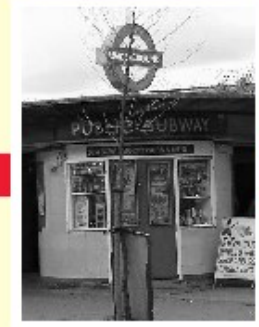


# Leytonstone

Security Novels Series  
Episode XV



**John M Upton**

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## Leytonstone

The Right Honourable Sir Harold Bolton QC adjusted his judicial wig with a slightly apprehensive look before looking down at the written judgement before him. It was a statement to the court he hoped he would never have to make and as those in the courtroom returned to their seats, he cleared his throat and prepared to announce the result of the appeal.

"Will the defendants please stand" Sir Harold declared with an authoritative tone whereupon seven men stood up along with their extensive legal team.

"Following extensive assessment of the evidence submitted by the defence solicitors, and having taken advice from the Home Office, this appeal court makes the following findings" he declared "Henry Davenport , Ian Heaton, Richard Burrows, David Rawton, Andrew Rawton, Simon Smith and finally Franklin Rogers" Sir Harold addressed the defendants, the most prominent of which was the tall and very dominant figure of Rogers who looked on with a confident expression "The charges on which you were convicted were found to be based primarily on DNA evidence that was gathered by the authorities using methods that have now been proven to be unreliable."

The defendant's looks were getting more smug by the moment as the reading out of the verdict continued.

"As this DNA evidence formed the vast majority of the case against the defendants, this court rules that the convictions on all charges can now only be considered as unsafe and are therefore quashed" Sir Harold announced with a notable tone of regret as he was fully aware of the reputations of the men standing before him "You are all therefore free to go."

There was a mixed loud uproar in the courtroom as the defendants loudly and brashly celebrated whilst up in the gallery some people reacted with a look of utter horror at the events unfolding below.

"This court is adjourned!" Sir Harold was forced to raise his voice above the din in the room "and may God have mercy upon our souls" he added under his breath, fully realising the implications and potential outcome of the verdict he had just announced.

"Yes!!" Franklin Rogers declared with his arms raised in triumph as he led the way down to the custody area ahead of his colleagues in order to sign the paperwork and gather their belongings prior to their official release which was now but a few minutes away.

Accompanying the freed defendants down the narrow corridor was their equally jubilant legal team which consisted of some of the most well known not to mention expensive defence lawyers in the country.

"Can I have some order please!" the duty custody supervisor called loudly over the commotion as the crowd filed into the administration area of the Court of Appeal.

"Hush!" Rogers called out "The man wants a word" he declared and with his power and influence everyone duly fell silent.

"Err thank you" the custody supervisor continued "If the defendants could sign for their belongings and release forