed through the perimeter gate of an old military establishment and then proceeded through a complex of old wartime concrete and brick buildings in various states of disrepair.

"You'll need to sign in" the driver confirmed as they stopped in front of what appeared to be the main building on the site, a very non-descript 1960's style concrete office block with no signage on its exterior whatsoever to indicate as to the nature of its purpose and operation.

"If you will come with me" the driver announced once he had got out and with his colleague opened the back doors of the car to allow the two officers to exit.

Tracy and the Commander were politely yet formally escorted into the building where an armed uniformed security guard stood watch behind a desk with an armada of forms and clipboards at his disposal.

"You have the signed request form?" the guard asked.

"All signed, sealed and delivered" the Commander announced as he handed across the form which the guard took and read through carefully before getting up and removing one of several otherwise identical log books from the bookcase and consulted it.

"Vault four" the guard confirmed "Building three, sub level two, section three."

"Through there, turn left at the end and follow the signs" the representative confirmed to the Commander "Try not to be too long, we want to be locked up by six."

"Thank you" the Commander responded as he and Tracy headed off down a long narrow and dimly lit corridor.

"What is this place, a maze?" Tracy asked as they made their way through a myriad of seemingly identical gloomy passageways that gradually sloped downwards into the bowels of the earth.

"You have to admit it though love" the Commander commented "Great place for a secure storage facility, no one in their right mind would normally even contemplate coming down here."

One corridor seemed to lead to another until they found themselves after what seemed like hours but was in fact just a few minutes, approaching a large vault door with a uniformed security guard waiting for them there.

"My God that's a big door" Tracy remarked looking upwards as the guard on duty proceeded to enter a code into a keypad before opening the huge doorway.

"There you go" the guard cheerily announced "Welcome to vault number four."

"Bit dark isn't it?" the Commander asked as he peered inside into the murky gloom.

"Try these" the guard suggested as he handed them a couple of searchlight torches "Be careful though, it's bigger than it looks down there."

"Thank you" the Commander thanked the cheerful guard as with torches in one hand and each others hand in the other, the two slightly nervous officers headed inside.

"How big is this place?" Tracy asked as they walked through the vast but dark open subterranean cavern that made up just this single vault.

"Conservative estimates I have read say that each of the twenty vaults here are up to six acres in total floor space" the Commander remarked.

"It's giving me the creeps" Tracy responded as she tightened her grip on her husband's hand for support whilst nervously casting her torch around the vast interior of the vault, the light illuminating row upon row of seemingly identical shelves crammed with file boxes stretching off into the dark infinity.

"I think it should be over here" the Commander declared as he shown his torch onto a sign chalked on the end of one set of shelves which marked the end of the box file area and where an open floor section of sealed wooden packing crates and boxes began.

"Good grief" Tracy looked on aghast "What a lot of junk!"

"One man's junk is another man's treasure" the Commander commented "Ah here we go" he announced as he read the number on one large crate, 9906752 printed on the side and some faded details noted underneath.

"Here's the other one" Tracy confirmed as she examined the next even larger crate before placing her torch up on one crate opposite so they could look at both crates in reasonable light.

"Ah, slight problem" the Commander indicated the substantial padlock on the first crate.

"Never leave home without a locksmith's daughter" Tracy remarked as she got out her lock picking equipment and started work on the padlock.

"Oh well done" the Commander declared as Tracy successfully removed the lock.

"The other dear?" Tracy asked indicating the second huge crate which at almost eight feet high and equally as big in length and width, was twice the size as the one that the Commander was now opening the door of.

"If you wouldn't mind love" the Commander confirmed as he headed into the first crate with his torch which showed that it was full of sealed file boxes and old style reel to reel audio tapes.

"What a lot of junk!" Tracy exclaimed as she successfully managed to open the second huge crate and look inside.

"Do you mind love" the Commander calmly remarked as he appeared from out of the darkness and looked over Tracy's shoulder "That junk as you call it happens to be my past."

"I take it this is yours then?" Tracy remarked as she pulled an old totem style 'Lewisham' station sign from one box.

"Well Crowthorne did agree to ensure all of my belongings were secured so I guess this must be the lot" the Commander responded.

"Find anything interesting in the other one?" Tracy enquired.

"Enough files to make even the late Earl Renquist green with envy" the Commander confirmed "When they said all the material relating to the case was impounded, they weren't kidding."

"Well we can't go through all this lot here" Tracy commented "Not enough light and nowhere near enough space for a start."

"We need a very big van and some of the Service's best removal blokes" the Commander confirmed as he took a look in one box of small objects.

"Found something?" Tracy asked.

"There it is" the Commander declared "I've been looking for this forever."

"What is it?" Tracy asked looking at the small green plastic disk in her husband's hand.

"This is my lucky poker chip" the Commander explained "It's a genuine Las Vegas poker chip that my Uncle brought back for me, he claimed it was one of a handful he won in a poker game from Frank Sinatra himself."

"And you believed him?" Tracy asked sceptically.

"Well its a story that sounds pretty convincing when you are ten years old but it definitely did come from Las Vegas, I know that much" the Commander agreed "And up until the day I mislaid it, I had never even been remotely shot at so I guess it was lucky."

"Where are we going to put all this?" Tracy wondered as she scanned around the first crate with her torch and saw the huge number of files, documents and material inside "For that matter, when is anyone going to find time to read it all."

"I have no idea" the Commander was forced to admit "However I think that is a problem for the morning."

"Are we taking anything with us now?" Tracy asked as the Commander checked the faded labels on some of the file boxes.

"These two files" the Commander declared as he identified two specific folders from towards the back of the first crate, pulled them out and passed them to Tracy, "This small box of tapes" he indicated another box nearby "my lucky poker chip and that."

"I should have guessed" Tracy responded not looking in the least bit surprised.

"Hello?" Commander Cassini asked cautiously as he looked around the Commander's office door into the darkened interior "Anybody home?"

"Oh Mr Cassini, there you are" the Commander's Personal Assistant called as she entered the outer office "He's not back yet but he is expecting you."

"Oh right" Cassini responded as he checked his watch which showed the time to be passing half past six in the evening.

"The Commander said to wait for him in his office" the PA explained "Whilst you are waiting, he asks could you call Sir Richard Crowthorne and ask him to join you here."

"Right" Cassini confirmed as he entered the darkened office as the PA left for the evening, her day's work done which was more than could be said for anyone else involved in these events.

Cassini closed the office door quietly behind him and switched on the lights before looking at the Commander's desk with careful consideration.

"Well you will only get this opportunity once" Cassini remarked to himself as with a bit of trepidation he went around behind the Commander's desk and sat down in probably the most powerful chair in the country.

What surprised Cassini about the chair was that despite its power and that of its more usual occupant, it was still a standard Government issue cheap mass produced office chair with the optional arm rests that usually fell off after a few months of use thanks to the cheap and nasty build quality.

It was what that seat represented that was important really and Cassini knew he really shouldn't be sitting in it but it felt good.

Looking around the office, Cassini took in the painting of a steam locomotive at speed on one wall and various pictures further down, mostly of Security Service based subjects.

The desk itself was also obviously from the Civil Service standard catalogue and it was on to this that Cassini proceeded to extract the files from his briefcase and lay them out before reaching for the telephone to make his requested call.

"Sir Richard Crowthorne please" Cassini requested as soon as he was answered by the MI5 central switchboard "It's Commander Cassini calling from the Administrator General's office" he added with a slight swagger in his voice and a wry grin.

"Ah Mr Cassini" Sir Richard's voice answered a few moments later "How are you enjoying sitting in the big seat then?"

"I'm surprised how cheap it is" Cassini was forced to admit "One of the arms is falling off and it has got a terrible creak to it."

"Would I be right in thinking the proper owner of that chair requests the pleasure of my company?" Sir Richard enquired.

"How did you know that Sir?" Cassini asked.

"A combination of years of experience and friends in low places" Sir Richard explained "I'm already on my way to you, I'll be there in two minutes" he confirmed over his mobile telephone as he entered the reception area of New Scotland Yard and proceeded directly to the lifts "Have a couple of drinks ready, and make sure its the good stuff."

"Will do" Cassini confirmed "See you in a minute."

By the time that Cassini had got the glasses out, located the decent scotch and poured two drinks, Sir Richard was coming in through the office door.

"Ah" Sir Richard declared as he took the drink and joined Cassini at the Commander's desk "You must have been expecting me" he joked.

"Cheers" Cassini raised his glass in unison "Any further word on our friend Mr Havelock?"

"I did a bit of digging around before I left, called in a few favours and the like" Sir Richard confirmed "Trouble is, it would appear that this rather non-descript civil servant has kept largely off the radar and any polite enquiries of the personnel offices in the heart of Whitehall just get the proverbial diplomatic brush off."

"Sounds intriguing" the Commander commented as he entered the office and placed the 'Lewisham' station sign on the side table.

"That rings a bell" Sir Richard observed "Don't tell me you managed to get the old files released?"

"Oh yes" the Commander confirmed "Two bloody great vaults of stuff including all your old files as well."

"Good God" Sir Richard remarked "I was told it had all been destroyed."

"Are you enjoying the centre seat?" the Commander asked Cassini casually.

"Oh sorry Sir" Cassini got up from the Commander's seat "I was just getting comfortable."

"Well you can sit here again" the Commander remarked as he sat down behind his desk "Just not until it's your wife's picture is sitting on the desk."

"Speaking of which" Sir Richard enquired "Where is the missus?"

"She is checking all is well in Greater London before heading home" the Commander confirmed with a look across at Tracy's picture in the antique silver photograph frame on the desk.

"We've managed to identify Lord Perivale's friend" Cassini passed across his file to the Commander "His name is David Havelock, a second rate seldom seen hardly heard of Civil Servant with a lot of connections."

"Jesus Christ!" the Commander exclaimed as he opened the file to be confronted by the photograph of Havelock.

"No..." Sir Richard responded "David Havelock."

"However" the Commander explained his reaction "He has seemingly arisen from the dead. You remember the two men who were responsible for setting up the Lewisham job?"

"Oh yes" Sir Richard recalled a distant memory "Mr Smith and his trigger happy assistant with the mad colleagues Mr Jones. We never did find any of them."

"Meet Mr Jones" the Commander showed the picture of Havelock to them.

"Are you sure?" Sir Richard asked.

"I was face to face with the guy in the Depository and wiped the floor with him at poker two weeks beforehand" the Commander responded "I think we can safely say I am fairly well qualified on the subject."

"Could someone please explain to me what the hell is going on?" an understandably confused Cassini asked.

"Our friend Havelock here" the Commander explained "Is the missing link in the Lewisham Diamond Heist of March 1969 and wanted for three murders, although technically one of them was attempted but that is where it starts getting really complicated."

"Havelock has been Lord Perivale's bag man in the Treasury Department for the best part of thirty years at least" Sir Richard remarked "Perivale was the then junior minister responsible for the Government's acquisition of the diamonds so I am wondering if he is the mysterious Mr Smith."

"You take that to the Crown Prosecution Service and they will laugh it out of the office" the Commander remarked "At the moment all we have is a theory that happens to fit the facts, we need evidence."

"Two vaults of material for example?" Sir Richard suggested.

"Exactly" the Commander agreed "I need to borrow your best team of bodies to go up to Loughton with a very large van and bring back the material here to the yard."

"Can I use your telephone?" Sir Richard asked.

"By all means" the Commander moved aside to allow Sir Richard to make his call.

"Time for you to earn some overtime lad" the Commander informed Cassini.

"All helps to pay the mortgage" Cassini had to admit.

"I want you to put your best team on this no neck Havelock" the Commander explained "Tap his phones, watch him around the clock. I want you to get into his life, I want to know his work record, parking tickets, tax reports, the name of his goldfish, the works."

"Consider it done Sir" Cassini responded as he got to his feet "Thanks for the drink."

"Anytime" the Commander confirmed before Cassini departed, already on his mobile telephone.

"Iggy, it's your boss" Cassini was heard to call as he left "Wake everybody up, we got one of the Commander's specials on."

"Maybe one day he will sit in this chair for real" the Commander remarked as Sir Richard finished his call.

"Assuming my outfit don't head hunt him first" Sir Richard admitted "He's quite a talent."

"All organised?" the Commander asked.

"One of my best removals firms are on their way up there now" Sir Richard confirmed "Should have everything down here by the morning."

"Good" the Commander agreed "I was thinking..."

"Usually when you say that, the Home Secretary starts to have nightmares" Sir Richard wryly remarked.

"I think its time little Eddie Regent arose from the grave and gave Lord Perivale and anyone else he is working with a firmly overdue kick up the jacksi" the Commander announced.

"Interesting idea" Sir Richard was forced to admit "Just the one paper though, maybe the Standard for example?"

"The editor their was the guy who as their staff photographer took this" the Commander indicated the old copy of the Evening Standard with the picture of Eddie in front of the ceremonial plaque at Victoria Station "Got a prize for it too if I remember rightly."

"Well the thought of little Eddie Regent reappearing might be enough to scare Perivale into making a run for it" Sir Richard remarked "Between us and Cassini's boys, we've got him completely covered so with the right amount of provocation, it just might lead us to the diamonds."

"I'll give it some thought overnight" the Commander remarked "I need to go home, snuggle up to the wife and do some night time reading."

"What's on the reading list?" Sir Richard asked as they both got up and left the office, the Commander taking care to lock it as they left.

"Oh, just your original case notes" the Commander admitted "I fished them out of the depths of Loughton earlier."

"Blimey" Sir Richard remarked "Well I hope you can read my handwriting!"

"I think you will find that is twenty pounds you owe me" Lord Perivale declared as he potted the billiards winning shot in triumph and looked up at Havelock.

"Here you go Sir" Havelock responded reluctantly as he handed over his money before they both moved off to the sumptuously appointed bar of the private club where by way of mitigation, Perivale bought his associate a drink.

"To keep you up to speed" Perivale advised Havelock "I shall be seeing the Prime Minister tomorrow afternoon and handing in my resignation from the Government."

"It's time then" Havelock responded "So what is going to be the heartfelt reason for this sudden decision when the PM asks?"

"Oh I haven't decided yet" Perivale remarked casually "I expect it will either be to spend more time with the family or that old standby, health problems."

"And the Administrator General?" Havelock asked "It would appear that he is definitely poking around where he shouldn't be if my contacts are correct."

"He's just fishing" Perivale dismissed Havelock's concerns casually "He doesn't know anything and even if he managed to cut through all the red tape and dig up the old evidence, it'll take him so long to read it all that by the time he realises what really happened we will have long since retired to a nice exotic island with no extradition treaty, sitting back earning at least fifteen percent net interest."

"I'll have a couple of my hired thugs keep an eye on him just in case" Havelock remarked "He may just get lucky, you never can tell."

"I'm home!" the Commander called as he came in through the front door and hung his uniform tunic up on the coat hook in the hall way whereupon it promptly collapsed onto the floor.

Oddly there was no initial response so the Commander went through to the front room where he was understandably surprised to see Roger Field sitting on the sofa enjoying a glass of brandy.

"Hello darling, you've let yourself go a bit" the Commander remarked jokily.

"Hello old friend" Field responded "Tracy is in the kitchen, sorry to drop in on you unannounced."

"Oh that's all right" the Commander responded reassuringly "You're welcome anytime you know that."

"I wanted to let you know about the funeral arrangements for your father" Field reluctantly explained "I've been in contact with your colleagues from the Witness Protection Division and we have everything set for the day after tomorrow at three o'clock."

"Thanks for sorting that out" the Commander admitted "I wouldn't know where to start."

"Not to worry" Field reassured him as Tracy came in with two mugs of tea and sat on the sofa alongside her husband, holding him for comfort and support.

"Better get the best uniform out of mothballs then" the Commander remarked "I haven't worn the old black funeral one for years."

"It looks like your father is going to get a hell of a send off" Field remarked "He had a lot of friends who are all turning out for it."

"Should be interesting" Tracy remarked.

"It could wind be even more interesting by the end of tomorrow" the Commander admitted.

"You're up to something aren't you?" Field remarked.

"We've found all the original material related to the original investigation" the Commander explained "And I now know who our two friends Mr Smith and Mr Jones are."

"Bloody hell!" Field exclaimed "Who are they?"

"Ask me again the day after tomorrow" the Commander grinned knowingly "There may be one or two other surprises in store as well."

"Now am I intrigued" Field responded "I shall await tomorrow with interest."

"Let's put it this way, I can guarantee you will be surprised" the Commander confirmed.

"Well I'll leave you two too it then" Field remarked as he got up to leave.

"Thanks for sorting out the arrangements" the Commander remarked as they shook hands warmly in the hall way "I'll make sure there's a drink in it for you."

"Well to be honest" Field remarked "It more or less arranged itself, your father left some very well planned arrangements and instructions."

"Well thanks again anyway" the Commander confirmed.

"You're welcome" Field responded as he stepped out of the door "Goodnight."

"All right then" Tracy asked as the Commander rejoined her on the sofa and they kissed "What exactly are you up to?"

"Just my favourite pass time" the Commander wryly remarked.

"Model railways or putting the wind up prominently positioned politicians?" Tracy asked.

"The latter love" the Commander confirmed with a grin "That reminds me, did you bring those files home?" he asked.

"Oh yes" Tracy realised, she had almost forgot about them "Here you go" she confirmed as she reached over the side of sofa and picked up the briefcase before passing it to her husband.

"Lovely" the Commander responded as he opened the case and exacted the elderly faded card folder covered files.

"So what is that lot?" Tracy asked.

"This one" the Commander showed her the first fairly slim file with a dull green cover "is the details of my entry into the care of the Witness Protection Division, this second one" he passed across a somewhat fatter manila coloured file with the crest of the old Metropolitan Police proudly displayed on the front "is the full investigation into the shooting of one Eddie Regent, in other words me outside New Scotland Yard but it is this one that is the most interesting."

"Doesn't look it" Tracy remarked as she looked at the third file in the Commander's hand. In contrast to the others, it appeared to be a very non-descript file which had only a long since faded description written on its creased and battered front cover whilst inside it appeared to contain a rather muddled collection of type written notes from an era when everything was produced on old manual typewriters which often resulted in overtyped errors and some characters slightly out of line.

"Well if Sir Richard Crowthorne ever wants to write his memoirs, then he is going to need this" the Commander explained "It's his original case notes in all their detail."

"Briefing notes, initial case meeting, February 9th 1969" Tracy read from the first typewritten entry.

-o-o-o-o-

"Mr Crowthorne" McGregor called across the general office as he sailed through like the captain of the ship, which in this case was not far from the truth "Would you beg me the indulgence of the pleasure of your company in my office please."

"Yes Sir" the young Crowthorne responded eagerly, leaving the paperwork on his desk and immediately following his superior into his office, a typical 1960's style room with only a few neatly framed pictures on the walls raising it above the level of the mundane.

"Close the door" McGregor instructed "and have a seat."

Crowthorne duly did as instructed and sat nervously at the desk whilst the imposing figure of his superior officer seated opposite looked at him through the haze of his ever present cigar.

"How long have you been in this section?" McGregor enquired.

"Err eighteen months" Crowthorne confirmed.

"And in that time" McGregor consulted the file containing Crowthorne's personal and career details on the desk in front of him "Your performance has been exemplary so I think its time you took charge of your own assignment."

"Thank you sir" Crowthorne responded, not entirely sure where this was leading.

"I believe you are familiar with the east and south east of the capital?" McGregor asked.

"Grew up down that way" Crowthorne confirmed "I have developed a few contacts down that way."

"I know" McGregor remarked "I've been reading your regular reports."

"Is there something specific that you want me to do?" Crowthorne enquired.

"Seen today's papers?" McGregor passed across a copy of the Financial Times which was folded open at a specific story "In its infamous wisdom, the Treasury of our beloved Government is investing in over thirty million pounds worth of diamonds in an attempt to stabilise the economic future of the country."

"That's a lot of money" Crowthorne commented "Where do we fit into this?"

"It would appear that in order to maximise the potential positive publicity, the diamonds are to be put on public display at a depository in Lewisham of all places" McGregor explained "If that isn't a potential set up for a robbery, I don't know what is."

"Who's going to be on my team?" Crowthorne asked with clear anticipation of being put in charge of a major operation.

"Just you" McGregor responded with a wry grin "Let's just say that this little chat is off the record, only you, I and the Director General know about this."

"Oh..." Crowthorne was understandably surprised by this response.

"It's just that we want this kept strictly need to know" McGregor explained.

"Well that is our business" Crowthorne remarked.

"Indeed" McGregor agreed before continuing to explain the situation "When the Government suddenly takes one of these periodical plunges off the proverbial deep end, this service has always made it its business to keep an unofficial tab on what is going on, it would not look good however if the Government found us crawling all over their operation, hence the discretion."

“Do I keep any records of this operation?” Crowthorne asked as he hid a slight but understandable nervousness about this operation.

“Just one file, keep written notes of everything you do” McGregor instructed “That way if it does all go pear shaped, your backside is covered.”

“Right...” Crowthorne seemed understandably reluctant.

“Don't worry lad” McGregor reassured him “It's not that bad, you have the back up of myself and the Director General, not only that but there are a couple of assets in place down that way that will be most useful.”

McGregor reached over to the far side of his seemingly enormous desk and extracted a further set of files from an in tray which he passed across to Crowthorne.

“Edward Regent” McGregor announced as Crowthorne in front of him opened the first file “Freelance operative, does some work on the casual for us and other agencies plus he is connected up to the nines down that way. He has a reputation as the best wheel man in East London, if anyone is going to put a team together, I guarantee you he will be invited to the party.”

“Roger Field” Crowthorne read the name from the second file “I know this guy.”

“Personally?” McGregor asked.

“More by reputation than anything else” Crowthorne explained “Runs an outfit out of Caledonian Road, mostly legit, some a bit into the darker parts of the black economy, nice bloke apparently.”

“Works a fair bit with our Mr Regent as well” McGregor added “Old friends from way back, Field is Godfather to Regent's youngest son Eddie.”

“We have a file on a twelve year old?” Crowthorne asked with understandable amazement as he opened the third file.

“Eleven actually” McGregor corrected him “He turns twelve the day after tomorrow. We have had our eyes on him for a year or two now, what he doesn't know isn't worth knowing and he has an IQ of one hundred and forty nine.”

“Blimey” Crowthorne remarked “What's this about illegal gambling?”

“He's one of the best poker players I ever lost honest money to” McGregor slightly embarrassingly admitted “Whatever you do, don't sit at a poker table with him, he'll take you to the cleaners.”

“You're thinking of recruiting this lad into the service eventually at some point aren't you?” Crowthorne asked.

“Lets just say the thought had crossed my mind” McGregor was forced to agree “Anyway, the diamonds.”

“Where and when?” Crowthorne asked.

“They are being delivered by cargo plane from Switzerland into Heathrow Airport at ten o'clock in the morning the day after tomorrow with no pre publicity or announcements being made until they are in the country and already paid for, that way no one can complain that the Government is going to waste taxpayers money because they will have already spent it” McGregor explained before passing across a summary sheet of the details

“From there its two armoured vans, a bandwagon load of political publicity officers and press and a very heavy Police escort by road from Heathrow via Westminster for a photo opportunity outside in Downing Street and then on to Lewisham.”

“How do we know it won't be boosted in transit?” Crowthorne asked.

“Way too much security” McGregor informed him “However I do want you shadowing the diamonds from the moment they hit the ground until the point where they are safely in their display cases at Lewisham.”

“So by our reckoning” Crowthorne concluded “We are looking at some sort of snatch and grab operation based in and around the Depository itself?”

“That's the theory yes” McGregor agreed “With this amount of rocks, you don't just sidle up with a sawn off and a carrier bag and then walk away, if it is going to be lifted, it would require a whole team plus logistics, on site intelligence and planning.”

“Well it would probably take at least two weeks work to get that kind of operation together I would have thought” Crowthorne remarked “Are we sure someone is going to go to all that trouble.”

“Just trust me on this one” McGregor reassured Crowthorne “There is a lot more to this than it at first appears.”

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“So I take it no one ever knew MI5 were shadowing the entire thing?” Tracy asked as she took the Commander's empty tea mug and headed back into the kitchen to sort out refills for them both.

“Apparently not” the Commander admitted as he continued to look through Crowthorne's records “Ah here we are, the meeting between Crowthorne, McGregor, my father, oh and little old me. I remember this very clearly.”

“Why's that then?” Tracy enquired as she came back in with the biscuit tin and passed it to her husband.

“I won fifty quid off of Crowthorne” the Commander explained with a wry remark “He didn't take his boss' advice about not playing poker with me!”

-o-o-o-o-

“If I had to guess” Eddie remarked as he came into the saloon bar of the Black Horse and saw Richard Crowthorne talking with McGregor to his father by the bar “I’d say you were definitely MI5.”

“And you are?” Crowthorne asked, looking down at the somewhat short young lad who had just addressed him.

“Edward James Regent Junior” he responded “Eddie to my friends, it’s the tailoring in the standard issue suit and overcoat, slightly cheaper than that the boys from MI6 use but not beer stained and battered like the wooden tops from Special Branch.”

“I told you he was intelligent didn’t I?” McGregor remarked aside to Crowthorne with a chuckle.

“You play poker?” Eddie asked as he sat up on a bar stool with the men and produced a pack of cards that he proceeded to shuffle expertly.

“Why yes lad” Crowthorne admitted foolishly.

“Terrific” Eddie responded “Lemonade please” he called to the barman before turning back to Crowthorne “Right then, put your money on the table and we can talk about why Her Majesty’s Security Service has suddenly developed an interest in my father and me.”

“What makes you think we have an interest in you lad?” McGregor asked politely.

“The two rather second rate fresh off the training course goons you’ve had poking around in my general direction for the last two months for a starter” Eddie responded with a knowing smile “You know if you rotated your covert operations agents once every few days, it would make them a bit more difficult to spot.”

McGregor laughed with wry amusement, Crowthorne looked suitably embarrassed that the Service had been outwitted by a wise twelve year old boy and Regent looked on with some pride at his son, a young lad with a maturity and intelligence way beyond his physical years.

“Working on the theory that you two gentlemen didn’t drop by to discuss the weather or my health, such as it is” Regent remarked “What can I do for you?”

“You have heard about the diamond investment initiative the Government are putting together?” McGregor asked.

“It’s in all the papers” Regent confirmed “Admittedly not the Racing Post though.”

“Well some bright spark in Whitehall is going to make a big public spectacle of it all and put the jewels on display in Lewisham of all places” McGregor continued to explain.

“Do they actually want them nicked or something?” Eddie remarked as he dealt out another hand to Crowthorne who was definitely on a losing streak already.

“That's what we are thinking yes” McGregor confirmed, impressed by Eddie's quick conclusion that all of this didn't add up at all “This almost certainly means someone will be recruiting a team and providing the intelligence for a job at some point.”

“And you reckon whoever 'they' are will come knocking at my door seeking my, how shall I put it, talented services?” Regent asked.

“That's the theory” Crowthorne confirmed “Oh blast” he promptly added as Eddie beat him again.

“Have you spoken to Roger Field about any of this?” Regent asked.

“I've tipped him the nod that something is in the air” McGregor admitted “But you are our best placed asset and as usual you will be well paid for any help and assistance you can give us.”

“Well I'll see what I can do” Regent admitted “Assuming of course that anyone does plan on trying something, this isn't a domestic pay roll snatch you know.”

“We know” McGregor confirmed “And I can assure you something will be happening if our other sources are correct.”

“Who's your bag man on this operation?” Regent asked.

“You'll be liaising with young Mr Crowthorne here” McGregor indicated his subordinate alongside him at the bar who was reluctantly handing over fifty pounds in winnings to a smiling Eddie “Assuming he hasn't been declared bankrupt in the meantime that is” he added with a wry smile.

“All right” Regent agreed with a firm nod of the head “I'll be in touch.”

“We appreciate this” McGregor responded as he got up and shook hands with Regent “Be careful though.”

“Always” Regent confirmed.

“Mr Crowthorne” McGregor called “I'll be off now, it's your operation, try not to muck it up.”

“I'll try my best Sir” Crowthorne confirmed.

“Good day gentlemen, Eddie” McGregor announced before putting on his hat and departing the bar.

“So how many operations have you headed up prior to this little party then?” Eddie asked as he pocketed his winnings much to Crowthorne's chagrin.

“This is my first actually” he admitted as he finished off his drink and prepared to depart “See you around” he added before leaving.

Out in the street, Crowthorne looked around to see the roads near deserted, it only ever really got busy around that part of the city on market days and rush hour, it being neither at that time. As he began his walk to the nearby Caledonian Road Underground Station, he became aware he had company as small footsteps approached.

“Mr Crowthorne Sir” Eddie called earnestly as he joined him in his walk to the Station, “Can I have a word?”

“Something on your mind lad?” Crowthorne asked.

“In a word, yes” Eddie confirmed “I take it from your accent that you are from around these parts of town?”

“I grew up in Deptford” Crowthorne admitted “Haven't been back down this part of town though for about ten years though.”

“That's what I thought” Eddie remarked with concern “Look I appreciate you are the paid professional and I am just a slightly too street wise school kid but I don't think you realise quite how much things have changed around here in the last year or two.”

“How so?” Crowthorne asked as they approached the entrance to Caledonian Road Underground Station.

“There used to be a time, not that long ago here in the murkier parts of London's black economy when crime and business was done properly by gentlemen in smoke filled bars and around honest poker tables to a set of unwritten rules bar the odd rotten apple here and there” Eddie tried to explain.

“So what happened?” Crowthorne asked as they entered the station booking hall.

“Greed and determination” Eddie confirmed with regret “I see pretty much all the local players in this dark game around the east end and what I see worries me frankly.”

“You mean that some don't play by the rules anymore?” Crowthorne remarked as he accompanied Eddie to the ticket window where he paid his fare.

“There are too many trigger happy gun carriers in town nowadays” Eddie remarked “Take that shooting at that bank job in Epping last month for example, that would never have happened two years, maybe even just a year ago but now its money first, lives second and the thought of someone pulling off a job involving thirty plus million of diamonds in a very public place, well the potential consequences of what happens once the greed factor hits fills me with dread.”

“Well there is no denying that the usage and discharge of firearms is on the increase” Crowthorne admitted as he and Eddie entered a vacant lift car for the descent to

platform level “And as you say, all those diamonds could make even the most level headed crook go off the kilter and start shooting.”

“Exactly” Eddie confirmed as the lift reached the bottom and they exited out into the tiled tubular passageway before heading to the southbound Piccadilly Line platform “I have friends who are likely to be around when this job goes down, relatives of friends too and then there is my father and well, need I spell it out?”

“All right” Crowthorne agreed as they sat down on a bench whilst they waited on the near deserted platform for the next southbound Piccadilly Line service “I’ll make you a deal, if you help me and promise not to take me to the cleaners at poker, I’ll make sure your dad is all right, ok?”

“Deal” Eddie agreed as they shook hands before he picked up an abandoned Underground leaflet that was alongside them on the bench.

“Interesting” Eddie remarked as he read the leaflet about the forthcoming opening of the Phase 3 Victoria Line section.

“Something wrong?” Crowthorne asked.

“Oh nothing” Eddie dismissed the inquiry as he put the leaflet into his inside school uniform blazer pocket “I was just thinking aloud.”

“Where are you going anyway?” Crowthorne asked as the rumble of an approaching train began to filter from the north end tunnel portal and they got up.

“Need some fishplates and a new deck of cards” Eddie admitted with a smile as the train of 1959 type tube stock in its unpainted aluminium finish arrived in the platform amid the sound of rough electric motors and hissing brakes “I think I might check out how the Victoria Line construction works are coming along as well while I am at it.”

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“On no account should anyone ever let themselves play poker with this lad if they cherish the sanctity of their wallet” Tracy read from Eddie's official MI5 file with amusement.

“One of McGregor's little notes” the Commander admitted “Which reminds me, I do believe he still owes me a tenner.”

“Come to bed” Tracy suggested “It's late and I get the strangest feeling tomorrow is going to be a long day.”

“Good idea love” the Commander agreed “I can finish dining on these old memories in the morning.”

“Evening Standard News Desk” the operator answered “How may I direct your call?” she enquired.

“The editor, Jerry Lassiter please” the Commander requested as Tracy placed a mug of fresh coffee in his hand before returning to the kitchen to butter the toast for their rushed breakfast.

“Who shall I say is calling?” the operator asked.

The Commander had to stop and think for a brief moment as technically there were three possible identities he could use, all of which were relevant to the matter he wished to discuss with Lassiter the editor “Tell him it's the Regional Administrator General of the Security & Police Service please” he finally responded.

“Commander” the voice of the Lassiter came through a few moments later “This is a rather early pleasure, Home Secretary been caught with his hands in someone’s wallet again?” he joked.

“Not this time Jerry” the Commander admitted with a laugh “He's got enough on his plate at the moment without me adding to them, no I wanted to talk to you about something I would like printed in your final edition tonight.”

“Sounds interesting” Lassiter remarked “Must mean someone is in deep trouble then.”

“Oh I expect so” the Commander responded “Listen, could you possibly come and meet me about eleven o'clock and bring your camera?”

“Your office?” Lassiter assumed.

“Err no actually” the Commander admitted “Victoria Underground Station, the newer ticket hall.”

“Right” Lassiter confirmed with a puzzled expression as he looked across at one of the photographs on his office wall, that being his prize winning shot of Eddie Regent looking at the plaque which was located in the exact same place that the Commander wanted him to meet. Little did he know that this was no coincidence by any stretch of the imagination.

“Oh” the Commander added “I'd appreciate it if you kept schtum on this” he requested “I don't want those two MI5 officers on your staff blabbering the wrong thing in the wrong place.”

“Mum's the word Commander” Lassiter confirmed “I'll see you later.”

“Cheers mate” the Commander responded before hanging up.

“Are you taking the tube today love?” Tracy asked as she came into the front room, buttoning up her uniform tunic as she joined him and they kissed.

“That's the plan my dear” the Commander confirmed as he picked up the various old files and placed them carefully into his briefcase.

“I'll have to love you and leave you then darling” Tracy responded with regret “Departmental Heads Weekly Briefing at eight o'clock and it's my turn to make the tea.

“Bye” the Commander kissed Tracy again before she left “I love you.”

“And then some” Tracy agreed with a bright smile and a wink “See you later...” whereupon she grabbed her motorcycle helmet from the hall table and left.

A couple of minutes later the Commander watched from their balcony to see Tracy heading away across Vauxhall Bridge on her Security Service motorbike before himself putting on his uniform tunic and leaving.

It was only a few minutes walk to the entrance to Vauxhall Underground Station which was still fairly quiet as the main influx of morning commuters had yet to reach the city.

Having passed through the ticket barriers and proceeded down the escalators to the platform level, the Commander was able to immediately board a northbound Victoria Line service which was arriving into the platform at the same time as he did.

Once he had boarded the leading car of the train, the Commander took a seat and, being unable to find any abandoned newspapers to read, took out Crowthorne's notes file from his briefcase and continued to read from where he had left off the previous night, commencing with the report on the arrival of the diamonds themselves.

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"Here we go" Crowthorne commented to himself as he observed from the Heathrow Airport main customs building, a large four engine propeller driven cargo aircraft unloading onto a tightly sealed off area of the apron.

In the centre of a hive of activity, all being carefully observed by a wall of armed Police in addition to representatives from various agencies and interested parties, two heavily armoured Security vans were being carefully loaded with their precious cargo, all sealed inside secure wooden crates which could have contained tins of beans for all anyone knew.

It took twenty minutes to load all the crates methodically and securely, their being thirty in all, fifteen being loaded into each van before four armed guards got into each vehicle and with an accompaniment of numerous Police escort vehicles, the valuable convoy moved off.

Crowthorne followed discreetly, observing from his fairly anonymous looking grey Rover car as the convoy proceeded out of the airport and onto the main road into the city.

Thanks to the Police escort and some careful planning, the convoy's journey into the heart of London was swift and uneventful, only a momentary problem with one of the vans at one point which passed by without any major concern.

Downing Street had been especially sealed off by the Police for the formal press announcement at which the Government's investment would be publicly unveiled.

Crowthorne joined the gathered members of the press who were waiting opposite number eleven Downing Street having been carefully searched and vetted before being permitted inside the security cordon.

As the convoy approached the entrance to Downing Street, some of the escorting Police vehicles parked up to form a perimeter around the junction whilst four motorbikes escorted the vans themselves into the street where they stopped in front of numbers ten and eleven Downing Street.

At that moment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer accompanied by Perivale who had masterminded this project, came out of number eleven and went over to the assembled members of the press.

"Good morning" the Chancellor announced "Today marks the beginning of a new prosperous investment by the Government for the benefit of all in this country."

The press including Crowthorne looked on in anticipation of seeing the diamonds, not really interested in the Chancellor's usual blustering speech.

"By investing in these diamonds....." the Chancellor continued as behind him, one of the van's back doors was opened and a small display case containing three of the large diamonds was brought out and presented to the press for viewing.

The Chancellor continued to drone on, revelling in the glow of some positive publicity for once but by now everyone's attention was firmly fixed on the giant diamonds which were being shown a short distance away, the sunlight catching off the facets and reflecting all around.

Crowthorne watched carefully everything that was going on, noting especially the rather pensive look being displayed by Perivale who was distinctively more nervous all the time that any of the diamonds were exposed to the outside world.

With the press briefing coming to an end, the diamonds being shown were returned to the safety of their security van before the doors were firmly and securely closed again.

The Chancellor headed back inside number eleven, clearly happy that all was going well whilst Perivale joined one of the escort cars as the convoy prepared to reform and move out.

Crowthorne joined the members of the press in a specially provided minibus that was scheduled to follow the convoy to its destination.

Once everyone was ready, the two security vans swept at high speed out of Downing Street where their heavy and prominent Police escort resumed for a high speed as well as high profile journey to its destination.

There was quite a crowd awaiting the arrival of the convoy as it swept into Lewisham, some there out of curiosity whilst others did not have a huge amount of choice as many of the local roads were jammed due to key streets being closed off by the Police.

Despite the anticipatory crowds, there was not really all that much to see as amid the wail of sirens and bells, the convoy came up Lewisham High Street before arriving outside the Diamond Depository where the road and surrounding environs had been carefully and comprehensively sealed off to allow the safe and secure unloading of the precious cargo.

Crowthorne joined the press as from behind a tape barrier, they observed the crates being unloaded under the careful supervision of Perivale, and the taken inside the building.

It took some ten minutes to speedily unload the vehicles and secure the diamonds inside within the supposedly secure confines of the vaults.

Crowthorne continued to discreetly observe proceedings both outside the Depository as well as what he could see of the interior through the open doorway where he could make out Perivale beaming like a Cheshire cat as he oversaw operations.

It was a further fifteen minutes before the press were allowed inside the depository where the big show diamonds had been put inside a glass display cabinet with a guard standing alongside.

As he walked around with the press, Crowthorne noted that Perivale was talking discreetly to another man, a gentleman who at that time was unknown to him but who would later be identified as Havelock.

The leaflet which was advertising the opening of the display exhibit was being handed out and as Crowthorne received his copy, he read it with some alarm at seeing just how much potentially useful information to anyone planning a heist had been provided.

"Yee gods" Crowthorne commented to himself as he looked at the leaflet and then looked at the diamonds before leaving the Depository, being allowed out through the Police cordon still in place.

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The Commander finished reading the report and returned it to his briefcase with a puzzled look of thought as it occurred to him that between the arrival of the diamonds in the country and their theft from the depository at Lewisham, only a few large show jewels had been seen in public and even then only briefly.

With this thought in mind, the Commander alighted from the train at Victoria and changed via the sub surface passageways and a short set of escalators to the District and Circle Line eastbound platform where straight away he boarded a Circle Line train for the short journey, one stop to St James' Park.

As he left the station, the Commander noted the presence of someone watching his movements as he proceeded up the road and into the main entrance of New Scotland Yard.

"Good morning Sir" the receptionist greeted the Commander as he approached her desk.

"Morning" the Commander responded, clearly still troubled by various thoughts "Could you tell me if Commander Henderson of the Antiquities Squad is in yet."

"I saw him come in about ten minutes ago" the Receptionist confirmed.

"Thanks" the Commander replied and headed for the lifts.

The sixth floor, being home to the Antiquities and Art Crime Division, seemed to have a far more upmarket ambience than the rest of the building with fine antiquities and paintings seemingly everywhere, indeed the Commander found himself having to squeeze past a piano in the hallway to get to their main office.

"Morning Mike" the Commander called as he knocked on the office door where he found Henderson lurking in amongst several crates of material that were dominating his office.

"Oh morning Sir" Henderson responded as he popped his head up "Just had a warehouse full of stolen silverware raided overnight" he explained the chaos "Trouble is, we are running out of space to put it all."

"Nice coffee pot" the Commander looked at one of the items in the top of one of the crates.

"Seventeenth century we reckon" Henderson confirmed "Gawd knows what we are going to do with all this lot though, anyway, we don't usually see you in this neck of the woods Sir."

"I wanted a moment with your expertise" the Commander explained "How good are you with diamonds?"

"I was practically born in Hatton Garden" Henderson proudly responded "Will that suffice Sir?"

"Indeed it will" the Commander agreed as he reached into his uniform tunic pocket and produced a small velvet bag which he passed across "What do you make of this?"

"Wow" Henderson exclaimed as he opened the bag and extracted the large diamond from within "That's a large chunk of rock!"

“For the past thirty odd years” the Commander explained “the theory is that is the only diamond ever recovered from the Lewisham Diamond Depository job in 1969.”

“Oh I remember that” Henderson remarked as he took out an eyepiece magnifying glass and examined the diamond closely “Thirty odd million wasn't it?”

“Depending on which version you read, about that” the Commander confirmed.

“Pity this one is worth only a fiver then” Henderson commented “It's a phoney.”

“I had this nasty feeling you were going to say that” the Commander responded “Paste?”

“Cut glass crystal” Henderson confirmed as he handed back the jewel “Not a bad bit of work actually, would have fooled anyone unless they took a really close look at it and knew what they were looking for.”

“Interesting” the Commander commented.

“I do hope this hasn't mucked up your case” Henderson remarked.

“On the contrary my friend” the Commander confirmed with a knowing smile “It's exactly the break I was looking for, thanks.”

“Anytime Sir” Henderson confirmed as the Commander departed, once again having to squeeze his way past the various antiquities to get back to the lifts.

A few minutes later he arrived in the investigation room that Cassini had requisitioned as requested. Upon entering he was surprised by the sight of the desks piled high with old files which were being progressively read and catalogued by a team that Sir Richard had put together from both his own and Security Department staff and officers.

“Morning everyone” the Commander declared “Found anything interesting?”

“Most of the files from the Treasury Department in this lot are little more than carefully disguised meaningless waffle” Sir Richard responded from one desk at which he had been reading through files for most of the night since his men had delivered the material at two in the morning from the secure vaults at Loughton.

“Mr Cassini” the Commander called around whereupon Cassini's head popped up from behind a crate.

“Yes Sir, good morning” he responded.

“Oh good, you're here as well” the Commander remarked “If you two could join me in my office?”

“Be right there Sir” Cassini confirmed whilst Sir Richard gave a thumbs up from behind a file box.

The Commander duly left the investigation room and headed upstairs to the top floor, pausing on his way to look in Tracy's office only to find she wasn't there, evidently her Departmental Heads meeting was overrunning which was nothing at all unusual.

Instead he continued to his own office where he found his Personal Assistant looking a bit nervous in the outer office.

“Something wrong?” the Commander asked.

“You've had a delivery” the Personal Assistant confirmed with a nervous smile.

“Intriguing....” the Commander remarked as he opened his office door and switched on the light.

“Oh ruddy Nora!” the Commander was heard to declare whereupon the Personal Assistant looked up.

“I told you Sir....” she responded.

“Why the hell did they stick all this stuff in here?” the Commander asked as he surveyed the crates of items, mostly his possessions from his school days that had been retrieved from the vaults at Loughton.

“Well apparently the room downstairs is full to the ceiling with the case files” the Personal Assistant explained as she joined the Commander in surveying the pile in the centre of the Commander's office floor “The Antiquities Squad had a raid last night which has taken up pretty much every other storage space in the entire building so there wasn't much choice I am afraid.”

“Put the kettle on dear” the Commander requested “I'll see if I can shift this lot into the corner.”

“Right Sir” the Personal Assistant agreed and left the office.

The Commander took a few moments to look through the boxes as he moved them into the far corner of the office out of the way and from them extracted a framed photograph of himself, his brother and sister which had been taken by his father when he was eleven on the platform at Lewisham Station, beneath one of the totem style signs, one of which now sat on the Commander's office wall nearby.

Once the boxes were out of the way, the Commander put the framed picture on the side table immediately beneath the Lewisham station sign which seemed an appropriate space for it before sitting down behind his desk and rummaging around in the desk drawer until he had successfully located his tin of biscuits.

At that moment there was a polite knock at the door and the Personal Assistant came in with a tray of three teas which she placed on the desk. She was duly followed in by Cassini and Sir Richard.

“Thanks” the Commander responded whereupon the Personal Assistant left them to it.

“Nice sign” Sir Richard remarked as he took a sip of his tea and noticed the station sign on the wall.

“Cost me five shillings did that” the Commander remarked as he too took his tea and unceremoniously dunked a biscuit in it “Rather glad to get it back, those old type signs go for silly money nowadays.”

“What did you think of my old ramblings?” Sir Richard asked, referring to his old case notes.

“Well I only got as far as the diamond delivery” the Commander admitted “However one thing did occur to me.”

“And that would be?” Sir Richard asked.

“Only twice were any of the diamonds ever in public view from the moment they touched down at Heathrow until the point when they were stolen” the Commander commented “Once was during the brief press launch in Downing Street and then when they were on display in the case at the Depository, correct?”

“Correct” Sir Richard agreed as he too took a biscuit from the tin on the desk and dunked it.

“And on both occasions, the only diamonds actually seen were the small number of really big show diamonds” the Commander continued which includes this one” he extracted the velvet bag from his uniform tunic pocket again and passed it across to Cassini who opened it and looked inside with an impressed expression.

“Wow” Cassini remarked as he took out the diamond and looked at it in his hand.

“Don't get too excited lad” the Commander warned him “It's a fake.”

“What!” Sir Richard almost choked on his biscuit.

“False, fake, phoney, straight banana” the Commander reiterated “Which in my book says that the rest of the display diamonds were probably duff as well.”

“Well that puts a fresh outlook on things” Sir Richard remarked as Cassini passed him the now fake diamond for his inspection.

“Here's my theory” the Commander continued “What if those diamonds never were in the depository in the first place and the entire heist was staged to cover up that fact?”

“We know they existed” Sir Richard responded “They were checked and double checked by the Swiss authorities before leaving Geneva.”

“I think they were intercepted somewhere between leaving the vaults at Geneva and their arrival at Downing Street” the Commander explained “Then the heist was staged by Mr Smith and Mr Jones to cover their disappearance and of course the UK Government cleaned up on the insurance.”

“The whole thing was an insurance scam” Cassini concluded having decided to give up on the diet he was supposed to be on and join in the biscuit eating.

“Well like I said” the Commander admitted “It’s a theory but it does happen to fit the facts.”

“Bloody hell” Sir Richard remarked.

“Perivale and Havelock?” Cassini inquired “Could they be sitting on them waiting for the right time to cash in their retirement nest egg?”

“That would be my best guess yes” the Commander agreed “Trouble is unless we actually catch them with the diamonds in their hands, we cannot prove anything.”

“Well most of the case files we have downstairs are next to useless” Sir Richard remarked “Most of the evidence was at best circumstantial and at worst made up.”

“The Treasury and the press hype fuelled public wanted a quick result and there was a nice convenient team of stool pigeons just waiting to be jailed” the Commander responded “Nice quick spectacular show trial, the Government looks good in the papers and in the chaos, no one thinks to question why the diamonds were never recovered.”

“These two geezers” Cassini commented “Perivale and Havelock, they think they have got away with it don’t they?” he asked.

“Indeed” the Commander confirmed “As far as they are concerned, the only remaining witness died two days ago.”

“So what we need is something to make them run and hide, go for the diamonds and lead us right to them?” Sir Richard asked.

“Exactly what I had in mind” the Commander agreed “Tell me gentlemen, do you have both subjects under close surveillance?”

“Tight as a drum” Cassini confirmed “I have had a couple of my guys go through this Havelock guy’s life with a fine tooth comb and beyond the official Civil Service biography, there is very little on him, almost as though he has had his life story carefully written for him.”

The telephone on the Commander’s desk rang at that point, “Would you excuse me a moment” the Commander requested as he reached across to answer it.

After a few moments during which someone relayed an important message, the Commander's expression changed noticeably and as soon as he had hung up he turned to Cassini.

“Get that telly on will you please” the Commander indicated the large widescreen television on the wall nearby “BBC News 24 if you can.”

“Yes Sir” Cassini responded as he got up and switched on the television as requested.

“A reminder of the breaking news item as the time approaches nine o'clock” the news presenter on BBC News 24 announced, her voice echoing around the office “Downing Street has just announced that Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Lord Perivale has announced his retirement with almost immediate effect from the Government, citing health problems and the wish to spend more time with his family.”

“Looks like he's flying the coop” Sir Richard remarked “Probably thinks it's safe now to go and collect his retirement nest egg.”

“Put a couple of your Political Services Branch boys on him” the Commander suggested.

“He'll notice them won't he?” Cassini remarked with a bit of concern.

“Yes he will” the Commander confirmed with a knowing smile.

“That'll more than likely make him somewhat nervous I would have thought” Sir Richard added.

“I want him to be nervous” the Commander explained “Very nervous indeed, for when scumbags get nervous, they do silly things and make mistakes and I want to be on top of him like a ton of bricks when he does.”

“And our close surveillance teams?” Cassini asked

“Keep them running around the clock” the Commander confirmed “If all goes according to plan, as soon as the final edition of the Evening Standard hits the streets at about four o'clock this afternoon, I expect we will see our two friends heading for the proverbial hills and we are going to be right there with them.”

“Shall we meet up again at three thirty then?” Sir Richard suggested, still unaware of what it was the Commander was planning but knowing full well it was going to be spectacular.

“Indeed” the Commander confirmed “I have a feeling that this is going to be a very interesting day.”

"Here have you heard Maam" the duty supervisor in the Control Room called as Tracy came in to see what was going on generally in and around the city "Some high ranking Government Minister has resigned."

"That's unusual" Tracy remarked as she looked through the incident logs "Ministers usually wait until four o'clock in the afternoon before announcing they are quitting."

"He could have been fired" the supervisor commented.

"Doubtful" Tracy confirmed "Firings from the Government are usually announced at about half five, that way there's more chance of it being buried beneath bad news on the six o'clock bulletins."

"Speaking of bad news" the supervisor remarked as he monitored a call coming in to one of the despatch officers in the room "Sounds like there's trouble brewing in Parliament Square."

"Let's have a listen" Tracy responded as she picked up a headset and plugged it in.

For about a minute, Tracy listened in to the reports of an impromptu anti war protest brewing in Parliament Square, not an unusual event these days but something that always caused problems for the authorities.

"All right then" Tracy declared "rustle up whatever resources and bodies you can find and get them down there, I'll head down and try and organise things on the ground."

Two minutes later, Tracy was outside New Scotland Yard on her motorbike, preparing to head out with three van loads of officers she had managed to collate together.

As she left with the other vehicles following closely behind, she was unaware of a figure watching from the upper floor of a nearby overlooking building who then spoke to an unknown person through a mobile telephone as Tracy disappeared from sight.

"Who writes this rubbish?" the Commander asked himself as he read the draft press briefing for a new initiative on tackling racism and gun crime.

"By developing cross curricular links with the intermixed diversified elements within the broader community structure..." the Commander read before giving up and reaching for the telephone.

"Press Office please" he requested of the central switchboard as he continued to leaf through the draft publication, his eyes easily alighting on further examples of political double talk.

"Gemma?" the Commander asked once he had been answered by the head of the press office located downstairs "I've just been reading this proposed policy your office sent up."

"Is there a problem Sir?" Gemma enquired, the tone in her voice indicating she was fearing the worst.

"You bet there is" the Commander responded indignantly "This has to rank as one of the most unintelligible bits of twaddle I have ever read!"

"That bad?" Gemma asked.

"I have to read this rubbish at a press briefing next week" the Commander explained "Even if I manage to make it through the first paragraph without either I or my audience collapsing into rolls of laughter, it's quite clearly a front runner for most ludicrous cobbles ever committed to paper!"

"Sorry Sir" Gemma responded most apologetically "That was written by one of our newer people, he's got a degree in public and political speech writing and I think he got a bit carried away."

"A bit?" the Commander retorted "I tell you what, get me a rewritten version that resembles plain English and then send it up."

"Will do Sir."

With the call over, the Commander looked around the office with a depressed sigh as his plan to use the next half hour going through that policy document was now vacant so he had to move on to a fresh task.

He picked up the pile of memos from his in tray, he being one of the very few people now in the service who still received paper memorandums as his ability with e-mail was somewhat limited.

"Your medical check up is now four months overdue" the Commander read from the first piece of paper "And what of it?" he asked as he dispensed the memo into the adjacent shredder.

"Sentencing policy review recommendations" he read from the next memo which the ornate headed paper told him without even checking that this was yet another initiative from the Home Secretary. The Commander noted with some amusement that the usual 'comments invited' section had been amended by a wag at the Home Office to 'insert witty comment here'.

"Try keeping them in jail instead of losing them all the time would be of help" the Commander remarked as he put that one to the side to respond to later.

The next memo was a more general one from the weapons and firearms office reminding all officers that they were required to put in half an hour per week on the gun range, something the Commander had to admit to himself that had got overlooked partially because his aim without his reading glasses was pretty poor but mostly because he hated guns, this despite the fact they were carried as standard by every officer in the service.

The telephone on the desk rang at that point and the Commander, glad of the distraction, put down the paperwork and reached across the desk to answer it.

"Hello" he called.

"Any chance of a quiet word in your shell like?" Sir Richard discreetly requested.

"Well according to one of the thousand memos on my desk" the Commander responded "Apparently I am overdue my weekly half hour practice on the firing range, meet me in the basement in ten minutes shall we say?"

"Ten minutes it is then" Sir Richard agreed.

"It is merely our task to ensure everyone's safety whilst maintaining people's right to free speech" Tracy confirmed to a BBC reporter as the officers under her command behind her tried to keep the protestors confined to the grassy area of Parliament Square and at the same time trying to keep the busy traffic running.

"But surely confining the protestors like this" the reporter responded "Is merely suppressing them?"

"They would have plenty to protest about if we allowed them to spill out into the street only for them to promptly get run over wouldn't they?" Tracy responded "If you will excuse me?"

Leaving the reporter to duck the protesting mob and head for safety, Tracy made her own way back to the front of the cordon of officers that were just managing to keep them in check.

"Don't this lot ever go home?" Tracy remarked casually but just then the protestors started getting more heated and hurling insults as some people came out of the Houses of Parliament main gate who they actually recognised as being members of the Government.

"Blood on your hands minister!" one protestor shouted loudly right by Tracy's ear.

"Oh stick a sock in it will you?" she remarked "Anyway he's only a treasury minister, not anyone important."

"Oh sorry" the protestor calmed down but Tracy kept her eye firmly on the politician in question for it was none other than Lord Perivale with two junior ministers from the Treasury who were leaving the Houses of Parliament and walking back to their offices in Whitehall.

Not far behind them as the three ministers crossed the road were two casually dressed individuals that Tracy instantly recognised as being part of Cassini's undercover

surveillance division and indeed right behind them was Cassini himself overseeing the continued observation of Perivale.

“Nice morning for it” Tracy remarked to Cassini as they met on the opposite pavement “How's it going?”

“Perivale is keeping to a fairly set routine” Cassini confirmed “Mostly tying up political loose ends before his so called retirement takes effect.”

“Oh so it is Perivale who has announced his retirement then?” Tracy responded.

“I am surprised you haven't heard Maam” Cassini remarked “He saw the Prime Minister first thing this morning and announced he was retiring from the Government with immediate effect, health grounds or something.”

“I've been stuck here with this lot most of the morning” Tracy admitted “What about the other guy?”

“Havelock?” Cassini responded “He gave us the slip earlier in that archaic rabbit warren they call Parliament” he nodded back to the Houses of Parliament right behind them “Apparently Sir Richard has managed to dig some dirt up on him though so he won't be going far.”

“Oh damm it!” Tracy remarked as she looked back behind her to see the protestors surge forward as the Prime Minister's car emerged out into the street “I best get back to these loons.”

“Good luck” Cassini remarked before heading off.

Six shots in rapid succession impacted into the paper target as the Commander fired the entire contents of his old six shot revolver in the firing range situated in the basement of New Scotland Yard before he put his gun down and squinted to see how well he had done.

“You're improving” Sir Richard remarked as he joined the Commander and looked with him at the target in the distance, noting that all six shots had indeed managed to hit the target for a change.

“Still prefer the old fashioned methods though” the Commander admitted as he reloaded his gun for a second attempt.

“What, creep up behind and whack them over the head with a baseball bat?” Sir Richard enquired as he took out his own gun and positioned himself in the adjacent firing range lane.

“Well it worked didn't it?” the Commander retorted as he duly took aim and fired six more shots with Sir Richard alongside firing four from his semi-automatic pistol.

“Providing whoever it was didn't see you creeping up behind them first” Sir Richard was forced to admit “Me I always prefer Mr Beretta here.”

“Yeah well” the Commander responded as he reloaded again “I'll settle for a quiet chat with Mr Smith and Mr Wesson, far more civilised.”

“You must be the only officer left in the service still using one of those old antiques” Sir Richard remarked before emptying his weapon into his target, leaving a nice neat well centred set of holes in the paper.

“Tracy did try and persuade me to upgrade to something a little more modern” the Commander admitted “She even tried hiding this one once, she seems to have this strange feeling that I am going to get shot one day.”

“Wouldn't be the first time” Sir Richard admitted.

“I'll stick with my antique thanks” the Commander responded “I think we ignore traditional old fashioned things at our peril, don't you?”

“A prophetic statement if ever I heard one” Sir Richard responded “Which brings me onto my next subject, when were you going to tell me you were about to reveal that little Eddie Regent was going to arise from the grave?”

“How the hell do you know about that?” the Commander asked as he fired off two more shots.

“I'm acting head of the Intelligence Service” Sir Richard responded by way of explanation “I wouldn't be much good at my job if I didn't find these things out.”

“Anyone else know?” the Commander asked.

“I've kept it under a container load of hats” Sir Richard confirmed “I take it you are serious about this then?”

“It's time I feel that Eddie came back and gave those who shot him a very firm and long overdue kick up the arse” the Commander responded with determination as he aggressively fired off the last four shots in his gun.

“Then perhaps you had better have a read of this” Sir Richard produced an intelligence report from his inside coat pocket and passed it across “I called in a lot of favours and had two of my best officers sniff around in some very unsavoury parts for this.”

“What is it?” the Commander asked after putting his gun down and taking the report.

“That there probably ranks as one of the most heavily buried profile and evaluation reports I have ever seen” Sir Richard admitted “and its all about our friend Mr Havelock.”

“Possible physiological disorder” the Commander read from the report “Kicked out of the army after three months after an incident in which he fired an unguarded weapon in a public place.”

“He likes to get his gun off and then some” Sir Richard confirmed “but it gets better.”

“Well I can't see any way it could get any worse” the Commander admitted.

“You remember the guy you identified from both the poker game meeting and in the Depository as Mr Smith?” Sir Richard asked.

“I'm not likely to forget him” the Commander admitted “Assuming we are talking about the same chap, he is Havelock.”

“Well when you were shot outside New Scotland Yard, the guy who put those two bullets in you then fled because Forrester and his boys appeared like the cavalry” Sir Richard continued to explain “Anyway, he dropped his gun as he was clambering back into his car and when the ballistics were checked, that gun was shown to have been the same one that was used to shoot the second security guard at the Depository four hours earlier.”

“I remember the gun thing in the trial reports” the Commander recalled “They never identified the prints though did they?”

“Not until about an hour ago” Sir Richard handed across a fresh report from his own Department “I had my guys cross reference the original prints lifted from the weapon and the getaway car with the one on Havelock's well hidden military record and guess what?”

“Please tell me they match” the Commander asked.

“Your wish is my command” Sir Richard confirmed with a knowing grin “Havelock is the man responsible for going nuts in the Depository, the slaying of two security guards, the attempted murder or manslaughter of half a dozen men, women and children in the Depository and of course the shooting of the nation's hero, little Eddie Regent in Broadway outside New Scotland Yard at 16.04 on Friday 7th March 1969.”

“I think its time this Mr Havelock and I met once more” the Commander remarked “More formally and preferably while he is unarmed of course.”

“That may be a bit tricky” Sir Richard responded with some reluctance.

“Don't tell me you've lost him?” the Commander asked.

“He gave my boys the slip shortly after half nine” Sir Richard admitted “and then he managed to lose Cassini's lads about an hour later.”

“At four o'clock this afternoon” the Commander responded “Eddie Regent will return from the grave and at that point Perivale is going to panic and run straight to the

diamonds and when that happens he will use Havelock and his two dumb sidekicks to create an unpleasant diversion.”

“It sure looks that way” Sir Richard agreed.

“When that happens” the Commander reiterated “I want the face and description of Havelock and his two friends put on every television and newspaper in the country, then when he is found, every single armed officer I can find will surround him, arrest him and bring his sorry backside to me, then he and I are going to have a little chat.”

“You know” Sir Richard remarked “That could be one conversation that I would like to hear.”

“Everybody is welcome” the Commander confirmed with a smile before looking at his watch and realising it was now ten minutes to eleven and he had an appointment elsewhere soon “If you will excuse me, I have some wheels to set in motion.”

“Good luck” Sir Richard called after the Commander as he left “You're going to need it.”

As Tracy successfully managed to get the last of the protestors back behind the reinforced barriers, she noticed out of the corner of her eye two men observing her discreetly from the pavement on the corner of Parliament Square and Parliament Street. She didn't let on that she had seen them though, instead she continued with the operation to calm down the protestors who had at one point threatened to get seriously out of control when the Prime Minister had passed a few minutes earlier.

“Right!” Tracy called over a megaphone to the protestors who upon hearing her voice immediately showed respect and fell silent “I've nothing against free and fair protest but be aware that the next muppet who makes a break for it will win themselves a non-luxury dinner for one at Her Majesty's pleasure, and I do warn you now the catering ain't exactly five star restaurant quality.”

With the protestors now firmly under control, Tracy stepped back and crossed the road to the Houses of Parliament side by the main gates. From there she observed the two men discreetly move down their part of the street to maintain their watch on her which merely confirmed her suspicions.

“Lima Mike One to Control” she called discreetly into her radio “Can you patch me through to Commander Cassini?”

“Commander Cassini” came the response “Something on your mind Maam?” he asked.

“Have you or Sir Richard got a couple of goons watching me by any chance?” Tracy enquired.

“Not any of mine” Cassini confirmed “and all of Sir Richard's lot are working on Perivale, why?”

“There's two bomber jacketed blokes with dodgy tache's standing on the east side of Parliament Square and they are definitely watching me” Tracy explained

“Green jacket I.C.1 male, about six foot two and dark blue jacket I.C.3 male about five foot ten by any chance?” Cassini asked over the radio.

“Spot on” Tracy responded with some surprise “How did you know that?” she asked.

“Because I am standing just outside Westminster tube station and I can see them from here” Cassini confirmed “Definitely not ours and I doubt they are in any way friendly.”

“I'm going to be heading over to Hyde Park Corner in a minute to sort out the other part of this protest” Tracy remarked “Could you spare anyone to watch these two and see if they try and keep up?”

“Yes Maam” Cassini confirmed “I can spare me!”

“Right, thanks” Tracy responded whereupon she went over to her Security Service patrol motorbike and put on her helmet before climbing on it and starting the engine.

Cassini moved down the street a bit so that he could see both the two men and Tracy and from his new position he duly observed the men hail a taxi as soon as they realised their quarry was about to leave.

Tracy duly departed, heading off around Parliament Square and away whilst behind her, the taxi that had just collected the two men followed fairly closely behind. Cassini nodded across the road to one of his own officers in an off duty cab parked across the street who came quickly across in his vehicle and picked him up before setting off in the same direction.

“Lima Mike One from Eagle One” Cassini called to Tracy over the radio “You have two uninvited guests in a black cab one hundred yards behind you” he confirmed.

Victoria Underground Station is by far one of the busiest on the entire Underground network and as was usually the case, the booking hall was teeming with travellers, lost tourists and pretty much everyone else as the Commander descended the steps of the Wilton Road entrance and arrived amid the crowds.

He looked around at the masses of people as they filed their way around the place, either going through the ticket barriers that led to the Victoria Line escalators or queuing in long lines around the ticket machines nearby. Some more canny travellers though passed through this chaos and headed along the connecting corridor to the older ticket hall under Terminus Place and used the back entrance to the Victoria Line which was alongside the District and Circle Line entrance.

The Commander however was, unusually not here to catch a train or buy a ticket, his interest instead was in something which was probably passed completely unnoticed by the vast majority of people who passed through the ticket hall every day, that being the black marble engraved commissioning plaque which read:

THIS STONE WAS UNVEILED BY
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH
ON THE OPENING OF
THE VICTORIA LINE
ON 7 MARCH 1969

When the Commander had first seen it, it was mounted on the inward facing wall but since then had been moved to its present position on the side wall at the bottom of the staircase that led from the main line station's South Central Concourse. Indeed alongside it was a newer sign in polished aluminium which commemorated the 21st anniversary of the Victoria Line in 1990 but this to him seemed a far less formal looking plaque, almost an inferior impostor to its more sedate and official neighbour.

"There's irony for you" a voice was heard to call from behind the Commander causing him to turn around and see standing there amidst the passing pedestrian traffic, Jerry Lassiter, editor of the Evening Standard and with his camera in his hand having just taken a shot of the Commander looking at the plaque.

"Thanks for coming" the Commander responded as they met by the plaque and shook hands "So what exactly is ironic then?" he asked.

"Well the last time I took a picture of that there chunk of stone, I wound up winning a prize for it" Lassiter explained "Although I could have sworn it was over there."

"It was" the Commander confirmed "Why it was moved I'll never know."

"Actually it was one of my first ever assignments" Lassiter continued "I was sent out by the editor at the time to get a few atmospheric shots of the newly opened station and the first people to come through. I never imagined that one impulsive shot I took of that poor little lad looking at that plaque would gain so much publicity."

"First picture you take in your career and it's on the front page by five o'clock" the Commander remarked "Not bad at all for a first effort."

"Just wish it was under better circumstances though" Lassiter admitted with some sadness.

"You can say that again" the Commander responded quietly, however the general background noise of the busy ticket hall meant that Lassiter did not hear it.

"Anyway, enough dining on ashes" Lassiter remarked "I'm curious, what is it that is so important yet so secret that the Administrator General wants to meet the editor of the Standard in the middle of Victoria Station and not tell anyone else about it?"

“Were you ever aware of the events surrounding the shooting of Eddie Regent?” the Commander asked as they ascended the steps and left the station.

“If I recall he saved some of his classmates and a few others during that diamond heist in erm...” Lassiter struggled to remember the full details.

“Lewisham” the Commander finished his sentence for him as they crossed the bus station area and headed for Victoria Street.

“Oh yes” Lassiter responded as he remembered more clearly now “He then headed into town and went on the newly opened Victoria Line before heading to New Scotland Yard” he continued “Apparently he was the only eye witness who could connect all of the evidence for the prosecution.”

“Except for one small problem” the Commander cut in.

“Indeed” Lassiter confirmed “The poor lad got himself shot a hundred yards from safety by the mad gunman from the heist.”

“And then your picture made the front page of the final edition of the Standard” the Commander remarked “It was quite a scoop.”

“I didn't even realise it at the time” Lassiter remarked “I handed in my prints to the editor at about half three and then went home, it was only later when I saw the last edition and my picture on the front of it that I realised as evidently the editor had that I had taken a picture of the poor little sod not long before he was killed.”

The two men continued walking up Victoria Street, the same journey that Eddie had taken all those years earlier and which they were now discussing, of course now the street thanks to much redevelopment looked very different to what it was back then.

“I always wondered what would have happened if he had been able to give his evidence” Lassiter admitted as they passed Westminster City Hall “Of course in the end I believe one of the gang involved turned Queen's evidence and gave the lot up didn't he?”

“That was the publicly announced version” the Commander admitted “However that is not exactly the way it actually turned out.”

“It was just here wasn't it?” Lassiter remarked as they turned left and entered the top end of Broadway, in the shadow of the buildings of New Scotland Yard.

“Just there” the Commander pointed a short distance ahead “Two shots from a hand gun at a range of about ten yards, no way was he ever going to be missed from there.”

“Poor little sod” Lassiter commented as they stood where Eddie had fallen all those years earlier “I gather that the Commissioner at the time managed to get to him and carry him inside the Yard but that he died shortly afterwards. I remember his statement to the BBC, the television was black and white admittedly but you could clearly see the blood stains on his uniform, made for quite an emotional impact with

the public did that, along with the national hero accolade the press and public put upon him.”

“That wasn't quite the end of the story though” the Commander continued “Come up to my office, its time we had a chat about Eddie, a large quantity of diamonds and a mad gunman.”

“Intriguing” Lassiter remarked as he followed the Commander into New Scotland Yard and they headed via the lifts up to his office.

“Take a seat” the Commander invited Lassiter as he went and got the good scotch out of the cupboard and poured them both a drink before sitting down behind his desk.

“Cheers” Lassiter remarked before taking a sip of his drink with much appreciation “So you were saying there is more to the official story than what was originally put out by the Met?”

“Indeed” the Commander confirmed knowingly.

“Figures” Lassiter responded “That trial was a railroad job if I remember and they didn't even get the guy who actually did the shooting.”

“They never found the diamonds either” the Commander added “Just a few conveniently sprinkled here and there where it mattered for prosecution evidence purposes and even they amounted to a value of no more than a couple of grand, tops.”

“So where are we going with this?” Lassiter asked.

“I want you to bring the story up to date” the Commander explained “and by doing that, your final edition when it hits the streets at four o'clock should help to provoke a reaction.”

“I'm listening” Lassiter confirmed.

“As you correctly stated” the Commander continued “Eddie Regent was indeed the only eyewitness who could testify and put all the prosecution evidence together but as you know, the bad guys got to him first and shot him.”

“One dead eyewitness, case closed” Lassiter remarked.

“At least that is what they where meant to think” the Commander responded “Eddie was rescued by Forrester, then the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and one time owner of this very office. Unfortunately in the reception area downstairs as the gunmen made their successful getaway amid the panic and confusion, Eddie stopped breathing and had to be resuscitated twice.”

“He must have made it as far as the hospital though” Lassiter remarked “I remember the big highly protected convoy with the ambulance on the television news bulletins.”

“It took the best part of two hours in surgery to put him back together again” the Commander confirmed “It was at this point that Forrester and MI5 decided that in order to protect him, the press release would state he did in fact die in the reception area of New Scotland Yard.”

“You mean he is still alive?” Lassiter almost fell off his seat in shock.

“He survived all right but it was touch and go for a while” the Commander continued to explain “Obviously he could not give evidence in court anymore as he was officially dead so his evidence was given by the prosecution's Queens Evidence witness as his own.”

“Oh very clever” Lassiter remarked as he made notes.

“That Queens Evidence witness was placed into the care of the witness protection division where he remained until his death from heart failure three days ago” the Commander added “His original condition on giving the evidence at the trial was that Eddie was given full protection, a new identity and adopted by a new family.”

“You know” Lassiter commented “If I were somewhere in the world, maybe even in London and I was either the guy who pulled the trigger that day in 1969 or the big man sitting on a vault of diamonds, I would suddenly start getting very worried if the star witness they assumed had been dead for over thirty years suddenly popped up phoenix like from the grave and told all.”

“Not half as worried as they will be when they find out who Eddie is now” the Commander smirked knowingly.

“Spill” Lassiter jokingly responded “Come on, you can tell me, I'm a responsible member of the press!”

“Edward James Regent junior, also known simply as Eddie” the Commander explained “was placed into the care of a senior detective of the Metropolitan Police Flying Squad called Inspector Jim Edwards, he and his wife adopted him as their own son.”

“That was the chief investigating officer on the Lewisham heist case wasn't it?” Lassiter asked.

“The very same” the Commander confirmed “Later Eddie followed his adopted father into the fledgling National Security & Police Service where he worked his way up through the ranks.”

“Eddie is a serving member of the Security Service?” Lassiter remarked “Now that really would make whoever is sitting on those diamonds a bit edgy, so where is he now?”

“Oh, he's in this very building” the Commander confirmed “Would you like to meet him?”

“Erm absolutely” Lassiter responded with surprise.

“Recharge your glass” the Commander passed across the decanter of scotch as he got up “I’ll just go and get him” he headed for the door only to turn around and return to Lassiter.

“I thought you were going to get him Commander?” Lassiter looked up from his seat understandably confused.

“Not much point” the Commander admitted “I’m already here.”

“Holy Mary mother of God” Lassiter murmured with shock as the penny dropped as to exactly what was going on here.

“Please to meet you” the Commander remarked with some amusement as he returned to the seat behind his desk, “Watch your jaw though, if it falls any further it’ll be in the basement.”

“I think I need another drink” Lassiter remarked as he filled his glass again and then downed the shot of scotch in one gulp “If this story hits the streets, your man with the diamonds is likely to have a heart attack!”

“I am certainly counting on some sort of reaction I have to admit” the Commander remarked.

“Does your wife Tracy know about this?” Lassiter asked.

“Oh yes” the Commander confirmed “I have always been open and honest about everything with her, she’s a very good listener I have found.”

"Well this will certainly push the quite frankly insignificant resignation of Lord Perivale off the front page" Lassiter responded "It's been a bit of a quiet news week generally speaking."

"Yes, that was rather sudden wasn't it?" the Commander remarked.

"Hang on" Lassiter commented "Lord Moneybags Perivale was the guy at the Treasury that bought the diamonds in the first place."

"Yes, I do believe he was" the Commander confirmed.

"A coincidence?" Lassiter asked.

"Ask me again tomorrow morning" the Commander sat back comfortably in his chair with a knowledgeable smile.

"Right, times up!" Tracy declared through a megaphone at the second lot of protestors she had had to deal with that day, this time after they had marched through Hyde Park

to the south east corner "Everyone can go home now in a sensible, quiet and orderly fashion."

With that announcement, the crowd of protestors began to disperse and within a few minutes they were gone, leaving just a few abandoned placards and Tracy with a couple of dozen uniformed officers standing by the gateway at Hyde Park Corner.

"Lima Mike One to Eagle One" Tracy called into her radio after turning away from the other officers.

"Eagle One" Cassini responded.

"Do I still have my small but dedicated fan club in tow?" she enquired.

"Confirmed" Cassini replied as he looked out from his observation point in the lower part of Park Lane at the two suspects who were discreetly hanging around nearby keeping a constant watch on Tracy "and by way of a bonus point, guess who they bumped into briefly about twenty minutes ago."

"Please tell me it was Havelock" Tracy responded.

"In the flesh" Cassini happily confirmed "I put a couple of Sir Richard's boys onto him."

"All right then" Tracy concluded "I think its time we gave our two mysterious party crashers the mystery tour."

"Lead on Maam" Cassini responded in agreement "I'll bring up the rear and send for the cavalry if we need it."

"Halle-bloody-lujah!" Sir Richard declared as the message came through to him in the operations room that Havelock had been found and reacquired.

"That sounds promising" the Commander responded as he came in to the room in time to hear Sir Richards declaration of delight.

"Cassini found Havelock" Sir Richard explained "He met up with the two goons that have been following Tracy around all morning."

"Err what two goons following Tracy around all morning?" the Commander responded with clear concern.

"Oh sorry" Sir Richard realised that the Commander had been in his meeting with the Editor from the Standard for the last couple of hours "Tracy noticed a couple of goons shadowing her both at Parliament Square and then they followed her to Hyde Park Corner, by then with Commander Cassini in pursuit."

"Lima Mike One from your husband" the Commander called with concern into the radio "What the hell is going on?"

"Oh nothing much" Tracy responded wryly as she headed down into Holborn Station "just leading two muppets on a merry dance to see how long they can last the course."

"Ah" the Commander remarked "The scenic tour!"

"Indeed" Tracy confirmed "With any luck they'll start to go giddy before too long."

"Well if you need any help, just summon the cavalry and I'll have the entire service there in an instant" the Commander remarked.

"I'll hold you to that" Tracy confirmed with a smile "See you later" she added before heading into the lower parts of Holborn Station whereupon the signal was lost.

"Right" the Commander tuned to Sir Richard "It is now half past two and we have just over an hour to come up with a plan to follow Perivale until he leads us to the prize and at the same time quietly apprehend Havelock. The floor is now open for suggestions and ideas."

"Well we know that Lord Perivale is scheduled to be in Westminster in various meetings until about four o'clock" Sir Richard confirmed "Working on the theory that he picks up the Evening Standard by about half four, we will know if and when he makes a call to Havelock before making his move."

"Fortunately for us" the Commander added "We have Havelock's two little buddies following Tracy around so all we will need to do is keep them shadowed until the opportune moment and then once Perivale has made the call and they meet up with Havelock, we nab all three."

"I suggest once we get Havelock" Sir Richard commented "He is taken to somewhere appropriate so that you and he can have one of those intimate one to one chats you seem to be so adept at."

"Whilst I am doing that" the Commander confirmed with an expression that broadcast the fact that he was looking forward to that particular conversation "You and Cassini track Perivale to wherever he goes. Once he leads us to the locations of any of the diamonds I want him very publicly arrested red handed."

"I think I can arrange that" Sir Richard responded with a knowing smile.

"Ok" the Commander responded "Get Cassini on the phone and let's make it happen."

"West End Final!!" the Evening Standard seller called loudly from his sales stand at the south end of Victoria Street as Tracy approached on foot having just dealt with a traffic incident in the nearby Bus Station and still with the two men in tow "Exclusive interview with Administrator General!"

“Here you go” Tracy responded as she handed across her fifty pence in payment for a copy.

“Thank you my dear” the seller replied warmly “You know you should get your husband to autograph some copies, sell for a fortune they would!”

“I’ll suggest it to him when I see him, thanks!” Tracy responded with a chuckle as she left, heading for her motorbike parked around the corner in Vauxhall Bridge Road.

A couple of miles away in the heart of Westminster, Lord Perivale was emerging on foot from the entrance of Downing Street where he had just completed his last meeting as a member of Her Majesty’s Government before embarking on his sudden retirement.

Nearby, as there was across the city was an Evening Standard seller and as he checked his watch which showed the time as approaching half past four, Lord Perivale approached the stand and duly purchased his daily copy of the paper. Initially he tucked it under his arm and headed off up Whitehall towards Westminster Station and his train home. It was not until he heard one of the sellers call out the headline that he stopped in the middle of the pavement, unfolded his copy and read the front page.

“Eagle Nine to Control” a plain clothes member of Cassini’s observation team discreetly reported from some distance behind Perivale “Target one has purchased the Standard and is now stationary in Whitehall reading it now.”

“Oh my God....” Perivale was stunned as he read the front page, the headline reading:

“EVENING STANDARD WORLD EXCLUSIVE - THE COMMANDER GIVES PERSONAL INTERVIEW”

“From dead hero to living legend - The editor of the Standard today exclusively interviewed the Regional Administrator General of the Security & Police Service in London and the South East, better known of course as the Commander earlier today, during which he gave a frank and honest insight into his early life for the first time.

“What most amazed the editor was that in 1969, he won an award for the memorable picture of twelve year old Eddie Regent, a heroic school boy from the east end of London who saved the lives of his classmates and members of the public during the infamous Lewisham Diamond Heist of 7th March that year.

“The photograph, reproduced opposite was of the young lad after he had left Lewisham that same afternoon and visited Victoria Station on the occasion of the opening of the main section of the new Victoria Line, the editor, then a junior photographer on the Standard’s staff happened to take his picture as he looked at the newly unveiled plaque on the booking hall wall.

“Less than an hour after that photograph was taken, Eddie Regent paid the price for being the eyewitness and hero when he was ruthlessly gunned down

outside New Scotland Yard in a story that shocked and saddened the nation and remained in the memory of many a Londoner for years afterwards.

“It was told that on that fateful day, he died in the arms of the then Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police who with his officers had battled to try and save his life against the odds.

“Yet, despite the best efforts of the gunmen who were never caught, Eddie survived....

“He was given a new identity and adopted by one of the Special Branch officers who was in charge of the Lewisham investigation. Earlier today the editor met with The Commander in Victoria Station's ticket hall and took this picture of him doing as Eddie did all those years earlier, looking at the commemorative plaque on the booking hall wall.

“In an extraordinary and exclusive interview, the Commander has spoken for the first time about how the little boy that was described by the Metropolitan Police and the Prime Minister at the time as 'beyond brave and heroic' survived, grew up and became one of the most powerful and respected law enforcement officers in the country.

“Oh hell...” Perivale reacted when he realised that he was now in very serious trouble. He stopped reading and with a slightly controlled panic, looked around nervously before reaching for a mobile telephone, a fact picked up on by the three members of Cassini's squad who were watching his every move.

“Eagle Nine to Control” one of Cassini's officers reported “Target one is making a call on his mobile, his hands aren't half shaking though.”

Sir Richard responded simply by clicking his fingers pointedly at one of his technical officers nearby who immediately began to record and monitor the call being made by Perivale from his mobile.

“Looks like we seemed to have achieved the desired effect” the Commander remarked as one officer passed him a newly delivered copy of the paper “Oh nice picture” he remarked at seeing the two photographs on the front page, one of Eddie in 1969, the other of the Commander in the same position just that morning “Also on pages six, seven, eight and nine” he added.

“Havelock you snivelling muppet” Perivale called out when his call was not immediately answered the moment it started ringing “Pick up the God damm phone!”

“He's pissed!” Sir Richard remarked with glee as he and the Commander eavesdropped on the call from within the deep confines of New Scotland Yard.

“Afternoon boss” Havelock calmly answered, a contrast to Perivale's state of mind “What's up?”

“What's up?” Perivale responded “Don't you ever read newspapers?” he demanded to know.

“Only the ones with big tits in” Havelock admitted.

“Well never mind” Perivale replied “I need out beloved Commander to be heavily distracted for the next hour or two, do you have anything in position we can use?”

“I have just the thing” Havelock confirmed “How messy and distractive do you want it?”

“I don't care” Perivale confirmed with determination “Just make sure he is off my back until I am out of here.”

“Consider it done” Havelock calmly responded as he hung up.

At the south end of Victoria Street, Tracy was just starting up her motorbike and pulling away when Cassini who was overseeing the two men who had been following her received a call over the radio.

“Eagle One from Control” the Commander called “Perivale has called Havelock, whatever is going to happen is likely to occur in the next few minutes.”

“Roger that” Cassini confirmed “Commander Caverner just headed off up Victoria Street, she's navigating the one way system approaching Cardinal Place at the moment, the two goons are in a black cab a short distance behind her.”

“Move your boys in and prepare to taken them out” the Commander instructed “But wait for Havelock to show up first.”

“Will do” Cassini confirmed.

Tracy rounded the corner by Cardinal Place and turned into Victoria Street, having to pull out quite wide to avoid an out of service route 507 Red Arrow articulated bus that had just pulled out almost right in front of her.

“Thank you” Tracy remarked sarcastically as she passed it and headed up the street only to be stopped by the traffic lights opposite Westminster Cathedral as some pedestrians crossed the road in front of her.

“Oh hell!” Cassini remarked as he approached the scene in a van and realised that not only had the two men just abandoned their cab by the side of the road, a fact revealed as the bus pulled forward to reveal the empty vehicle, but that the bus was wandering all over the carriageway as it came up behind Tracy in a fashion most unusual for any professional bus driver.

“Lima Mike One from Eagle One” Cassini called quickly into his radio just as the traffic lights in front of Tracy turned green and she released her brakes to move “Watch out behind you!”

Tracy never heard the call, the first she knew about it was when she became aware of the articulated bus swinging way too far to the right before coming alongside her and then violently moving towards her. Quickly she took evasive action but not before her bike was heavily sideswiped by the bus, sending her rolling off onto the pavement whilst the bike was partially crushed under the front wheels of the bus.

“Officer down!” Cassini declared over the radio which caught everyone's attention on the network.

Quickly Cassini and several other officers appeared and went straight to the injured Tracy on the pavement whilst the bus which was impaled on the motorbike, reversed off of it before speeding off, demolishing a kerb side bus shelter as it went and sending pedestrians scattering for cover.

“Control from Eagle One” Cassini called “Hit and run on an officer in Victoria Street near Westminster City Hall, suspect vehicle is a red Mercedes Citaro articulated bus fleet number MAL31 heading north towards Westminster and hitting everything that is in its path.”

“Roll everything we have got down there now!” the Commander ordered as he grabbed his uniform tunic and left the room in a hurry, leaving Sir Richard to head up to the main Control Room to co-ordinate operations.

Already there were officers and members of the emergency services approaching from all directions when the Commander emerged from the entrance of New Scotland Yard and flagged down a passing riot control group van for a high speed lift to the scene of Tracy's accident.

As they approached the end of Broadway, with Victoria Street crossing across in front of them, the driver and the Commander in the front of the van realised that the careering bus approaching them from the right was the target vehicle.

“Ram the bugger!” the Commander demanded.

“Already had it in mind Sir” the driver confirmed as he gunned the engine of the van and rammed the front end of the bus from the side at quite some speed. Indeed the impact was so heavy that it forced the bus sideways into the shop front on the opposite side of the street and badly wrecked both vehicles involved.

“Well that was fun” the Commander remarked wryly as he shook his head “Are you all right?” he asked the van driver.

“The garage chief is going to be pissed” he responded with a cough.

“Get yourself seen to” the Commander ordered as he kicked the battered door of the van open and got out where he found that the now badly wrecked bus was being surrounded by numerous armed officers, all with guns drawn and trained on the vehicle and its occupants.

The Commander managed to pick his way through the wreckage and boarded the bus by the centre set of doors where inside he found the two men who had been following Tracy for much of the day, dazed and injured on the floor. Up the front, protected by the cab structure but trapped, he found Havelock behind the wheel still defiant.

“Well hello there” the Commander greeted him with friendly tones but underlined with implied menace “It’s a pleasure to finally make your acquaintance Mr Havelock, or should I call you Mr Jones?”

“Huh?” Havelock responded, still a bit stunned by the whole thing to really take in what the Commander said.

“Don’t go away” the Commander recommended with a firm smile before heading back down the interior of the bus, returning to the centre doors from where he gave a shrill whistle to attract the attention of the officers outside.

“The two bozos on the floor in here can be locked up at your discretion” he called to them “Get some of the Fire Brigade boys to cut Mr Havelock out of the cab, patched up and then placed in the care of Mr Crowthorne and his merry men until I can interview him, oh and someone had better call London General at Waterloo Garage” he added with a glance around the wrecked bus “They might want their bus back.”

As the bus was boarded by armed officers and three members of the London Fire Brigade with cutting gear, the Commander quickly left the scene, heading at speed on foot down Victoria Street which was now largely sealed off to the point outside Westminster City Hall where a number of emergency service vehicles were parked up and a large crowd of officers and others gathered around.

The Commander feared the worst when he saw the state of Tracy’s motorbike on the roadside, now little more than a mangled smouldering pile of scrap that a Fire Brigade officer was attending to with an extinguisher. There was better news however when he was let through the crowd of people to find Tracy lying on the pavement being attended to by a number of Ambulance Paramedic staff and with Cassini holding her hand in support.

“I think this is your position Sir” Cassini remarked as he got up and swapped places with the Commander.

“Tracy? Can you hear me?” he asked with clear concern.

“I told you articulated buses were a bad idea” Tracy groggily responded with a stifled giggle but she was almost unconscious by now.

“We’ve had to give her something for the pain” the paramedic in charge of the treatment confirmed “As far as I can ascertain she got off lightly, left arm is broken, possibly a couple of ribs fractured and some heavy abrasions to the leg but nothing much more, we’ll know better once we get her to hospital.”

“Right” the Commander got up, still holding onto Tracy’s hand as on a stretcher she was carefully lifted up and carried to the waiting ambulance.

“Ok, stand back please” the paramedics called as Tracy was loaded into the back of the ambulance.

“Mr Cassini” the Commander called.

“Yes Sir” Cassini confirmed as he rejoined him “I’m really sorry Sir” he apologised unreservedly.

“Not your fault” the Commander confirmed as he patted Cassini on the back in comfort “Do me proud and make sure she has the best close surveillance and protection team on her at all times.”

“Already done” Cassini confirmed as he indicated a group of officers nearby waiting with unmarked high speed patrol cars, ready to provide close escort and protection.

“Darling” Tracy groggily called as the Commander got in the back of the ambulance with her “I’ll be all right, you are needed elsewhere.”

“I’m going with you love” the Commander insisted.

“You go with me and then you are distracted” Tracy weakly commented “And that is exactly what those buggers wanted, don’t let them have the satisfaction.”

The Commander reluctantly nodded in agreement at Tracy’s simple logic and so, much against his better judgement, he kissed Tracy, mouthed I love you to her and left the ambulance.

As the doors were closed and with its close protection escort, the ambulance moved off, the Commander was joined by Sir Richard.

“How is she?” he asked with concern.

“They say she’ll be all right” the Commander responded “I do hope they are right.”

“She’s in good hands” Sir Richard reassured the Commander “I’ve got Perivale being closely followed as we speak and our friend Mr Havelock awaits your pleasure.”

“Indeed” the Commander confirmed “I think it’s about time he and I had a little chat” he responded with clear determination as he turned and headed back towards New Scotland Yard.

“And now the screaming starts....” Sir Richard remarked aside to Cassini as they followed the Commander up the road, past the wreckage of the bus and van collision that was just beginning to be disentangled by a distinctly unimpressed engineer and his crew from the bus company.

“Never had the Commander down as a screaming type of guy” Cassini responded.

“Oh not him” Sir Richard confirmed “It's always been well known that anyone who so much as harms a hair on Tracy's head, gets the full up close and personal treatment from the Commander.”

“Havelock could just scream for his lawyer” Cassini remarked.

“I doubt he'll have the energy after he has had his chat with the Commander” Sir Richard commented “Indeed I should think it is highly unlikely he will be able to walk again for a good while either....”

Lord Perivale had relaxed a bit as he sat down on a seat on the westbound District and Circle Line platform at Westminster Station, he had heard from conversations as he passed through the booking hall of what had just occurred in Victoria Street a few minutes earlier and the cacophony of accompanying sirens clearly signalled that Havelock's diversion was big, spectacular and likely to be successful.

Looking around casually, he was unable to see any of the usual MI5 Political Monitoring Unit officers that usually were lurking around which made him become even more relaxed as he opened his paper and read more of the Commander's story which was spread across a number of pages.

Perivale had to admit to himself as he waited for the next District Line train to Richmond that the Commander had played one hell of a move with this revelation, he could tell that he was a good poker player.

A Circle Line train arrived, stopped and then departed as he continued to read the story but his mind was also on other matters, in particular his long prepared and carefully worked out plan that had been many years in the making but considering whether any last minute adjustments would be necessary.

After a few minutes, a District Line service arrived and Perivale got up, noting who else was on the platform with him before boarding one of the few remaining unrefurbished trains of 'D' type stock with its very 1970's style interior colour scheme of oranges and browns.

"This is a District Line service to Richmond via Earl's Court" the driver announced in the absence of any pre-recorded automatic system being available before, with a heavy hiss, the air operated doors closed and the train moved off.

Perivale removed a small notebook from his inside jacket pocket as the train proceeded westwards, stopping at the likes of St James' Park, Victoria and Sloane Square. It wasn't until it was approaching Earl's Court that he finished consulting his extensive hand written notes and relaxed back in the seat for the rest of his journey.

After travelling for more than thirty minutes, the train pulled into its final destination at Richmond, a fact confirmed by the driver of the service over the tannoy as it clattered across the point work at the station throat before gliding into the platform.

As soon as the train had stopped and the doors opened, a tidal wave of passengers flowed out of the six carriages onto the platform and uniformly headed for the exit at the west end.

In amongst the crowd was not only Perivale but also upwards of a dozen close surveillance officers from at least three different agencies, the Security Department, MI5 and also MI6 now whom Sir Richard had invited to join the party as well.

"Good grief" the Commander marked as he watched via the live CCTV link, the crowd with Perivale amongst them pass through the ticket barriers "How many people have we got on him?"

"Half a dozen of Cassini's lot" Sir Richard confirmed "Best part of ten or so of mine and another half dozen I borrowed from my opposite number over the river, not forgetting the dozen officers I have parked in a company Transit out in the car park."

Perivale remained unaware of the intense attention he was receiving as he passed out of the station and climbed into the back of a waiting car that was booked to take him home.

As his car pulled away, it was like an unseen army of invisible followers were unleashed as various officers got into waiting vehicles and set off in discrete pursuit.

"You can't do this!" Havelock screamed loudly from inside the darkened room in which he had been left alone and handcuffed to a chair for the last half an hour.

The only light visible in the room came from a faint crack at the bottom of the only doorway plus a single forty watt bulb suspended from the ceiling directly over the small simple wooden table set in the centre of the room just in front of him.

"I want my phone call and my lawyer!!" Havelock yelled once more but nobody was listening, his voice just echoed around the apparently empty room which because of the darkness, he was unable to fathom out the interior size or any detail of it.

Suddenly, the sound of a heavy metal door opening and then closing again in a far unlit corner of the room made Havelock look up suddenly, his heartbeat increasing noticeably as footsteps approached in the darkness with slow, methodical and precisely implied menace.

"What the hell is going on here?" Havelock demanded with clear and determined defiance as the footsteps stopped seemingly fairly close by.

"Good evening" the Commander calmly announced as he switched on a light which added some illumination to the room and revealed who Havelock's guest was.

"I have powerful associates who will ensure that I am released without charge within twenty minutes" Havelock declared.

"No doubt you speak of your sponsor Lord Perivale" the Commander responded as he placed a number of files onto the small table and proceeded to walk around the seated Havelock, not taking his eyes off of him at any time.

"Who my associates may be is something I refuse to discuss" Havelock continued his defiance "I do not recognise the legality of my arrest and will say nothing to you or anyone else."

"As you wish" the Commander responded "I tell you what, I'll do the talking and you can sit back, listen and learn but feel free to contribute whenever you feel like it."

Havelock said nothing, merely grunted defiantly and shifted slightly on his chair.

"You are an interesting individual" the Commander began as he sat down at the table and casually consulted the files "However your official biography is shall we say, somewhat lacking in detail?"

Once more, Havelock just sat there unmoved so the Commander just shrugged his shoulders and carried on.

"Your public record is whiter than white" the Commander showed him the first file he was consulting "Nothing overly remarkable, all the 't's crossed and 'i's dotted, the best part of forty years in the Civil Service and nothing to show for it."

The Commander paused as he reached for a second file "Now I had a hunch when I read your file that it was just too prim and perfect, a carefully put together white wash for public consumption and do you know what, I was absolutely right."

Havelock looked on, remaining emotionless.

"Then this little known seldom seen and hardly heard of little gem surfaced" the Commander continued with a knowing smile of satisfaction "This is the real you, right here and deary me, you have been a naughty boy haven't you?"

"I want my lawyer" Havelock reiterated firmly.

"Hmm, looks like I passed close to a raw nerve there" the Commander noted before returning to this second file "According to this, you joined the army at the age of eighteen but then left under something of a cloud, some vaguely hinted at incident involving the random discharge of a firearm."

"Bollocks!" Havelock remained defiant.

"Then you get recruited into the Civil Service courtesy of no lesser mortal than Lord Perivale, only of course he wasn't a Lord back then, he bought his title some years back" the Commander continued "Indeed according to this, you were Perivale's bag man right the way through except for a six month spell in 1970 and into 1971 where you went to the Home Office at exactly the same time someone there had all the evidence and related material of the Lewisham Diamond Heist investigation seized, sealed and firmly buried."

"Nowt overly illegal about all that" Havelock remarked "The Civil Service has been up to all sorts of dark arts since time began."

"I'll grant you that one" the Commander conceded "However, somehow I doubt the Civil Service stretches to armed robbery, murder and perverting the course of justice."

"Hmmp" Havelock responded.

"Friday the seventh of March 1969" the Commander opened the third file "Can you tell me where you were on that day?"

"Nope" Havelock confidently responded, he was certain that no substantial evidence existed of his involvement in this affair.

"Well let me refresh your memory then" the Commander continued "I have a reliable eyewitness that saw you in the Depository that day being very free and easy with a gun, the very same gun with prints on it that I have upstairs in a sealed plastic bag in which it has been since it was also used to shoot that very same witness at 16:04 the same day in Broadway, W1, London."

"So no witness then" Havelock concluded.

"Not so fast my old friend" the Commander cautioned him "Who said he was dead?"

"The press, the Police..." Havelock began to reel off a list but was interrupted.

"You and your associates aren't the only people who can manipulate the media" the Commander explained "Yes Eddie Regent did require resuscitation and extensive emergency surgery after your efforts but reports of his demise were somewhat exaggerated."

"You're lying" Havelock defied him "Just get me my lawyer."

"You play poker?" the Commander casually asked, apparently changing the subject.

"Well yes" Havelock replied, caught slightly off guard by the change of direction.

"My old man taught me that most important thing is to never reveal your hand until it will make the most devastating impact on your opponent" the Commander recalled "The best hand I ever had was when I was young, the other guy had a full house, three aces and kings but I flopped a royal flush."

Havelock looked up with interest at the Commander's recollection, realising that this last comment almost exactly matched an encounter he had had so many years ago.

"Ever witnessed anything like that" the Commander asked before adding with implied menace "Mr Jones."

"Who exactly the hell are you?" Havelock asked, although by now he was becoming aware of exactly who he was sitting in front of.

"You remember that twelve year old lad who beat you at poker, struck and then identified you in the Depository before you gunned him down in cold blood before he could relay his tale to the Police?" the Commander asked with a hard stare "Well here I am."

"Bugger..." Havelock responded as his worse fears were confirmed.

"Oh but there's more" the Commander continued "Thanks largely to the efforts of yourself and your friend Lord Perivale, you disappeared when it came to the arrest and trial of the robbers, the gunman was never traced or found and through some deft slight of hand with the media, no one even noticed."

"Like I said" Havelock responded having recomposed himself "You still can't prove anything."

"Then all these years later you make your final fatal mistake" the Commander continued with cool calm but firmly implied menace "You attempted to kill my wife, and for that my friend, you are going to pay."

Havelock merely looked on unimpressed with the Commander's threat but unaware of his reputation when it came to affirmative punishment of those who had so much as threatened Tracy's life.

The Commander calmly stood up and went around behind Havelock "Fortunately for you, she is all right, a little bruised and battered but otherwise ok, because if she had been killed, right now you would be watching in horror as two of my more muscular colleagues removed your kneecaps and scattered their shattered remains across this room."

Havelock swallowed slightly uncomfortably at that narrowly avoided fate but otherwise remained silent.

"No my friend" the Commander continued "You're going to jail, and I don't mean one of those cushy hotels that the Home Office runs, I mean one of those old Victorian institutions that don't appear on the visiting list of the Independent Prison Inspectors Board where all you will see for a very long time are four brick walls and a bucket, maybe if you are lucky the odd passing rat or three but that is it."

By now Havelock's defiant stance had become simply a vacant staring into the far distance.

"At the moment" the Commander advised him sincerely "You are looking at being in jail so long I doubt your parole officer hasn't even been born yet, however if you do have some ambition to see daylight anytime in the next forty years, you are going to tell me everything you know about diamonds, your old pal Perivale and anything else you would like to share."

The Commander could tell by Havelock's body language as he momentarily looked up at him that he was certainly thinking about it.

"You have fifteen minutes to decide what you want to do and then we'll talk again, more formally of course" the Commander informed him "Don't go away."

With that, the Commander turned smartly on his heels and left the room, the heavy metal door closing with a firm slam and leaving Havelock alone in the gloom to contemplate his future.

"You look like you enjoyed yourself" Sir Richard remarked as the Commander joined him in the corridor.

"Well, let's just say we had a bit of a chat, yes" the Commander confirmed "Although admittedly I seemed to be doing most of the talking."

"And he's still breathing as well as in one piece?" Sir Richard enquired as the two men walked back up the stairs and to the main control room.

"For now" the Commander responded with a wry grin "I gave him twenty minutes to consider his options."

"Our friend Mr Perivale is safely tucked up at home at the moment" Sir Richard confirmed "We've got the whole place wired for sound so when he makes his move, we'll be the first to know about it."

"Take over here" the Commander asked "I'm going to see Tracy, I think I need a hug and by now I suspect so does she."

"What about chummy down there?" Sir Richard asked as the Commander grabbed his uniform tunic.

"Let him stew" the Commander responded with little regard for Havelock's welfare "Crank the heating up in there every ten minutes, it should give him something to think about."

"He could file a complaint" Sir Richard cautioned the Commander as he was about to leave.

"Do you really think I care?" the Commander responded, clearly tired and fed up "Besides any complaints have to come through me so he would be wasting his time."

"If Perivale so much as sneezes, I'll call you" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Thanks" the Commander responded as he left.

"Nice one Commander" Lord Perivale had to admit as he finished reading the Evening Standard in his study at home with just the ticking of an antique clock and the gentle burning of a fire in the hearth breaking the relaxed silence.

He contemplated another sherry but decided instead to proceed through to his study and sat at his huge antique desk where he consulted his diary and a file containing various notes and other pieces of information.

After a few minutes of careful study of his notes, he took out a fresh cigar from the elderly box on the desk, clipped and lit it before thinking quietly for a few moments.

Anyone else in his situation would never be as relaxed as he, however Perivale was now more than confident that any part of the Lewisham affair that he had been or was still currently involved with, was still a mystery to the authorities otherwise he would have been arrested hours if not days ago.

His over confidence was his weakness of course for as he relaxed and enjoyed his cigar before preparing to depart the house, his every move was being watched and listened to thanks to a number of listening devices and miniature hidden cameras that Sir Richard Crowthorne's team had secreted throughout the house earlier in the afternoon.

Perivale rested the cigar on the edge of the rather awful looking art deco ash tray and picked up the telephone, speed dialling a number that he double checked by cross referencing with the file open in front of him.

"Ah good evening" Perivale declared as soon as he was connected "I have a reservation for a high security transit this evening, the name is Harbinger, Daniel Harbinger."

"Ah yes sir" the person on the other end of the telephone, a representative of a private firm that specialized in the movement of highly valuable merchandise under tight security confirmed "We have here a time of nine thirty at your address, one large armoured van, motorcycle escorts and a secure saloon car?"

"That's correct" Perivale confirmed "I was just ringing to check that all was still set."

"Absolutely Sir" the representative confirmed "I can assure you high security and absolute discretion, we pride ourselves on the quality of our services to the client."

"Glad to hear it" Perivale responded with a chuckle "It's costing me enough."

"Unfortunately in this day and age" the representative responded "High security is a necessary evil, there are a lot of very unsavoury characters out there these days."

"Nine thirty then" Perivale confirmed "I will give the drivers their instructions upon arrival and should be finished by about midnight I would have thought."

"We look forward to serving you Sir" the representative confirmed "Until later."

“Thank you” Perivale responded and hung up before relaxing back in his big antique leather arm chair and inhaling another puff on the huge cigar.

“Gentlemen” Sir Richard declared to the officers in the operations room once he had finished listening to Perivale's call “Start your engines.”

“Eagle One to all units” Cassini called into his radio “Put a call into your loved ones and start the overtime meter, we are rolling in ten minutes.”

The Commander anxiously made his way through the corridors of Guys & St Thomas's Hospital, searching for the treatment room where Tracy had been taken to. After some minutes of fruitless, indeed near frantic searching, he noticed two of Cassini's undercover officers on guard duty in one corridor and knew quickly he had found the right place.

“Evening Sir” the two officers greeted the Commander who acknowledged them as he was allowed inside the treatment room.

“Hello love” the Commander greeted Tracy, seemingly hinting towards tears as he saw her sitting up on the bed, still wearing her badly torn and blood stained uniform but with her left arm now secured in a sling and much of her left leg bandaged.

“Careful” the doctor attending advised as Tracy and the Commander just held each other and kissed with some emotion. Both of them said nothing at first but had equally feared they might not have seen the other alive again, a fear now dismissed with a huge feeling of relief.

“Oh Tracy” the Commander responded, close to tears with relief that she was all right “I really thought I had lost you for a while.”

“You don't get rid of me that easily love” Tracy replied as she lifted herself off the bed and they just held each other for what seemed like an eternity but was probably only a minute “Do you think the budget will stretch to a new uniform though?” she joked.

“I have had worse ones than that” the Commander responded with a laugh as they both managed to recompose themselves, Tracy signalling that she was still herself as she showed one of her wonderful characteristic smiles that had the effect of lighting up even the darkest of rooms.

“Did you get the bastard?” Tracy asked as they left the treatment room, the Commander providing her with some support as she was still having a bit of difficulty walking. She was supposed to rest but Tracy being Tracy, she was having known of that, at least not yet.

“Yep, we got him” the Commander confirmed “Not very chatty though” he remarked “He did start to look rather uneasy when I mentioned the kneecaps thing though.”

“You haven't damaged him have you love?” Tracy asked.

“No” the Commander responded “Just left him to stew a bit, think over his options.”

“Let me guess” Tracy remarked “Tell us everything you know or you introduce him to two heavily built blokes who will go to work on him with a pair of pliers and a hacksaw?”

“Lets say I sort of implied it” the Commander admitted as they exited the hospital, stepping out into the early evening air where a patrol car was waiting to take them back to New Scotland Yard “Of course I could just let the engineer from the bus company have a go at him with a monkey wrench, that would get him talking and no mistake.”

Tracy gently eased herself into the back of the car with the Commander's assistance before he joined her, getting in the car on the other side.

“Looks like I'll be needing a new motorbike as well” Tracy admitted “Not that I'll be in any fit state to ride one for a week or two” she looked down at the dishevelled state of her uniform, a condition that more normally occurred to the Commander than herself.

“I'll see what I can do my love” the Commander confirmed before calling to the officer driving the car, one of Jennifer Caverner's specialist VIP Protection Division drivers “Back to the office please mate” he called “preferably via a chip shop.”

“What do we have on this private security firm?” Cassini asked as he consulted various maps of the area surrounding Perivale's house in the middle of the large table at the centre of the incident room.

“It's an outfit that specialises in the discrete movement of valuables, antiques, art, that kind of stuff” Sir Richard confirmed “They do a lot of work for the likes of major galleries, collectors, foreign government embassies, auction houses, that kind of thing.”

“So we are looking at probably half a dozen vehicles at least I would have thought” Cassini remarked “Add to that no idea of destination, route or cargo, it could wind up being a very complicated evening.”

“And we are not talking 'B' team amateur hour here either” Sir Richard added “These firms only employ the best guards and specialist anti crime counter measure specialists, many ex services and the like.”

“Which means if we keep too close a watch on Perivale and his wagon train to wherever, we could wind up being blown before we have even left the starting grid” Cassini chucked his pen casually onto the map on the desk in frustration and ran his hands through his hair, accompanied by a long yawn.

“When was the last time you got any sleep?” Sir Richard enquired.

“Two, maybe three days ago” Cassini confirmed, rubbing his eyes.

“Here” Tracy announced as she entered the incident room with a pot of fresh coffee and some cups “Maybe this will help.”

“Welcome back” Sir Richard responded with a smile “Are you ok?” he asked.

“I’ve been better” Tracy admitted casually as she poured a much needed coffee for Cassini and passed it across to him.

“Thanks Maam” he responded “Where’s the boss?”

“Struggling his way up the stairs with two dozen fish and chip suppers” Tracy confirmed as the Commander duly came through the door with a large cardboard box, he was preceded by the distinctive and much welcome smell of fresh fish and chips.

“Help yourselves ladies and gents” the Commander called to the various officers on the incident room who were more than happy to oblige “Courtesy of an anonymous benefactor shall we say.”

“I should come over to the Yard more often” Sir Richard remarked with delight as the Commander handed him a battered sausage and chips that he had purchased specifically for him “Get much better fed here.”

“Any word from our friend Havelock?” the Commander asked.

“Still simmering gently down there” Sir Richard confirmed.

“Better nip down and see if he is done yet then” the Commander declared, rubbing his hands with glee “Hold on to some chips for me.”

“Mind if I tag along love?” Tracy asked, joining the Commander as he left the incident room and taking his arm in hers.

“Are you sure you are up to this?” the Commander asked her as they headed down the stairs to the basement detention floor.

“The one remarkable thing about having some no neck muppet trying to kill you” Tracy remarked wryly “is that it does wonders for the old adrenalin supply.”

Downstairs, the dark cell in which Havelock was sitting was being guarded on the outside by two large tall officers who dwarfed Tracy and the Commander as they arrived.

"How is he?" the Commander asked the officers on duty.

"Hasn't shifted an inch Sir" one of the two officers confirmed as the other unlocked and opened the heavy metal door.

"Good evening" the Commander declared as he and Tracy entered the room and approached the small table, behind which was still sat, emotionless and defiant, Havelock.

"So" the Commander asked as he put his hands on the table and leant forward, looking Havelock square in the eyes "Feel like talking yet?"

"Not exactly the garrulous type is he?" Tracy remarked casually.

"Indeed" the Commander agreed "Oh, I'm sorry you haven't been introduced. Mr Havelock, meet Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner, the wife you tried to kill earlier in case you wondering."

"You know really, I should punch you in the mouth" Tracy commented.

"Later my dear" the Commander advised her "First there is some business to discuss."

"Where's my lawyer?" Havelock demanded to know.

"Probably stuck in traffic" the Commander responded "It's chaos out there thanks to some idiot deciding to steal a bus and crash it into a serving senior officer of this service slap bang in the middle of Victoria Street."

"There is a guy from the bus company who wouldn't mind a word with you though" Tracy added.

"Your old friend Lord Perivale is flying the coop" the Commander gleefully informed Havelock.

"What?" Havelock responded.

"Clearing out, bugging off, setting sail into the sunset" the Commander continued "And I think it would be safe to say that any percentage he owes you is walking out of the door with him."

"Would a deal be out of the question?" Havelock enquired, realising that he had now been firmly left out to dry, a realisation that the Commander was making sure was emphasised to its fullest extent.

"You spill the beans on your buddy Perivale" the Commander responded "I'll put in a word and a decent bottle of scotch to the Attorney General and see what we can work out."

There was an awkward silence in the darkened room as Havelock gave serious consideration to his situation and his options which were limited in the extreme.

"All right" Havelock responded with a heavy sigh of resignation "Lord Perivale basically was my boss throughout my Civil Service career" he explained "I did his dirty work, be it with manipulation of reams of paperwork or more erm physical interventions."

“Yeah, I've seen the results of your more physical skills” the Commander remarked “So where did the whole diamond affair come in?”

“Just before Christmas of 1968” Havelock confirmed “There was a closed cabinet meeting of the various Treasury Ministers and key civil servants, I was there as Perivale's aide.”

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“As you are no doubt aware gentlemen” the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Malcolm Oliver remarked in the cigar smoke filled conference room somewhere deep in the heart of the Treasury “The current fiscal forecasts are at best poor and at worst utterly catastrophic.”

There were mumbles of concern amid the men present in the meeting for a few moments in response to Oliver's statement of concern before he continued.

“Mr Henderson” Oliver turned to one of the Civil Servants sat nearby who looked up with a worried frown at the calling of his name “You've been championing this daft project in the North Sea as the salvation of this nation's fortunes and this Government has poured a not inconsiderable amount of public money into it on your recommendation so when are we going to see some oil at the end of this mythical rainbow?”

“Well Minister” Henderson responded “It's not that easy, you don't just drill a random hole in the middle of the ocean and up pops crude oil, this is not the Beverley Hillbillies Sir.”

“No it certainly isn't” Oliver agreed “They found oil, from what I have seen your operation has found sweet Fanny Adams hasn't it?”

“Current projections” Henderson responded as he leapt to the defence of his own project and consulted his records “clearly indicate that we can look forward to substantial revenue within the next five to seven years.”

“I hate to rain on your parade my dear fellow” Oliver quickly responded “but at the rate the economy is going down the toilet, we won't have another five to seven months before this country is declared bankrupt.”

“Ahem” Perivale quietly interrupted with a cough “If the Minister would care to examine my proposal on the diversification issue that I submitted yesterday, he would see that there are other possibilities and stop gap measures we can implement to keep the UK economy topped up at least until this North Sea project commences its earning potential.”

“You want to gamble the Government's major cash reserves on the commodities market?” Oliver asked Perivale pointedly “It's a hell of a risk isn't it?”

“Much like any form of investment” Perivale coolly responded “there is always the element of risk involved, however my proposals, if approved and implemented that is, would see what risk there is spread over a wide range meaning that any potential losses would be far outweighed by financial benefits providing the current forecasts hold up.”

“That's what I like about you” Oliver responded with a chuckle “You talk utter bollocks most of the time but its dazzlingly convincing!”

“Thank you Sir” Perivale responded “I think....”

“All right” Oliver agreed “Come through to my office and we will discuss your proposal. Unless there is any other business, then I declare this meeting adjourned.”

Once dismissed, the various men around the conference table got up and began to file out of the door until only Perivale, Havelock and Oliver remained.

“Ok” Oliver declared “You have my attention, lets hear the details.”

“Well the main objective is to diversify as much of the UK Government's reserves into other commodities and currencies as possible whilst the pound sterling is still holding some value as current predictions say it is due to nose dive very soon now” Perivale explained.

“The commodities you mention in your report” Oliver commented “Gold, futures markets, US dollars, diamonds, etc. the list is pretty extensive.”

“Merely a discussion document really” Perivale admitted “However I do feel that the public would have more confidence in the pound, the economy and this Government if we were seen to be investing to protect the public purse.”

“What would be your timetable if you got the green light?” Oliver asked, clearly taking a serious interest in the proposal.

“Well at the current moment” Perivale consulted his notes as Havelock sat just behind him and looked on “I believe that if we are to capitalise on the best investments with the most profitable returns, we would be looking at an initial phase of sixty million pounds split equally between US dollars and diamonds over the next two months.”

“And what sort of return are you forecasting on this initial phase of investment?” Oliver enquired.

“On the basis of current forecasts for the next two years” Perivale once again consulted his notes “I believe we would be looking at a twenty to thirty percent growth margin by the end of 1970.”

“I am beginning to see why you suggested this idea” Oliver was forced to admit candidly “With a return like that, we could keep the economy and the Government afloat for some time.”

“What about the public perception?” Havelock interrupted with a suggestion that Perivale had in fact told him to come into the discussion with prior to this meeting “If we are going to be investing a substantial sum of the public's money in these commodities, they will want to see what it is they've invested in.”

“An interesting idea” Perivale agreed “The positive publicity that could be garnered from the public being allowed to view up close what are in effect their gold, diamonds or whatever would certainly put this Government in a favourable light.”

“Diamonds are a Government publicity officer's best friend?” Oliver responded with a chuckle “The Prime Minister will love that!”

“So do you think this idea has legs then?” Perivale asked.

“I'll take it to the Prime Minister this afternoon before he heads to Chequers for the Christmas holidays” Oliver confirmed “You will have your answer in the New Year I would have thought.”

“Excellent” Perivale responded.

“Thank you gentlemen” Oliver concluded “If we play this right, we may just save the economy and our jobs!”

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“So it was Perivale who set the wheels in motion then?” the Commander asked.

“The whole thing was conceived by him some months before that initial meeting” Havelock confirmed “If he could persuade the Government into investing in some attractive commodity which could then go on public display, he could pull off a hell of a theft and live off the interest alone until his retirement, meanwhile the Government would be happy as they claim the insurance and probably make a profit on it to boot.”

“Very clever” Tracy remarked “Perivale may be a double dealing two faced thieving scumbag but you have to admit he's got quite a brain in there somewhere.”

“I assume that when Perivale got his approval from the Prime Minister was when things began to move?” the Commander asked.

“Yes” Havelock responded with a nod of the head “A couple of days into the New Year, Perivale and I were summoned to Number Eleven for a quick meeting with Oliver.”

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“You think this is it?” Havelock asked Perivale as they got out of the ministerial Rover car outside Number Eleven Downing Street.

“I would have thought so” Perivale confirmed but he was clearly concerned by something as they headed towards the door “Trouble is this is an awfully short meeting that has been scheduled.”

“Meaning?” Havelock responded as they were allowed inside Number Eleven.

“It doesn't long to say no” Perivale explained the reason for his concern.

“It doesn't take long to say yes either you know” Havelock reassured Perivale as they were quickly shown into Oliver's office.

“Gentlemen” Oliver greeted them warmly as they arrived “Have a seat, help yourselves to a drink. Had a good Christmas?”

“Err yes, thank you Sir” Perivale confirmed as Havelock poured two drinks from the decanter on the desk.

“Terrific” Oliver responded before looking at them across the vast desk with a wry grin.

“Yes Sir?” Perivale enquired slightly nervously.

“The Prime Minister said yes” Oliver confirmed with glee.

“Told you Sir” Havelock remarked aside.

"He was especially enthusiastic about the idea of making as much positive publicity as possible out of this idea" Oliver continued "Gawd knows, this Government needs it at the moment" he admitted.

"And the numbers involved?" Perivale enquired.

"Thirty million authorised for the diamond purchase and a further twenty million for the conversion to US dollars as part of the first phase" Oliver confirmed as he handed across a substantial document containing the approved details.

"My goodness" Perivale remarked as he took the documents "That's one hell of an impressive blank cheque."

"Don't spend it on anything too frivolous" Oliver joked "There's the possibility of an election in April so if we could have this up and running for March then it would be appreciated at the highest level."

"Consider it done Sir" Perivale responded enthusiastically as he got up and after shaking the Minister's hand, departed with Havelock.

An hour later, Perivale was enjoying a celebratory drink in the warm secure confines of his club with Havelock.

"Well it looks like we are on our way" Perivale declared with a glow of satisfaction "Now is the time my friend for you to bring your talents to this affair."

"You mean how do we walk off with thirty plus million in diamonds and get away with it?" Havelock asked "Well I have a few ideas."

"It needs to be spectacular" Perivale commented thoughtfully "Something that gets the public's attention in a huge media frenzy."

"Whilst at the same time providing a gang of patsies whilst we saunter off to a quiet corner and count our earnings" Havelock added "and leave the public, the Government and the law none the wiser."

"What I need from you" Perivale leaned forward towards Havelock and carefully instructed him "is a solid fool proof plan worked out to every detail. I want you to put together the best heist team in East London and then drop the details of the diamond display right in their laps."

"Some of those old lags are experienced veterans" Havelock remarked "Won't they get suspicious?"

"The wonderful thing about the prospect of getting your hands on a large sum of money is that it can have the effect of making someone blind to the obvious" Perivale remarked "Greed has many uses in many different forms."

"Of course the trick will be to make it look like our little gang stole the diamonds beyond any reasonable doubt" Havelock added "We may need to grease the wheels of evidence in order to convince a jury."

"A jury could be better persuaded if there is the additional moral weight of media fuelled public outrage thrown in, nicely coupled with the clamour for quick and definite justice" Perivale continued.

"A few carefully placed and well reported incidents can take care of that" Havelock confirmed "All we need is a stage and our players."

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"So I went out and identified a potential crew for the job" Havelock confirmed.

"Whom I assume never knew that the diamonds were either phonies or just not there in the first place?" the Commander asked.

"Correct" Havelock confirmed "It was vitally important that the whole caper looked as convincing as possible."

"Leaving the real diamond theft completely undetected" Tracy remarked "Actually, were the diamonds ever in the country in the first place?"

"Oh they were here all right" the Commander confirmed "Richard Crowthorne wrote in his notes that he followed the delivery from the airport. My guess it was a shell game."

"You've lost me" Tracy responded.

"Two security vans to transport a consignment of diamonds that in the heist fitted into just one" the Commander confirmed.

"Pretty much spot on" Havelock confirmed "The cases containing the real diamonds were loaded into one van, a set of carefully weighted identical looking cases were loaded into the other."

"So the show at Downing Street was from the van containing the real ones but only the fake ones and the dummy cases were unloaded at Lewisham."

"Now that is one hell of an insurance scam" Tracy admitted.

"Where are the diamonds now?" the Commander asked.

"The general stuff is deposited in a vault somewhere in the City" Havelock confirmed "The bulk including the show diamonds are in a bank in Switzerland."

"That most likely means that our friend Lord money bags Perivale is going to lead us on a merry dance" Tracy remarked "before giving us the slip and bugging off to the land of cheese and cuckoo clocks."

"Thank you for your co-operation" the Commander remarked before turning to leave. Outside the door, the Commander turned to the guards with instructions.

"Make sure he gets a meal, a decent bed and his lawyer" the Commander instructed.

"Yes Sir" the officer confirmed as Tracy and the Commander left.

"Ok then" Cassini briefed a large group of his team around a large old cable drum on which was placed a map of the local area around Perivale's house "This is likely to be one of the most complicated surveillance operations we have ever done and the most tricky."

As Cassini continued his briefing, the Commander arrived in the old builders yard where they had been gathering and joined the briefing.

"We are dealing here with one of the best private security firms in the business" Cassini continued after acknowledging the Commander's arrival "They have some of the best counter surveillance experts and high level security escorts that money can buy, therefore it is necessary to have a large number of teams working varied short stretch observation stints because if the same vehicle is seen to be following them for more than five minutes, they will push the panic button."

"Unfortunately" the Commander regretfully added "We have no idea of route, destination or indeed anything else for that matter so expect to be given the scenic mystery tour" he warned.

"We have been granted the luxury of a dedicated radio frequency" Cassini continued "This ties us in with the Divisional Commander Cavener in the Operations Room at Cardinal Place plus our colleagues from MI5 who will be providing additional support when we reach the central parts of the city."

"Ten minutes until the convoy is scheduled to arrive" the Commander declared as he consulted his old pocket watch "We should get moving."

"Any questions?" Cassini asked "No? Good, let's get going then."

With that, the numerous officers dispersed to their varied and wide variety of vehicles and departed for their various starting positions in preparation for this highly complicated operation to begin.

"Alpha One to the Missus" the Commander called over his radio as he, travelling in an ordinary plain saloon car with Cassini, moved into position in a cul-de-sac just around the corner from Perivale's house "Anyone there?"

"Evening love" Tracy responded from her seat at the main console in the dedicated operations room "You're on the air" she confirmed.

"This looks like what we came to see Sir" Cassini commented as into the residential street ahead, drove a dark coloured luxury saloon car whilst the rest of the vehicles making up the convoy, two more cars, a large heavily armour plated security transport van and four motorcycle outriders, formed together out in the main road.

"Showtime ladies and gentlemen" Cassini declared over the radio "Your points of interest for this evening are a Mercedes saloon in dark grey, four, repeat four motorcycle outriders, two Ford Mondeo escort cars in dark blue with four occupants in each probably armed and finally one very big armour plated van."

"There's Perivale" the Commander announced as he observed through binoculars Lord Perivale leave his home and climb into the back of the saloon car with a suitcase and a small holdall.

"All units from Eagle One" Cassini announced as the saloon car drove out onto the main road and was followed by the convoy of vehicles in close formation "We are rolling."

"Now the fun begins" Tracy remarked to Sir Richard as they watched on the massive screen at the front of the room, the initial progress of the convoy, marked by a gold star on a projected map.

Also marked on the map were a significant number of other dots of various colours showing the current locations of the twenty plus vehicles plus on foot officers ready to track the convoy on its journey into central London.

"Unit three" Cassini called as they approached the motorway "Come in at the junction, we'll jump ahead. Unit five prepare to take over at the next junction after that and we'll see where this goes."

Tracy watched the convoy come onto the motorway junction ramp by way of the traffic monitoring camera live feed which also showed one of Cassini's teams in an anonymous looking car following discreetly behind.

"Put the kettle on" Tracy remarked to Sir Richard, "It's going to a long night."

"I hate motorways" the Commander remarked as he travelled in Cassini's vehicle, hanging back a distance from the convoy to avoid detection "They all look the same, endless lines of concrete and barriers, even in the dark."

"Indeed" Cassini was forced to agree with the Commander's sentiments but was interrupted by the radio calling.

"Unit five to Eagle One" the call came through "We are going to pull off at the next junction."

"Roger that" Cassini confirmed "Unit six take over from there, units five, three and six, jump on ahead to the junction with the M25."

"You might want to rethink that" Tracy warned from the Operations Room as she scanned the screens with some concern "There is a jack knifed lorry two junctions up and the traffic is starting to build up."

"What's the word from the Traffic Division guys?" the Commander asked.

"It looks like an all nighter apparently" Tracy confirmed "the fuel tank has split and that means nothing moves until the guy from the Environment Agency has been down with his bottles and a tea towel."

"Ok all units from Eagle One" Cassini announced "Be aware we may have a bail off the motorway in one or two junction's time."

"If they come off at the next junction" the Commander remarked "then we know their boys are tied into the traffic monitoring channels."

"Unit five to Eagle One" the next call came through "They are indicating to pull off at the junction."

"Looks like the scenic route then" Cassini confirmed as alongside him, the Commander consulted a map but then gave up and casually chucked it over his shoulder onto the back seat.

“Tracy” the Commander called “You’re the navigator in the family, if you were heading into central London and the motorway was blocked, what would be your route from this next junction.”

“Err” Tracy responded, not entirely sure as she consulted a map herself with help from Sir Richard “I’d head into town either by going through Hammersmith or alternatively up and in via the Marylebone Road route.”

“If they stick to the main roads” Cassini added “We can probably get around and ahead of them by using the back roads on sirens and lights.”

“Here we go” the Commander declared as some distance ahead, the convoy could just be seen pulling off the motorway at the next exit.

In a couple of minutes, they were down onto the 'A' roads and continuing into the city whereupon the car identified as Unit Five duly pulled off down a side street and was immediately replaced by a fresh vehicle and officers using the call sign of Unit Six.

“Where did you find some of these motors?” the Commander asked as he saw the rather battered state of the car in front with its exhaust pipe being held on with a piece of baler twine attached from it to the rear bumper.

“All I could scrape together at short notice” Cassini was forced to admit “Mostly the cast offs from various seizures and operations that the Garage Chief had lying around.”

“Definite borderline MOT that one” the Commander commented “Just hope none of my uniformed boys pull it over at the wrong moment.”

“Eagle One from Control” Tracy called as she continued to consult her map in connection with the status display on the large screen in the Operations Room “Take your next left, that puts you on the back roads, then give it a couple of minutes before hitting your sirens and lights.”

“Tracy love” the Commander responded as Cassini took the turning indicated “Can you get onto traffic control and ask them to bugger about a bit with their traffic lights computer, the more red lights Perivale and his wagon train encounter between here and the centre of the city the better.”

“I’ll put a call into them now” Tracy confirmed “Should I throw in a bottle of Scotch as well?”

“Good thinking dear” the Commander confirmed wryly “Just remind them not to drink and drive.”

“Should be clear now” Cassini confirmed as they continued down the rather dark unlit back road that probably looked just as depressing in the daylight as it did now in the late evening darkness.

“Hit the sirens and burn rubber” the Commander requested.

“Your final journey instructions” Perivale informed as he passed a document to the representative from the security company as the saloon car continued into the heart of the city at the front of the convoy “A private vault facility in Kentish Town” he confirmed.

“That's a very specialist private facility” the representative commented with admiration “You must have something very expensive to protect.”

“Just a little nest egg” Perivale confirmed coolly, not wishing to give away anything about the true nature of the cargo they were going to collect “Something for a rainy day you might say.”

“Well considering what that place usually stores” the representative remarked as he passed the destination and routing details forward to the car's driver “You must have been saving for a monsoon season.”

“Very funny” Perivale responded with a chuckle “Do we have any uninvited guests with us?”

“Last sweep just before we left the motorway showed up nothing of significance” the representative confirmed “Besides, if there were anyone tracking us, that little diversion from the motorway would have thrown most off the scent and once we enter central London, if any vehicles make a repeat appearance, we can take care of them.”

“Define 'take care of them' just to satisfy my curiosity” Perivale enquired.

“My men are some of the best private anti-terrorist experts in the business” the representative responded “If we have any uninvited guests, they will be made to see the error of their ways, firstly by polite business like means, then if that doesn't work, we resort to more traditional means.”

“A baseball bat to the kneecaps?” Perivale asked.

“When you absolutely beyond doubt have to persuade someone to get lost” the representative joked as he extracted a large bat from beneath the seat and showed it off proudly “accept no substitutes.”

“Ever considered going into the armed robbery business?” Perivale remarked.

“With the fees we charge” the representative confirmed with a wry smile “we don't need to, besides the one person in this City I don't want to wind up going against is the Administrator General, especially not after what I read in the paper today about him.”

“Yes” Perivale agreed “That was quite remarkable wasn't it?”

"Eagle one from Control" Tracy called over the radio as Cassini drove at speed along the darker back roads towards the centre of London "Our convoy of friends is heading towards Marylebone and will then be heading up towards Kentish Town."

"How on earth did you find that out?" the Commander responded.

"Lets just say a little bird told me" Tracy explained evasively causing both Cassini and the Commander to look bemused in response.

"All right" the Commander replied after a pause for thought, "Have the clan of Crowthorne gather near Marylebone Station and prepare to pick up the convoy from there, meanwhile have someone go through the computer and identify anywhere in the Kentish Town area which is capable of storing diamonds securely without attracting the attention of the Inland Revenue."

"Sir Richard is heading out the door now" Tracy confirmed "I'll have a probable destination for this wagon train by the time you reach Marylebone."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded.

"That makes things a little easier" Cassini confirmed as he turned onto one of the main roads heading towards the Edgware Road area and Marylebone.

"Unit eight to Eagle One" came a call over the radio.

"Go ahead" Cassini responded.

"The convoy is now approaching the inner orbital ring road" came the confirmation "They seem to be running into an awful lot of red lights mind."

"Well done Tracy" the Commander remarked.

"Marylebone coming up" Cassini announced as he turned off the main road and parked in the forecourt area of Marylebone Station.

"Thanks for the lift" the Commander responded as he got out of the car.

"Keep in touch" Cassini advised.

The Commander headed across the street and into the main entrance of the station where, outside the buffet enjoying a coffee he found Sir Richard and also spotted various members of his team around the place.

"Good evening Commander" Sir Richard declared as he was joined by the Commander "How are we doing?"

"Our friends are apparently going to Kentish Town" the Commander informed him "They should be passing here in about ten minutes.

"I had better rally my troops together then" Sir Richard declared.

"Mind if I tag along with your lads and lasses?" the Commander asked as they turned to leave the station.

"You're always welcome" Sir Richard confirmed as they left the station and proceeded to his car waiting outside.

"Eagle One" the Commander called over the radio to Cassini "Take a couple of your best teams and proceed directly to Kentish Town, if Tracy comes up with a specific location, give it a going over in your usual style."

"Will do Sir" Cassini responded before signing off and driving away.

"Control from Alpha One" the Commander called as he got into the drivers seat of Sir Richard's car "Where is the wagon train now love?"

"According to my display here" Tracy confirmed as she consulted her screens in the Control Room "they should be passing by your position in about one minute."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded "Ok, lets get moving" he announced as he started the car and moved off, this in turn saw the commencement of a virtual tide of other vehicles moving off in close formation.

Sure enough as indicated, no sooner had the Commander paused the car at the end of a side street than the convoy passed them by on the main road.

"There's our baby" the Commander declared.

"Ok everyone" Sir Richard called over the radio, "You all know what to do, let's get this party started."

As the Commander pulled out into the sparse traffic a few vehicles behind the convoy, a call came through from Tracy.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen" Tracy gleefully announced "Your destination today for this evening is most likely to be the premises of the North London Central Secure Storage Company at one two seven Argyle Street, Kentish Town."

"Well done love" the Commander responded "How far is that from the station?"

"About half a mile" Tracy confirmed as she consulted her A to Z map book.

"Eagle One from Alpha One" the Commander called "Cassini, did you get that?"

"On my way there now Sir" Cassini confirmed.

"Give the place a through look over" the Commander instructed "Then meet me outside the tube station in twenty minutes."

"I'll see you there" Cassini confirmed.

"Your lads and lasses capable of taking care of this lot?" the Commander asked Sir Richard.

"Shouldn't be a problem" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Good" the Commander responded as he took a sharp turn off the road to the left and headed down a side street "By the way, is this car insured?"

"It's actually my own one" Sir Richard responded with a tone of concern "Why?"

"It's just that the route I am about to take involves high speed and road humps" the Commander confirmed "I think I've picked up some bad habits from Tracy."

"Oh dear..." Sir Richard remarked as the Commander braked sharply but too late for a speed hump that they went over with quite a crunch.

Some miles away in Kentish Town in north London, Cassini quietly pulled into the side of the road a short distance from the secure storage facility that had been identified a short time earlier by Tracy.

Getting out and locking his vehicle, Cassini then proceeded down the road as if he was an ordinary passing by pedestrian, strolling casually past the rather anonymous non-descript building that housed the secure storage facility.

Checking the main front entrance as he passed, Cassini quickly noted the very secure lock and the constantly observing CCTV camera above before continuing along the street.

"Eagle One to unit seven" Cassini called into his hidden radio "Meet me around the back of the target premises and bring the night vision gear."

"Will do boss" came the reply as Cassini quickly ducked into a side alley, making his way past several rubbish bins that were stored back there and then out into the very narrow unlit side street that ran along the back of the various premises that fronted on to the main road.

He was careful to stay out of sight of the additional CCTV cameras that the secure storage facility had which watched over the rear of the premises into the back alley however from his position, Cassini could see virtually nothing thanks largely to the mostly unlit nature of his current location.

At the far end of the alleyway, a car pulled past and stopped that Cassini instantly recognised as one of his units and so gave up trying to look the place over and went over to join them.

"Evening Guv" one of Cassini's officers called as he joined them, getting into the back of the car.

"Evening" Cassini responded "Did you bring the surveillance and night vision gear?"

"In the boot Sir" the officer confirmed.

"Terrific" Cassini replied "I need a full survey of the secure storage facility from both front and back in the next ten minutes. There is an empty office building overlooking the front and a scaffolding hire company yard overlooking the rear but the back bit is darker than my brother in a coal mine at midnight."

"Will do boss" the second officer confirmed as they all got out of the car and went around to the back of the vehicle, only to pause momentarily when they noticed a dark coloured van with its lights off pull slowly down the alley way and stop immediately behind the storage facility, alongside its back door.

"Chuck us one of them night vision doo-dars" Cassini requested.

"Here you go" one of the officers responded as he reached inside the boot of the car and passed out to him a pair of night vision goggles that Cassini used to look down the alley way at the van.

"One of ours?" one of the officers asked.

"I don't think so" Cassini responded thoughtfully as he adjusted his goggles to get a better view "Two men in the front and its just sitting there" he confirmed.

"We'll check it out" one of the officers confirmed.

"Thanks lads" Cassini responded "If you can get the reg number, have the legendary Divisional Commander Caverner run it through the system and see what turns up."

With that, Cassini left his officers to their task and proceeded eastwards along the road towards the Underground Station where outside the main entrance, the Commander with Sir Richard were just arriving.

"Dear oh dear" Cassini commented as he noticed some fresh damage to the car "Did you sideswipe an elephant or something Sir?" he asked.

"I really must have a word with the traffic division about their damm traffic calming measures" the Commander remarked whilst Sir Richard examined the damage.

"You should join us guys in Undercover Surveillance Sir" Cassini remarked "We drive carefully, quietly and serenely otherwise we wouldn't be much use."

"Good point" the Commander agreed "Where's our wagon train?"

"About ten minutes away" Cassini confirmed "However we may have a new problem."

"I thought it was going too easily" Sir Richard remarked.

“There's a plain van parked around the back of the storage facility, arrived about five minutes ago” Cassini explained.

“Did you get a number off of it?” the Commander asked.

“It's being run through the computer now” Cassini confirmed which prompted the Commander to reach for his radio.

“Lima Alpha One to Control” he called “Tracy, are you there love?”

“Receiving dear” Tracy confirmed.

“I don't suppose you have a name on that van that Cassini's boys have called in by any chance?” he inquired.

“Details just coming through now” Tracy confirmed “Hang on a minute.”

“Are you thinking what I am thinking?” Sir Richard asked, seeing the expression of thought on the Commander's face and knowing full well what it meant.

“Yeah” the Commander confirmed as he waited for Tracy to get back to him “I'm wondering if old Perivale is going to pull off his shell game trick again.”

“Come again?” Cassini inquired.

“Last time around, he used two vans” the Commander explained “One contained the real diamonds which was duly shown to the public and press, the other van which was the one actually unloaded at Lewisham contained identical looking and weighted cases plus a selection of replicas of the show diamonds.”

“Sneaky” Cassini remarked.

“So that's how it was done” Sir Richard realised.

“Lima Alpha One, come in please” Tracy's voice called at that moment.

“Go ahead love” the Commander responded.

“Mercedes Sprinter van registration number Lima Foxtrot Five Six Oscar November Golf is registered to a van hire company in East London” Tracy read from the screen in front of her “Two things interesting about it though” she added.

“You have me suitably intrigued my dear” the Commander responded “Do continue.”

“The reg number is just two digits away from that of Perivale's armoured van” Tracy explained “Also the tip off about where they were heading came from the guy who is down on the computer as the registered owner of the van hire company.”

“Does this gentleman have a name?” the Commander asked.

“A chap by the name of Barry Roberts of 53 Calvadere Avenue, Lewisham” Tracy responded “He sends his regards by the way.”

“Well I'll be damned” the Commander responded “Now there's a blast from the past.”

“Yes” Tracy replied “I thought you would appreciate that!”

“Thanks love” the Commander called back “I'll see you later.”

“You know Lord Perivale should really more carefully check who he does business with” Sir Richard remarked with amusement.

“Indeed” the Commander agreed “Right Commander Cassini, show me this van.”

“This way Sir” Cassini confirmed as he led the way down the road as they proceeded on foot.

“If we hit the security van convoy” Sir Richard commented as they headed down the street “All we will probably find is an empty van, a smirking Lord Perivale and his attendant army of well paid lawyers, no case, he walks.”

“I have to admit he is just a bit more clever than I have given him credit for” the Commander admitted

"Here we are" Cassini declared as they turned a corner into a side street, "I have half a dozen of my people dotted around both front and back, no one is going in or out of that place without us knowing about it."

"Where is our mystery guest?" the Commander enquired.

"Down there to the left" Cassini indicated.

"You know that Perivale is anticipating us being around you realise" Sir Richard remarked "He is counting on us to provide him with a cast iron alibi, indeed I would bet that he is depending on it."

"Then it would be a pity to disappoint him wouldn't it?" the Commander responded knowingly.

"Eagle One from Unit Seven" came the call over Cassini's radio.

"Go ahead."

"Convoy now approaching target location but two of the motorcycle outriders have peeled off" came the message.

At the exact same moment that Perivale's car and the rest of the convoy pulled up outside the front of the building, the sound of a roller shutter type door being opened was heard to come from the back.

"Unit Three" Cassini called "Ziggy, sounds like something is occurring, tell me what you can see."

"Boss, we have two security guards coming out of the rear of the target premises with a trolley on which is a significant number of cases of some kind" the report came back.

"Tell me they are being loaded into the back of that van" the Commander asked.

"Indeed they are" came the confirmation.

"I hate it when I'm right" the Commander responded with some regret.

"Eagle One from Unit Five" came another call "There are a number of boxes of something being loaded into the van parked out front and Target One is overseeing the whole thing."

"Commander Cassini" the Commander declared "Put a couple of your teams on the visible convoy and make sure you have some Armed Support Units shadow you. When I give the signal, I will be requiring that convoy to be stopped and seized with everything we can throw at it."

"I think I can arrange that, but what about this van?" Cassini asked, indicating the vehicle in the back alleyway which, judging from the sounds of doors being closed, was preparing to leave.

"Leave that one to me" the Commander confirmed "I have a couple of ideas about that."

We should be ready to go in about five minutes" the security guard who was supervising the loading outside the front of the secure storage facility confirmed.

"Excellent" Lord Perivale confirmed with a grin of delight "You know where to meet me so if you will excuse me..."

As Perivale left, the last cases were loaded into the van and the doors firmly closed.

Above, observing from the roof top of the building opposite, one of Cassini's officers noted what was going on and reported in.

"Unit Four to Eagle One" he called, having handed over the binoculars to his colleague who continued to observe.

"Go ahead" Cassini responded.

"Front door van loading has been completed" the officer confirmed "It looks like they will be moving off in a minute or two."

"Thank you" Cassini responded.

"Target one is moving off" the officer added.

"In a vehicle or on foot?" Cassini inquired.

"On foot" came the confirmation "It looks like he is heading for the station."

"Now where the hell is he going?" the Commander remarked.

"I think its called full deniability" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Right" the Commander organised everyone's assignments "Sir Richard, have your people follow the van down there" he indicated the van parked behind the building in the back alley "Cassini, stick to the convoy out front like glue and get ready to have everyone you can round up, hit it with everything we have."

"Where are you going?" Sir Richard asked.

"Wherever Perivale is going" the Commander confirmed as he left them "Good evening gentlemen."

Lord Perivale approached the terracotta red tiled entrance of Kentish Town Underground Station calmly, blending easily into the sparse pedestrian traffic that was around at that time of the evening.

He was aware of the potential of being tracked if he used his Oyster Card pass so instead Perivale purchased a ticket from the machine before proceeding through the barriers and on down the escalators to platform level.

A few moments later as Perivale disappeared from view down the escalator, one of the ticket barriers beeped as it let through an Oyster Card user that did attract attention.

Many miles away in the Control Room at New Scotland Yard, Tracy looked to her right as one of the screens started flashing a live update which she had pre-programmed into her console earlier.

"Lima Alpha One from Control" Tracy called over the radio "Where are you going?"

"Evening love" the Commander replied as he stood at the top of the escalators at Kentish Town, observing Perivale step off at the bottom "I'm just catching a train."

"So I see" Tracy responded "Do you want me to call up the CCTV?"

"If you would be so kind my dear, I would appreciate it" the Commander confirmed as he headed down the escalator.

"Oh look" Tracy commented as she looked at the live feed from the station's CCTV cameras "It's our old friend Lord Money Bags, and he is heading for the southbound platform."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded "Before we lose radio reception down here, could you give me Barry's telephone number?"

Down on the platform level, Lord Perivale waited patiently for the next southbound Northern Line service which according to the indicator was now two minutes away.

The Commander reached the entrance to the platform some distance away and discreetly observed Perivale from the shadows.

It was only once the train of 1995 type tube stock arrived in the platform and Perivale proceeded to board it that the Commander quickly crossed the platform and jumped aboard the train, one car further up.

"Now where are you going my friend?" the Commander asked himself as he observed Perivale through the end carriage windows relax in his seat with an obvious air of confidence.

Tracy had decided that this quiet moment in proceedings was a good opportunity to get a cup of coffee which she subsequently discovered was somewhat more difficult than she had expected with one broken arm in plaster and a sling.

Indeed she took so long struggling back to the control room that when she returned to her console, Tracy discovered she had almost missed a development.

"Where the hell is that one going?" Tracy asked as she surveyed the displacement of all the units involved in the operation on the main screen where she noticed that whilst the main convoy was heading south into and presumably through the main City of London itself, the lone van had taken a different route and looked to be heading elsewhere.

The dots representing Lord Perivale and her husband the Commander meanwhile had come to a stop at Monument Station.

"The Commander just called in Maam" the duty Control Room supervisor informed her "He wants the main convoy stopped and seized when it reaches Bank."

"Everything in place yet?" Tracy enquired.

"Last few units moving in now" the Supervisor confirmed as he put the traffic camera view of the complicated junction area in front of the Bank of England on the main screen.

"Should be quite a show" Tracy remarked "Meanwhile, where is that mad husband of mine going?"

"Looks like he is making a phone call" the Supervisor remarked as he checked the CCTV feed from the westbound District and Circle line platform at Monument Station.

"I'll put a fiver on Perivale heading for Westminster" Tracy commented "I wonder if it would be a good idea to have a couple of units following above ground."

"I'm wondering who he is ringing" the Supervisor wondered as they observed the Commander on the screen struggling with his mobile telephone.

"Calling an old friend I expect" Tracy responded.

"We'll, well, well" Barry remarked with an amused chuckle as he read the final edition of the Evening Standard in the north London office of his van hire and transport firm in Euston.

As he finished reading the story and was about to turn to the sports page to see how West Ham had been doing, the telephone rang.

"South and City Heavy Transport, Barry speaking" he answered the telephone "How can I help you?"

"Hello old friend" the Commander responded "How have you been?"

"Not too bad considering the heart attack I nearly suffered when I read the paper this afternoon" Barry admitted "I always had this sneaky feeling you weren't dead."

"I have to admit it has been a very strange couple of days" the Commander replied "Anyway, sorry I have to cut short the reminiscing but I need a favour."

"Name it" Barry responded.

"Do you have another van, identical to the one that you hired to that Security Company?" the Commander asked.

"Got one parked outside old friend" Barry confirmed "Do you have something in mind perchance?"

"Indeed" the Commander responded "How soon could you meet me outside Monument Tube?" he asked.

"Ten minutes?" Barry looked up at the clock "I'm in my Euston office at the moment, branches all over the city in my little empire."

"Pick me up by the London Bridge end station entrance" the Commander confirmed "Then we are going to have a bit of fun at Lord Perivale's expense."

“I’m on my way” Barry replied as he left his office.

“Control from Lima Alpha One” the Commander called discreetly into his radio as he checked around the corner to see that Perivale was still waiting for the next service, a heavily delayed Circle Line train that had still not arrived despite being advertised as being due for some time now.

“Control” Tracy responded “Nice to hear your voice dear.”

“Agreed” the Commander replied “I suppose you know where I am at the moment?”

“Westbound Circle and District platform at Monument” Tracy confirmed “I have a confession to make...”

“You’ve been delaying the trains again haven’t you?” the Commander commented.

“Let’s just say they are all backed up from Tower Hill backwards” Tracy admitted sheepishly.

“I thought I recognised the work” the Commander commented “Are any of Cassini’s boys around this part of the world at the moment?” he asked.

“I have had two of his boys shadowing you for the last half an hour” Tracy confirmed “I foresee a change of plan approaching.”

“Correct” the Commander responded “Get them to follow Perivale when you let the trains get going again but don’t do that until I have met Barry in his van.”

“You’re not playing some kind of old fashioned switch trick on our friendly Lord now are you?” Tracy asked, knowing full well what the Commander was capable of when he was in one of his devious and sneaky moods.

“Maybe...” the Commander responded slightly evasively “Anyway, I’ll call you later.”

“You’d better” Tracy replied before changing the frequency on the radio console in front of her “Eagle Unit Nine from Control” she called.

“Unit Nine” came the quick but hushed response.

“The boss wants you to take over the shadowing of Target One from Monument onwards” Tracy informed them “The trains will be restarting in about three minutes” she added.

“Do you want us to continue a presence on the Chief?” came the reply.

“No thanks lads” Tracy responded “He’s has other plans for this evening.”

Outside of Monument Station, the Commander looked around the complicated junction which, not uncommon for this time of night, was quiet and devoid of any major traffic and a complete contrast with what it is normally like in the daytime.

As a result of the quiet, the approach of Barry in his van was obvious as he pulled up in front of the Commander and reached across to release the door lock so that he could climb into the front passenger seat.

“You're looking well for a dead twelve year old” Barry remarked with a wry smile as the Commander got in and they warmly shook hands.

“You've got to admit, I didn't do too badly out of it did I?” the Commander responded with a chuckle “Anyway, how did you get mixed up in this mess?”

“I do some sub contracting for that security transport firm your old friend Lord Perivale hired” Barry explained as he drove off down King William Street and across London Bridge “As soon as I read about you in the paper and then got a call from my mate asking for the use of a van tonight for Perivale, I gave your wife a call just in case it meant anything.”

“So where is your van heading?” the Commander asked.

“It's scheduled to pick up Perivale in Westminster in thirty minutes” Barry confirmed “You remember Terry from school?”

“Wasn't he the one running that unofficial tuck shop racket?” the Commander recalled.

“That's him” Barry confirmed “One of my best drivers, normally does the heavy lorry runs but was looking for some overtime so I gave him this van job tonight. He's up to speed on what's occurring.”

“This is almost like old times” the Commander remarked with a grin.

“I have to admit I never thought us lot would ever be together again” Barry agreed “Sorry to hear about your father though, he was a good chap.”

“Thanks” the Commander responded “The funeral's tomorrow” he added with a hint of sadness unusually seeping into his voice.

“I know” Barry confirmed “Me and Laura are coming, actually now I come to think of it, according to Roger Field I believe most of East London is coming.”

“You and Laura?” the Commander picked up on what Barry had said “Is that the same Laura by any chance?”

“It is indeed” Barry confirmed “Married with three kids now.”

“Where does the time go?” the Commander commented.

“You got any?” Barry asked.

“Err no” the Commander explained “Tracy can't have any, besides with the scrapes we keep getting into, any child of ours would probably wind up being an orphan pretty quick.”

“Terry” Barry called over his radio “Whereabouts are you now?” he asked.

“Just heading down Park Lane boss” Terry confirmed “Looks like we have a couple of the plod following us mind.”

“That's nothing” Barry responded “You should see who's sitting next to me” he remarked which made both men smiled broadly.

“Meet up in Buckingham Palace Road outside the Grosvenor Hotel” the Commander suggested to Barry.

“Terry” Barry re-laid the message “Stop outside the Grosvenor Hotel, we'll meet you there.”

“Ok boss” Terry confirmed “On my way.”

“So now what?” Barry asked the Commander.

“Time to start the show” the Commander confirmed as he reached for his radio “Control from Lima Alpha One, hit the convoy as soon as it reaches Bank and make it spectacularly public, wake up the neighbours!”

Two of the motorbikes that were escorting the convoy pulled ahead to make sure the complicated junction at Bank was clear and seeing nothing around of any threat, signalled behind them for the convoy to continue ahead, the plan being to come down Threadneedle Street and turn right into Cheapside.

As the convoy came into the shadow of the imposing frontage of the Bank of England, Commander Cassini, observing from a roof top overlooking the scene prepared to give the call to intercept.

It was a tense moment for the one hundred plus armed officers, some in plain clothes, many in uniform with body armour who were very carefully secreted all around. As the convoy entered the central area of the junction, the road was closed behind them, effectively sealing them in a tight enclosed box from which they would be unable to escape.

“Back Gate this is Eagle One” Cassini called over the radio “Is the door on the latch?”

“We're secure back here” came the confirmation.

“Ok everyone on my mark” Cassini called as the convoy reached the optimum point
“Now, now, now!!” he called loudly.

In an instant, the street seemed to fill with Security Service vehicles and officers who flooded out of surrounding buildings and the various subway entrances of the Underground Station and surrounded the convoy's vehicles, bringing them to an abrupt and sudden halt.

The air was filled with the sound of sirens and shouted orders as the occupants of the convoy vehicles were ordered to come out with their hands up.

Sensibly they did as ordered and by the time that Cassini had arrived, they were all being thoroughly searched before being led away.

"Right" Cassini ordered as the area was confirmed clear "Let's get this van open and see what we haven't got."

After struggling with the back doors of the security van for a couple of minutes, the lock were finally breached and the van opened to reveal its contents as a set of large metal cases.

Cassini climbed inside the van, randomly selected one of the cases and proceeded to open it, duly revealing the contents to be nothing but sawdust.

"Control from Eagle One" Cassini called over the radio "Van and convoy secure, contents verified as worthless unless you own a chinchilla."

"Thanks" Tracy confirmed "Clear up the mess and I'll pass on the message" she responded.

"Lima Alpha One from Control" Tracy called.

"Go ahead love" the Commander responded.

"Cassini just took down the convoy at Bank" Tracy confirmed "As you suspected the van was a decoy."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded "That should make Perivale more smug and comfortable" he remarked.

"Oh hang on" Tracy called as she was handed a note by one of Sir Richard's people "Perivale just got a call about his convoy so he definitely knows now."

"Where is he?" the Commander asked.

"He left Westminster Station about five minutes ago and headed on foot towards Whitehall" Tracy confirmed.

"Well he is due to meet his van of loot there in ten minutes" the Commander confirmed "Better have a few officers on standby in case he tries anything silly."

"I'll see who I can round up" Tracy confirmed.

It was noticeably quiet around Westminster as Lord Perivale turned right from Parliament Square into Parliament Street.

Behind and above him as he walked slowly down the street, the chimes of Big Ben struck out eleven o'clock.

Perivale paused and looked all around for a moment, thinking that there might have been someone following him but saw nothing and instead carried on into Whitehall.

In fact there was someone watching him, two of Cassini's officers who had been shadowing Perivale since they had left Monument Station but were far too experienced to let themselves be noticed by their quarry.

There were also a number of Sir Richard's people observing Perivale as well, observing him from both surrounding buildings and an off duty London Bus parked at the bus stops on the opposite side of the road from Downing Street.

Lord Perivale continued to walk along Whitehall, totally unaware of his attendant audience, passing the entrance to Downing Street.

He stopped when he saw the van he was expecting approach and pull into the side of the road whereupon Perivale got in the front passenger seat before the driver moved off.

As the van continued its journey, heading back towards Parliament Square, the off duty bus pulled away from its stop and followed unnoticed.

"Everything go all right?" Perivale asked as they went around Parliament Square and into Victoria Street, past Westminster Abbey.

"Smooth as a baby's proverbial" the strongly east London accented driver confirmed.

"Excellent" Perivale responded as he relaxed in his seat, albeit that he was used to more comfortable transport than this but it would more than suffice for his needs.

"If you don't mind me asking" the driver asked "You know making light conversation and all, what's the cargo?"

"Oh just a little nest egg" Perivale calmly responded without giving anything away as to the true nature of what he was carrying "Something for a rainy day you might say."

"Well I think one of your eggs may have dropped out of its basket" the driver mentioned "There was a bit of a loud clunk from back there about a half hour ago so you may want to check it if we get the chance."

"Pull up just here" Perivale instructed, indicating a side street up ahead.

"Yeah sure" the driver confirmed as he indicated and turned off the main road as instructed.

"Here is just fine" Perivale instructed whereupon the driver stopped down the side of Sloane Square station.

With understandable caution, Perivale looked around carefully as he got out of the van before proceeding around to the back where he opened the rear doors to reveal his precious cases.

Instinctively, he took one of them and opened it, revealing a bright glitter of real diamonds which reflected the street lights and illuminated Perivale's delighted face.

He took a few moments to take in the beauty of the diamonds before closing the box and returning it to its place in the van and closing the doors.

However closing the right hand door suddenly revealed the Commander standing there much to Perivale's shock and surprise.

"Good evening" the Commander announced "Going somewhere are we?"

"Why should I not be surprised to find you here?" Perivale asked with clear irritation.

"Past form?" the Commander asked.

"Right..." Perivale responded before suddenly throwing open the door of the van, knocking the Commander down.

Before he knew what was happening, the Commander found himself sitting slightly dazed on the pavement as the van accelerated sharply away leaving an equally dazed looking Barry behind as well.

"Damm, blast and belunderations!" the Commander exclaimed as he got up off the pavement before helping Barry to his feet.

"Here" Barry called once he had regained his senses "That bugger has run off with my van!"

"Are you ok?" the Commander enquired as he reached for his radio.

"I'll be all right mate" Barry confirmed.

"Lima Alpha One to control" the Commander called "Suspect making off in a blue Mercedes Sprinter van heading northbound from Sloane Square, registration number Lima Foxtrot Five Six Oscar Mike Romeo."

"Need a lift?" Tracy's voice responded although to the Commanders surprise it did not come as expected from his radio.

Instead, he turned around to see Tracy calling from the front passenger window of a Security Service patrol car which had just pulled up behind them.

"Lovely timing my dear" the Commander responded as he went around to the other side and swapped places with the officer who was driving who helped Barry into the back seat.

"Barry" the Commander called back as he prepared to drive off "Meet Tracy, the wife."

"Evening my dear" Barry greeted.

"Heard a lot about you" Tracy responded "I'm glad to finally meet you at last."

"Hold on to your hats" the Commander called as he accelerated sharply away in pursuit.

"I suppose this means the gloves are off then?" Tracy asked as the Commander steered skilfully around the top part of Sloane Square, the full scream of the sirens and blue flashing lights seeing to it that what few people and vehicles were around at that time of the night got out of the way quickly.

"As far as I am concerned he is running red handed..." the Commander confirmed.

"...in my van" Barry added.

"...and that means I can use every resource we have upon him" the Commander continued "Get out of the way!" he called to a slow moving car that pulled across his path seemingly oblivious to the Security Service patrol car bearing down on it.

"Lima Mike Zero One to Control" Tracy called "We are heading northbound from Sloane Square in pursuit, any reports on location and heading of that van?" she asked.

"It just ran the lights past Harrods heading east" the Control Room responded.

"A change of plan I think" the Commander declared as he executed a sudden handbrake turn and went down a back street.

"Excuse me love" Tracy asked out of surprised curiosity "Where are we going?"

"Hopefully we can get ahead of him" the Commander explained as they went over a speed hump without even slowing.

"But how do you know where he is going dear?" Tracy asked.

"Call it an educated hunch" the Commander responded.

"Have your hunches improved since 1969 by any remote chance?" Barry asked "Only the last one I heard from you resulted in several of us being shot at."

"I can safely say my form is as spot on as you remember" the Commander confirmed as he turned the car from one side street into another, narrowly missing a car coming the other way.

"Oh hell, we are in trouble now" Barry remarked under his breath.

"You should try being his wife" Tracy wryly responded, indicating her arm in its plaster and sling.

Now running for his future, Perivale drove as quickly as he dared through the quiet streets of the west end, desperate to find a safe haven and a way out of his current situation.

As he approached Hyde Park Corner, he reached across the dashboard of the vehicle for an A to Z of London to try and work out a suitable route.

However as Perivale was fiddling with the atlas, he took his attention off the road ahead for a brief moment. His attention was brought sharply back to the matter in hand however when a Security Service patrol car appeared from his right, crossing straight in front of him.

"Where the hell did you come from?" Perivale exclaimed as he was forced to swerve sharply to the left, ploughing through a traffic island and demolishing the bollards and signs on it.

"Here, that's my van he is wrecking!" Barry exclaimed as he witnessed the miniature demolition derby from the back seat of the patrol car.

"Buckle up everybody" the Commander declared "This is usually the point where I do some serious damage."

Perivale managed to quickly recover his composure and, seeing a large gap in the traffic, he turned violently to his left and headed across the flow and towards the Park Lane turn off.

"Tracy my love" the Commander called as he turned and accelerated to follow, "See if you can summon up some backup as I think we are going to need it."

"Lima Mike Zero One to Control" Tracy called as the Commander bumped the patrol car over the traffic island which meant she had to brace herself against the dashboard to stop herself from being thrown about "Any unit in the vicinity of Park Lane and Piccadilly, your assistance with a blue Mercedes Sprinter van that is really sprinting would be warmly appreciated."

The Commander duly pursued Perivale's van as it entered the south end of Park Lane sending the traffic in all directions as they swerved to get out of the way.

From the opposite direction, another Security Service patrol car could be seen approaching at speed under full sirens and lights and this forced Perivale to alter his intended plan once again.

"Now where the hell is he going?" Tracy asked as they observed Perivale's van turn sharply right, dive straight across the southbound carriageway traffic and into a side street.

"Gawd only knows" the Commander responded as he turned to follow with the second patrol car duly falling into line behind him.

"Fiver says it's the last refuge of the scoundrel" Barry remarked.

The sound of roaring engines, squealing tyres and sirens echoed amidst the tall buildings of the narrow side streets as the pursuit continued to twist and turn around the myriad of corners and junctions.

Unfortunately all the turns and deviations meant that the Commander lost sight of Perivale's van as they found themselves coming to a halt in Berkeley Square.

"I think we've lost him" the Commander declared, clearly irritated as he got out of the patrol car and looked around the deserted square.

"Well lets think about this logically" Tracy suggested as she got out of the car with an A to Z and laid it open onto the car bonnet "He can't have gone far, all we have to figure out is where he might be going."

"What about a club?" Barry suggested "Old school bastards like Perivale always have a club where the respectable disrespectable do business."

Less than a mile away, Perivale seeing that he had at last managed to evade his pursuers, parked the van in a back garage.

With understandable caution, he very quietly got out of the van and went around to the back. Opening the rear of the vehicle, he proceeded to empty the contents of two of the secure cases into his briefcase before making off on foot.

Perivale did his best to present an air of calm relaxed composure as he walked through the streets, before turning right to walk into the opulent grounds of his club where he was greeted by the uniformed doorman.

"Good evening Sir" the doorman greeted Lord Perivale as he opened the door for him.

"Evening Jim" Perivale responded in kind, intent on maintaining as normal an appearance as possible.

Once Perivale was inside the doorman carefully closed the door and returned to his duty of looking out across the quiet street.

In the distance, he noted the background noise of sirens but after a minute or two realised that in fact this particular noise was getting closer to where he was.

From a side road, the siren noise suddenly increased in intensity as a Security Service patrol car appeared and proceeded directly to the point in the street directly outside the club.

"Evening" the Commander declared as he got out of the car and brandished his warrant card "Has a Lord Perivale been through here in the last ten or twenty minutes?" he asked firmly but politely.

"It is not club policy to discuss the status of individual members" the doorman firmly yet politely declared, admirably standing his ground.

"That'll be a yes then" Tracy commented as she joined the discussion.

"Coming through" the Commander declared as he tried to pass the doorman and enter the building but was prevented from doing so.

"I'm sorry Sir" the doorman politely apologised "You cannot come in."

"Take a careful look at that" the Commander showed the doorman his warrant card as if to emphasise his point "You know what this means don't you?"

"Yes Sir" the doorman confirmed "But irrespective of your high status Sir, you cannot enter these premises unless you are a member."

"You couldn't make it up" Tracy commented.

"You'll just have to sue me" the Commander declared as he swiftly side stepped the doorman much to his stunned horror, and entered the building with Tracy and Barry following in close formation.

"This place must have cost a few quid" Barry remarked as they looked around the impressive entrance hall way which seemed to be larger and more ornate than a Victorian concert hall.

"Who was their interior design consultant" the Commander asked wryly as he headed up the grand staircase "Leonardo da Vinci?"

"I think you mean Michelangelo love" Tracy suggested.

"Yeah, him too" the Commander added.

At the top of the grand staircase on the first floor, Tracy, Barry and the Commander looked around in search of some clue as to where to go.

"You and Barry look down there" the Commander pointed down one way, "I'll see what is down here."

As Tracy and Barry headed off one way, the Commander proceeded around the other side of the upper landing, looking in side rooms as he went and for the most part finding nothing.

From a doorway in the distance however, a distinctive haze of thick cigar smoke was to be seen being emitted into the corridor which appeared to be a clear sign of occupation.

Entering the large plushly furnished lounge, the Commander could see a variety of very large antique arm chairs many of which appeared to be occupied by large gentlemen of a certain late middle age, many engrossed in large newspapers and relaxing in the company of large cigars and fine drinks.

"Good evening Sir" the elderly butler attendant welcomed the Commander amid some surprise at seeing the high ranking uniformed officer arrive in the room "May I be of assistance?"

"Indeed you may" the Commander confirmed in a quiet tone that anyone entering that room seemed as if by natural instinct to adopt "Is there a Lord Perivale in here?"

"Over by the main window Sir" the attendant confirmed indicating a cluster of seats over the far side of the room "Is he expecting you?"

"You know what, that is a very interesting question" the Commander admitted "I'll tell you the answer in five minutes, thank you."

Lord Perivale was firmly engrossed in a large newspaper, in fact the first edition of the following days Daily Telegraph which gave some indication of how late in the evening it was.

"Just put it on the table please" Perivale responded without lowering his newspaper shield as he heard the sound of someone approaching and assumed it was the attendant with his fresh drink.

"Sorry to disappoint you" the Commander sarcastically apologised as he sat down opposite him.

"Good evening Commander" Perivale replied with a calm tone but with a hint of annoyance just detectable.

"Almost morning actually" the Commander remarked as he checked his old pocket watch "I thought I would find you here, the last refuge of the scoundrel."

"Very amusing" Perivale responded.

"Something an old school friend said" the Commander explained "Anyway, to business."

"I have to admit I am curious as to why you are here" Perivale admitted.

"Small matter of several million quids worth of missing diamonds for a starter" the Commander explained, getting straight to the point.

"A wise man once said that the most important thing in the justice system is evidence" Perivale remarked "I think the Attorney General is lurking somewhere in one of these smoky seats, I am sure he would be happy to confirm this."

The Commander's pager beeped at that moment causing him to momentarily break off from the conversation and consult it.

"Sorry about that" the Commander apologised as he silenced the pager and returned it to his tunic pocket "It's the wife, she worries about me endlessly."

"Nice to know I suppose" Perivale remarked.

"Where was I?" the Commander asked.

"Evidence, specifically lack thereof" Perivale confirmed calmly.

"Ah yes" the Commander remembered "Tell me, ever heard of a gentleman by the name of David Havelock?"

"Should I have?" Perivale responded with a defiant tone.

"I would have thought so yes" the Commander continued "He's been your bag man for the last thirty five years at least and right now he is parked up in one of our less salubrious facilities back at the yard having sung like a canary to use an old cliché."

"I believe the gentleman in question would almost certainly be ruled as an unreliable witness" Perivale responded "So that's one part of your evidence dismissed, next?"

Unseen by Perivale who had his back to the main door into the room, Tracy entered carrying a briefcase and proceed business like across the room, to the quiet consternation of some of the members present who were unhappy at the presence of a female in these hallowed premises.

"Good grief" Tracy remarked as she joined Perivale and her husband at the far side of the room where she placed the briefcase onto the small table in front of them.

"Ah, thank you my dear" the Commander responded as he took the case and turned it to face him "Could you possibly ask those two gentlemen by the fireplace to join us?"

"Sure" Tracy confirmed.

"Sending for reinforcements Commander?" Perivale enquired.

"Expert witnesses and legal advice" the Commander responded with a calm air of confidence.

"Good evening Administrator General" the Attorney General announced as he and the second man joined them having been brought over by Tracy who then stood to one side to monitor the tense proceedings.

"Evening" the Commander responded "Don't you ever go home?" he asked.

"Late night with the DPP" the Attorney General explained "So what's all this about then?"

"Oh just requiring your services in your professional capacity" the Commander responded before turning back to Perivale "No doubt you two know each other?"

"Of course" Perivale confirmed.

"This by the way is Mr Peter Dent" the Commander introduced the other taller rather professorial looking man "He works for a certain well known company that specialises in diamonds."

"Really" Perivale feigned a growing disinterest in the whole business.

"This I believe belongs to you" the Commander turned the briefcase around "A fact confirmed by the cloakroom attendant if I am not mistaken?"

"He came in with it twenty minutes ago" Tracy confirmed.

"Would you be so kind as to open it please?" the Commander pushed the case forwards across the table so that the catches were immediately in front of Perivale.

"And if I refuse?" Perivale defiantly asked.

"I can always contact the Attorney General for a warrant" the Commander explained "and conveniently he is right here which saves a lot of time and hassle."

"All right..." Perivale reluctantly conceded as he released the catches on the case and opened it.

"I can see why you requested my presence" Dent remarked upon seeing the diamonds that the opening of the case duly revealed.

"Mr Dent" the Commander asked "Would you care to pass your opinion on these?"

"With pleasure" Dent responded as he carefully extracted one of the largest diamonds from the case and with an eyepiece type magnifier, proceeded to examine it.

Everyone around the table watched Dent as he carefully examined the diamond, this distraction providing an opportunity for Perivale to slide his hands unseen into the case and take something out that he quickly tucked inside his jacket pocket.

"Very interesting" Dent commented after completing a through examination of the diamond "Genuine in every respect which is peculiar considering that this is clearly

the Eastern Star which has not been seen since being stolen from the Lewisham Diamond Depository in 1969."

"You would be willing to testify to this in a court of law?" the Commander asked.

"After further detailed examination of this and the rest of the diamonds, yes absolutely" Dent confirmed.

"But there were never any real diamonds in Lewi...." Perivale began but stopped suddenly when he realised his mistake.

"Yes I know" the Commander produced from his pocket another diamond which appeared identical to the one Dent had just examined "This was the only diamond recovered from the Lewisham heist, spending the intervening time lodged in the tattered blazer pocket of the twelve year old witness who a few hours later was shot by the aforementioned Mr Havelock outside New Scotland Yard in cold blood."

"There is no way you can make a justifiable case out of this nonsense" Perivale defiantly responded although by now he was well aware that his options were running out fast.

"Mr Attorney General" the Commander turned to the man on his right "Given some of the evidence presented, would you grant a warrant for arrest?"

"Oh I would have thought so" the Attorney General confirmed.

"Right then" the Commander declared as he stood up "Lord Perivale, I..."

"Hold it right there" Perivale interrupted, standing up quickly and producing a gun from beneath his jacket pocket, one which he had managed to extract unseen from his briefcase a few moments earlier "This is the point at which I must take my leave of you gentlemen."

"I hate guns" the Commander retorted.

"As do I " Perivale agreed "I must apologise for this however desperate times call for desperate measures, if you would be so kind as to return that diamond to the case, I will be on my way."

"Better do as he asks" the Commander told Dent.

Dent duly did as requested and carefully placed the diamond back in the case.

"And close it please" Perivale calmly requested "I don't want anyone playing the old trap the fingers in the piano lid trick on me."

"Blast" Tracy muttered under her breath as she had positioned herself to do just that but now was foiled.

The Commander carefully closed and locked the case once Dent had put the diamond inside before Perivale took it from the table and with his gun still prominently pointed towards his captors, backed away slowly.

"Well I have enjoyed our little chat" Perivale declared, confident he was in full control of the situation now.

"We must do it again sometime" the Commander "Not here mind you as I suspect that after this little drama, your membership will most likely have been terminated."

"They are a very tolerant lot here" Perivale responded "Sort of the three wise monkeys for the landed gentry."

"I don't doubt it" the Commander remarked.

"Please don't get any daft ideas about going for your weapons" Perivale added "Keep your hands where I can see them and don't move."

With that Perivale walked away, keeping a constant eye all around him at the silent room, every pair of eyes being affixed on him as he reached the door and then left.

"It's at times like this I wish I had stayed in bed" the Commander remarked as he drew his gun and set off across the room with Tracy by his side.

"Can't we just shoot him?" Tracy asked wryly.

"Sorry my dear" the Commander responded "I'm afraid we have used up our quota of shot politicians and civil servants for this year."

Perivale walked briskly but calmly through the complex old building, heading for a discreet back door in order to leave unobserved.

As he reached the far end of the corridor, he came across an old back staircase that ran up the back of the building.

"Hold it right there!" the Commander's voice called suddenly from the other end of the corridor.

Perivale quickly responded by producing his gun and firing off a single shot down the length of the corridor, forcing Tracy and the Commander to duck back behind a corner as the shot echoed down the corridor and struck the wall nearby.

"Looks like Perivale doesn't want to co-operate" Tracy remarked wryly as they both looked back around the corner with understandable caution.

"Fine by me my dear" the Commander responded as he drew his gun.

"Clear" Tracy confirmed as she observed Perivale disappear from view.

"Right then" the Commander responded "Here we go" he declared as they headed out into the corridor and moved briskly along it, guns drawn until they reached the staircase.

"Ok Einstein" Tracy jokily asked "Looks like we have two choices, up or down" she remarked as they both cautiously looked up and down the tightly wound and dark spiral staircase that seemed to go on forever in both directions.

"Logic says down" the Commander commented.

"So that will be up then?" Tracy responded.

"You read my mind" the Commander confirmed with an amused smile "Shall we?"

Perivale had indeed headed upwards and was soon emerging into the old roof space attic, a seemingly long forgotten part of the building where various stored items of furniture, packing crates and other objects nestled amongst decades of dust and cobwebs.

He quickly looked around for an exit which after a bit of searching amidst the clutter revealed itself to be a hatchway out onto the roof behind an old filing cabinet.

The crash that was heard as he kicked the door open and exited out onto the roof was barely audible down the staircase but the Commander's very acute sense of hearing picked up on it.

"Did you hear that?" the Commander asked, pausing for a moment to listen more intently.

"All I can hear is the sound of my stomach rumbling" Tracy admitted.

"As soon as we get him" the Commander reassured her "I'll buy you supper" he confirmed as they resumed their ascent up the staircase.

Outside up on the roof top that overlooked the city, Perivale looked around before heading along the terraced roof line at a brisk pace.

Below him as he made good his escape, the Commander arrived in the dusty attic whereupon he promptly sneezed loudly.

"Bless you" Tracy responded.

"Thank you" the Commander just managed to reply before sneezing again.

"That looks like an exit over there" Tracy indicated over the far side of the dusty attic "The dust has been disturbed by the looks of it."

"Great" the Commander remarked with some disdain as he went over to the door and looked outside "I hate rooftops."

"I'll hold your hand love" Tracy reassured her husband as they exited out onto the roof where they both looked all around for any sign of the fleeing Perivale.

"Well it looks like we have two possibilities my dear" the Commander declared "west or east?"

From the near distance the sound of something being accidentally struck was heard in the quiet night air.

"Sounds like we are heading west dear" Tracy commented.

As they set off in the direction of the sound, ahead of them Perivale was cursing quietly to himself as he limped onwards from where he had walked into a ventilation duct in the darkness which was the noise that had been heard a few moments earlier.

Reaching the top of the metal external fire exit stairs, Perivale looked down them over the edge of the building to see if he had any company below.

Sure enough in the distance outside the club main entrance were a number of Security Service vehicles that had just arrived, the officers that they had contained now surrounding and saturating the interior of the building.

The bottom of the steps however were situated in a dark side alley that ran past the end of an adjoining building further down the long terrace and as such, there was no one visible below waiting for him.

With some trepidation, Perivale stepped out over the edge of the roof onto the top of the rusty steps which creaked and groaned under his weight as he began to step carefully down them.

Above him, Tracy and the Commander approached the end of the roof where they could see the visible top of the steps wobbling gently.

"Looks promising" the Commander marked.

"I'll go and have a look" Tracy responded, well aware of her husband's problem with heights.

Going over to the stairs as the Commander watched her back, Tracy looked over the edge of the roof to see the balding head of Perivale heading down the steps at a fairly rapid pace.

"He's down there all right" Tracy whispered back.

"Err right..." the Commander responded, now deeply apprehensive about the possibility of having to go down the steps.

"Don't worry love" Tracy confirmed with a warm smile "You go down and try to head him off, I'll take care of this."

"Thanks love" the Commander responded with some relief "Be careful" he added before leaving.

With the Commander heading off, Tracy stepped carefully over the edge of the roof, a task made the more difficult by having her arm plastered and in a sling.

Looking down through the metal lattice work, Tracy could see Perivale almost at the bottom now some three storeys below.

As he stepped off the stairs onto the ground in the dark side alley, Perivale was forced to squint to make out anything in the darkness.

A clatter suddenly made him jump and look to his right before breathing a small sigh of relief as a cat jumped down nearby and scuttled off down the alley.

Perivale decided to head away from the main street visible to his left and head instead for the rear of the premises. It was a wise decision as it turned out for as he set off, a Security Service patrol car pulled across the end of the alleyway and a searchlight was beamed down towards him.

"Hold it right there" the Commander's voice was heard to call over a bull horn.

Perivale reacted instinctively by throwing himself behind some large rubbish bins just as Tracy reached the bottom of the steps.

A gunshot rang out from somewhere down the alley, striking the metalwork of the fire escape steps and causing Tracy to duck down.

Behind her, the Commander and two officers made their way towards her using the shadows as cover.

"Morning love" the Commander remarked as he joined Tracy in the shadow of the stairway, pressed flat against the wall.

"Fancy meeting you here darling" Tracy joked as another shot rang out making them duck down again.

"That should leave him with one shot left assuming he's not carrying any spares" the Commander remarked.

"Give me that thing" Tracy took the bull horn from the Commander.

"Keep him talking" the Commander requested "I'll get the cavalry to surround the area."

As the Commander withdrew to make a call on the radio, Tracy addressed Perivale.

"Come on, give it up" she encouraged "There's nowhere left to run, we've got the place surrounded."

Perivale's simple and direct response was to fire another shot down the alleyway in her direction which missed by some considerable distance.

"And you're probably out of ammunition now as well" Tracy added as a matter of fact.

"Damm..." Perivale muttered to himself in irritation as he realised Tracy was correct.

Looking around, Perivale could not see any sign of anyone behind him so decided to make a run for it.

"He's running" Tracy announced as she got up from behind the bin and gave chase down the alleyway with two officers following close behind.

Perivale realised now that what few options he had left were running out fast as he reached the end of the alleyway and exited out into an unlit side road.

As he looked up and down he soon had his mind made up for him as to which way to go when another Security Service patrol car turned into the street to his right.

Turning smartly on his heels to his left, Perivale ran as fast as his ageing body could carry him.

The car carried on down the street towards him, pausing only briefly to allow Tracy and the other two officers on foot to come out of the end of the alleyway.

Perivale tried a few doors as he rushed down the street only to find them all securely locked.

"Hold it!" Tracy demanded with her gun drawn and pointed directly at Perivale.

"I should warn you my dear" Perivale commented as Tracy drew closer towards him "I have many powerful friends in this town."

"If I had a pound for every time I have heard that old chestnut, I would be a very rich woman" Tracy responded as she reached Perivale and spun him around "Hands up against the wall" she ordered.

Perivale reluctantly did as instructed as another Security Service patrol car arrived from the other direction delivering more officers to the scene including the Commander.

As Tracy was about to pad down Perivale, he suddenly struck out and knocked her to the ground.

With Tracy sprawled on the ground, Perivale turned quickly to make a run for it only to be tripped up and brought crashing to the ground by an incensed Commander.

"That's Police brutality!!" Perivale protested as two large officers grabbed him by both arms and dragged him unceremoniously to his feet.

"That's not Police brutality" the Commander remarked wryly.

"No" Tracy agreed as she got to her feet and promptly rammed her knee into Perivale's groin with some force "That's Police brutality!"

"And the breaking story this morning at two o'clock" the BBC World News presenter continued on the television in the hotel room of Jennifer and Fuller "The arrest of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by the National Security and Police Service in connection it is believed with his possible involvement in the Lewisham Diamond Heist of 1969."

"Sounds like the boss has been busy again" Fuller remarked as he poured his new wife a fresh glass of champagne.

"You do realise he is now your brother in law don't you?" Jennifer asked.

"I hadn't thought of that" Fuller responded with stunned realisation.

"Now who the hell could that be at this time of the night?" Jennifer asked as the telephone rang.

"Fiver says it's my newly acquired brother in law" Fuller remarked as he reached across and answered it.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Sorry to disturb you" the Commander called from his office at New Scotland Yard "But I need a little favour."

"Oh morning Sir" Fuller remarked "I see you've been busy."

"I've been running around town a bit I'll admit" the Commander confirmed wryly "It's partially the reason why I am calling."

"Business or pleasure?" Fuller inquired.

"Business I am afraid" the Commander confirmed with some regret "It transpires that our old friend Limping Lord Perivale had a large portion of his diamonds deposited in a high interest account in a Swiss bank not two miles away from your current whereabouts."

"That's handy" Fuller remarked "Err why 'Limping Lord' by the way?"

"Oh Tracy kneed him in the family jewellery" the Commander explained with a mild chuckle.

"Ouch!" Fuller exclaimed "And I take it before we come home as man and wife, you would like me to go and raid his piggy bank Sir?"

"Something like that yes" the Commander confirmed "My theory is that he has had his finger in more pies than just the Lewisham caper. I'll have one of our friends from Interpol meet you in the lobby of your hotel in the morning with the warrant."

"Right Sir" Fuller confirmed "I'll get onto it in the morning."

"Thanks" the Commander confirmed "I owe you one."

"Goodnight Sir" Fuller responded before hanging up.

"You've got to be kidding me?" Jennifer asked in astonishment. She had only heard one half of the conversation but it was pretty obvious what was going on "We have to go to work on our own honeymoon in Switzerland of all places?"

"It is probably part of some great global conspiracy" Fuller confirmed as he switched off the television and laid back on the bed "Never mind, it can wait until the morning."

"Can we go home now?" Tracy asked as she gave her husband a hug.

"Absolutely" the Commander confirmed as he closed the file on his desk and casually chucked it into the in tray.

"Please let tomorrow be nice and quiet" Tracy remarked as together they left the office, the Commander turning out the lights before closing the door.

"Best black dress uniform tomorrow I suppose" the Commander remarked as they headed down in the lift to the ground floor.

"Are you going to be all right with this funeral?" Tracy asked, expressing clear concern.

"As long as you are there with me" the Commander confirmed as he reaffirmed his grip of Tracy's arm "I should be all right."

The couple stepped outside into the cold night air where the only noise to be heard was the gentle creaking of the famous three sided sign as it rotated.

"Two forty five" the Commander consulted his pocket watch "The tubes are shut, looks like we are heading home by other means" he confirmed as they walked up Broadway towards Victoria Street.

As they reached the spot where all those years earlier he had been shot down in cold blood, the Commander stopped for a moment and looked down with a worried frown.

“Don't you think its time you put those demons to rest now?” Tracy asked.

“Probably” the Commander admitted quietly “It's just that in the course of one day all those years ago, suddenly everything changed and whilst I had tried to forget some of the more painful moments, these last few days have brought it all back.”

“Only this time” Tracy reassured him “The bad guys are well and truly locked up.”

“That's true” the Commander responded as they moved on towards Victoria Street “Just one final loose end to tie up which Fuller and Jennifer can take care of in the morning.”

“In the meantime” Tracy remarked as she looked up and down the near deserted Victoria Street “Where the hell do we find a cab at this time of night?”

As they contemplated their transport problem, a car approached from the Westminster direction and slowed to a stop on the opposite side of the road where the drivers window wound down and the face of Sir Richard Crowthorne appeared.

“You two look like you could use a lift” Sir Richard remarked.

“Excellent timing old friend” the Commander responded as he and Tracy crossed the road and got in the back of the car before Sir Richard drove off.

“So what are you doing up at this time of the night” the Commander asked “Or should I say morning?”

“I have just finished overseeing our friends Havelock and Perivale's accommodation” Sir Richard explained “Lets just say they won't be seeing the outside world for a very long time.”

“Perivale is a politician” the Commander remarked with a tone of regret “He'll find a way to get a reduced sentence at least.”

“If we had not caught him in actual possession of the diamonds then maybe” Sir Richard confirmed “However since we caught him with the rocks in his physical possession then we can safely say that with the addition of the original MI5 files from 1969, Perivale hasn't got a leg to stand on.”

“I can barely keep my eyes open” the Commander remarked as he sat back, leaning up against Tracy for comfort.

“You get some rest darling” Tracy insisted before calling up front to Sir Richard “Home please and don't spare the horses.”

“Good morning” Fuller announced as, dressed in full Security Service uniform and accompanied by his new wife Jennifer, he approached the reception desk of the Swiss

Bank with three members of the local Swiss National Police Service and a representative of Interpol in close formation.

“May I help you?” the receptionist asked, understandably surprised at this early morning visit not only by the local Police services but by a representative of the UK Security Service as well.

“I’m Commander Simon Fuller, this is Divisional Commander Jennifer Caverner” he informed the receptionist “We are from the United Kingdom National Security & Police Service and we have a warrant to search an account and safety deposit vault in the name of a Lord Perivale.”

“I’ll get the manager” the receptionist responded as she decided this was an event that was way over her level “If you will excuse me for a moment?”

“Well you have to admit” Jennifer commented wryly as the Receptionist left to go and find the Manager “It’s been a very unusual honeymoon so far!”

As he approached with a very worried and unsettled look, it was noticeable that the Manager was a very small man in stature and build and nothing like what either Fuller or Jennifer were expecting at all.

"Err Good Morning" the Manager announced somewhat nervously as he arrived and greeted the two officers.

"Morning" Fuller responded as he noted the Managers poorly hidden discomfort "We have a warrant to execute" he showed him the official document which the Manager took and examined carefully.

"Are you all right Sir?" Jennifer asked.

"Oh yes" the Manager assured her unconvincingly "It's just that these things are highly irregular in the normal scheme of things, especially when being presented by such distinguished law enforcement officers such as yourself."

"Cheer up" Fuller remarked "It could have been worse, I could have been my brother in law and in matters of this sort he tends to favour the kick doors in and ask questions later approach."

"This warrant appears to be in order" the Manager confirmed "If you would care to follow me?"

Fuller, Jennifer and the Swiss officers duly followed the Manager as he led them to the elevator that led down to the vaults.

"Excuse me" Fuller apologised as his mobile telephone rang just as they were about to enter the elevator.

The Manager held the lift and looked on as Fuller took his call which judging by his reaction was of some interest and relevance to current ongoing events.

"Problem dear?" Jennifer asked as the call was completed and Fuller joined them in lift before it began the ascent to the lower levels.

"Oh just an interesting little tidbit of information the Commander thought may be relevant to our current situation" Fuller explained as the lift came to a halt and the door opened.

"This way please" the Manager lead the way into the safety deposit box area, a grand area of clinically clean white walls lined with rows upon rows of identical boxes with little labels on each one indicating their number.

"Good grief" Jennifer remarked as they were led through the myriad of corridors "How many of these boxes are their down here?" she asked.

"Approximately fifteen thousand ranging in size from that of a small shoe box through to full size vaults" the Manager responded.

"There must be a fair few quid tucked away down here" Fuller responded.

"A conservative estimate would be about sixteen billion US dollars" the Manager confirmed.

"Blimey..." Fuller remarked.

"It's down here" the Manager confirmed as they turned right and into an area dominated by much larger box fronts.

"Perhaps I should have brought some breadcrumbs" Jennifer commented as she looked back at the myriad of corridors through which they had just passed.

"Here we are" the Manager declared as they stopped in front of the huge door of one of the largest vaults in the complex "Box number 36485" he confirmed.

"Ok then" Fuller prompted "Lets open it up."

"Here" the Manager passed one of the two keys he was carrying to Fuller "They must be turned at exactly the same time."

"Ready" Fuller confirmed as he inserted the key in the right hand lock.

"On three" the Manager instructed "One, two three."

They both turned their keys together and with a loud metallic clunk, the door released and opened.

"Open sesame" Fuller remarked as the door was opened.

"There you go" the Manager announced as he stepped back, allowing Jennifer and Fuller to enter the dark interior of the vault.

"Where's the light switch?" Jennifer asked as she turned around only to see the huge door of the vault slammed shut behind them.

"What the...?" Jennifer understandably exclaimed.

"I was expecting this" Fuller explained calmly as he found a small torch from inside his tunic pocket and switched it on.

"Would you mind telling me why?" Jennifer asked as she bent down to examine the heavy door and in particular its lock.

"The telephone call just now" Fuller explained "That was Sir Richard Crowthorne, he let me know that according to his research, Lord Perivale and his family own a large percentage of this Bank."

"Ah..." Jennifer responded with realisation.

"The Commander has the cavalry on its way" Fuller reassured her as Jennifer got up having given up on the lock.

"Well we are not getting out here on our own bat" she declared.

"I thought you were a locksmith's daughter?" Fuller asked.

"My sister is the expert on locks" Jennifer explained "She spent most of her childhood with my father on jobs with him and learned the trade, I spent the same time with our mother."

"Great..." Fuller responded "Now you tell me!"

"The only plus point I can see" Jennifer remarked wryly "is that unlike Tracy, I can knit a pullover and bake a cake blindfolded which may be useful I suppose given our current situation."

"Whilst we wait for the cavalry" Fuller suggested as he turned his attention and his torch to the contents of the vault "Let's see what we have got in here."

"Large number of boxes by the looks of it" Jennifer commented as she examined one of them "Any good at breaking and entering?"

"Hold this" Fuller passed across the torch to Jennifer and extracted a screwdriver from his tunic which he proceeded to use to attack the rather flimsy lock on the nearest box.

"Holy moly" Jennifer exclaimed as Fuller managed to open the box where the light of the torch caught the tray of cut diamonds in the top of the case.

"You can forget Lewisham" Fuller remarked as he did a quick bit of mental arithmetic "There's a damn sight more than gems from that job in here."

At that moment the heavy door was unlocked and the two officers had to squint as the light flooded back into the vault.

"Are you all right?" one of the Swiss officers enquired as he looked inside.

"I think so" Jennifer confirmed "What happened?"

"We sent in the heavy mob as your Commander would say" the officer confirmed "The Manager is under arrest" he added as behind him two burly armed officers dragged the Manager away.

"Nice work" Fuller remarked as he and Jennifer stepped back out into the light "Now the question is what to do with this lot" he looked back at the large number of cases contained inside the vault.

"And where the hell did the rest of it come from?" Jennifer asked.

"What's the dialling code for the UK?" Fuller asked as he went over to a telephone nearby, mounted on a wall.

"Double four and drop the zero off the area code" Jennifer responded.

Fuller picked up the telephone and dialled a number where after a short pause, it began to ring.

"Administrator General's Office" the Commander's Personal Assistant answered from her desk in New Scotland Yard.

"Morning" Fuller responded "It's Commander Fuller, is the Chief in?"

"I'll just put you through now Sir" the Personal Assistant confirmed.

Inside his office, the Commander was sat at his desk working his way through yet another mountain of paper work which seemed to never decrease no matter how much he tried to reduce it.

He was glad when the telephone rang to provide a distraction from the tedium and reached across to answer it, knocking a number of the files onto the floor in the process.

"Administrator General" the Commander responded as he looked down at the fallen files and instead choose to ignore them.

"It's Fuller Sir" came the response "Your tip off duly came true, the Manager tried to lock us in the vault."

"It was a forgotten fact lurking in one of Crowthorne's old background notes from 1969" the Commander explained "It turns out Perivale's family owned a fairly major chunk of that Bank since a major investment just after the war."

"Well I have some good news and some intriguing news" Fuller continued "I think we can safely say we have the diamonds we were looking for, the big question is where the hell did all the rest of this lot come from?"

"Come again?" the Commander responded with some bemusement.

"Well by my workings out" Fuller explained as he looked back behind him to see Jennifer and two Swiss officers opening the cases in the vault "We've got a lot more than just the Lewisham jewels down here."

"Good God!" Jennifer was suddenly heard to exclaim before coming over to Fuller and placing on the small table a large gold bar "What do you make of this?" she asked.

"Make of what?" the Commander asked upon hearing Jennifer's remark in the background.

"It would appear that our friend Lord Perivale has a large collection of gold bars as well" Fuller explained.

"Where the hell did that come from?" the Commander wondered, "Never mind, we'll figure it out later, meantime get our Swiss friends to record and catalogue the lot" he instructed "I'll see if I can sort some secure transport for it all."

"What would you like us to do in the meantime Sir?" Fuller enquired.

"Enjoy the rest of your honeymoon" the Commander advised "Just make sure you book a lot of excess luggage space on the plane home."

"Thank you Sir" Fuller replied.

"I'll see you two when you get back" the Commander confirmed as Tracy came into his office carrying his dress uniform tunic in a suit bag.

"Here you go love" Tracy announced as the Commander put the telephone down "All cleaned, pressed and ironed."

"And no arguments from the Quartermaster's office for a change" the Commander remarked as he stood up whereupon Tracy helped him to put on the black coloured funeral version of the dress uniform, her own one of which Tracy was already dressed in.

"Your hat love" Tracy passed her husband the gold braided cap to him.

"Hang on, this one is yours" the Commander remarked after struggling to fit it on his head.

"Ooops" Tracy responded, realising her mistake and duly swapping caps.

"There" the Commander confirmed as he checked his appearance in the mirror situated in the corner of the office "What do you think?"

"I think" Tracy remarked as she came up behind the Commander and put her arms around him for welcome comfort "You are trying not to think about this funeral."

"A lot has happened in the last few days" the Commander admitted as he turned and looked into Tracy's eyes before kissing her gently "It's been quite a bit to take in all things considered."

"Time to go love" Tracy confirmed as she looked at the Commander's pocket watch before handing it to him.

"Right" the Commander agreed with some reluctant hesitation "Don't let go" he asked of Tracy as he reaffirmed the hold of her hand in his.

Together they left the office and headed by way of the lift downstairs and then out of the main entrance of New Scotland Yard where a specially cleaned and polished patrol car with driver was waiting for them.

Without saying anything other than a word of thanks to the officer driving as he opened the door for them, Tracy and the Commander got in the back of the car and settled back for the journey to Lewisham.

"Eighty pence for them?" Tracy prompted.

"I really must have a word with the Prime Minister about that inflation" the Commander responded wryly "the price of thoughts keeps escalating alarmingly."

"Well it's just you've been awfully quiet all day so far" Tracy remarked "Funeral or not, it's just not like you."

"Perhaps I need an audience" the Commander pondered "Besides, I am still trying to work my way through all the facts of this Perivale mess."

"Leave Sir Richard's lads to sort that out" Tracy urged "You can't personally investigate every case that comes across your desk, we do have a staff of three thousand dedicated officers in this City you know."

"I suppose you are right" the Commander conceded "Like you said last night, maybe it is time to close the door on this chapter, I shall bow down to your superior intellect."

"Oh I don't know about that" Tracy responded "I still can't play poker for toffee."

The traffic around the centre of Lewisham was busy with long queues at the myriad of traffic lights that attempted to control the vast number of vehicles that seemed to constantly pass through the area irrespective of the time of day.

Fortunately the presence of a fully marked Security Service patrol car saw to it that progress for Tracy and the Commander was swift and it was not long before they were arriving outside the church where already a significant number of mourners were gathered.

"Hello old friend" Barry called as he opened the door of the car and greeted the Commander.

"Good to see you again" the Commander confirmed as he was joined by Tracy.

"I believe you know my wife Laura from a previous life" he introduced the lady alongside him.

"I have to admit that you were the last person I ever imagined we would see again" Laura remarked.

"It's been a surreal experience all things considered" the Commander was forced to wryly admit.

"I believe that this belongs to you" Barry retrieved a small flat leather bound case from his suit pocket and passed it to the Commander.

"So that's what happened to it" Tracy observed as she looked at the George Cross medal contained inside the case when the Commander opened it.

"Barry collected it on behalf of my posthumous self" the Commander explained to her "I have had the medal ribbon on my uniform the entire time but collecting the medal in person was always going to be a problem at the time since I was supposed to be officially dead."

"Here" Tracy responded as she took the medal from its case and proceeded to attach it in place on the Commander's dress uniform alongside his existing ones "There, in its rightful place at last."

"And so the story comes full circle" Sir Richard Crowthorne commented as he and Roger Field joined the little group and warm handshakes were exchanged.

"Still one small issue outstanding though" the Commander remarked.

"Yes so I heard as I was leaving the office" Sir Richard responded "Most interesting I must say."

"What's that then?" Field casually enquired.

"It transpires that our old friend Lord Perivale had his fingers in more than just the Lewisham job till" the Commander explained "That's if the contents of his Swiss bank account are anything to go by."

"Interesting" Field responded.

"I don't suppose anyone has lost ten million quids worth of gold bullion in the last thirty years have they?" Tracy asked.

"Not that I immediately recall" Field responded "However if they are going begging, I don't mind offering them a home" he chuckled.

"Well it came from somewhere" the Commander added, "The question is what do we do with it."

"Well we will consider that little problem later" Sir Richard interrupted "Their is the small matter of more urgent business inside."

"Would you excuse me for a moment" the Commander politely requested as something caught his eye across the church yard.

"Now where the hell is he going?" Field asked as the Commander left the group and headed across the church yard towards two people standing on the other side.

"I think I know" Tracy remarked as she observed the Commander reach the two people. One was recognisable clearly as James Garforth, the other was a woman dressed in a formal dress uniform that closer inspection would show to be that of a Captain in the New Zealand Royal Navy.

"His brother and sister" Sir Richard remarked "The only family he has left now apart from you my dear" he addressed Tracy.

"Another chapter comes full circle" Tracy remarked as they observed the three siblings embrace.

Outside the main church gate, the old Victorian horse drawn hearse with Security Service motorcycle escort arrived and this was the cue for the nominated pall bearers to come forward to carry the coffin into the church.

It was with silent reverence that the Commander, his sister Elizabeth, brother James Garforth plus Roger Field, Sir Richard Crowthorne and Barry carefully carried the coffin into the church before taking their places in the congregation before the service began.

An hour later, the Commander, arm in arm with Tracy led the mourners out into the graveyard where unusually in this day and age where the pressure of space saw most people cremated, a space beneath a shady tree was waiting all ready and prepared to receive the coffin.

"Are you all right love?" Tracy asked as they proceeded across the graveyard.

"Yes, I am all right" the Commander reassured her "I was just wondering if I'll ever get such a well attended send off or just a quiet five minutes in the corner of a church yard somewhere with just you and a few passers by in attendance."

"Are you kidding?" Tracy responded "I would expect yours to be one of the biggest ever, hopefully not for a long time yet mind."

The Commander being the Commander could not resist looking over the edge of the hole as the coffin was lowered into its final resting place.

"You know if my father was still alive" the Commander remarked wryly "Not only would he be commenting that if he wanted to be that deep underground he would have taken the easier option of going on the Northern Line but also by now he would have recruited half the mourners for a celebratory cash poker game down the pub afterwards."

"Sounds like a good idea" Sir Richard responded "With a bit of luck I might get back that fifty quid I lost to you back in 1969."

As the ceremonial service finished and the crowd of mourners broke up, the Commander escorted Tracy across to the main church gate where they met up again with Barry.

"Good grief, have you still got that old thing?" Barry asked as the Commander checked his old pocket watch.

"Just a small reminder of who I once was old friend" the Commander commented.

"You are still that knowledgeable poker playing twelve year old I knew back then" Barry responded "It's just that in the meantime you've grown a bit, got a slightly smarter uniform and a missus as well."

"Don't tell me" Tracy asked "You are amazed there was anyone who would put up with him?"

"Something along those lines" Barry confirmed "Eddie always was a bit of a one man band back then."

"I think I turned out all right all things considered" the Commander remarked with a wry smile.

"I don't know about you two" Barry announced "but I need a drink."

"Sounds like a good idea" the Commander agreed as Laura caught up with the group and together they headed out of the church yard.

"Actually, now I come to think of it" Barry remarked "I owe you a drink for you efforts back in '69."

"That's a point" the Commander conceded "Whilst I think about it though, can I ask a favour?"

"Sure" Barry confirmed.

"I've got a large consignment of diamonds and gold I need shifted from Switzerland"
the Commander explained "I couldn't borrow your van could I?"

To Be Continued.....

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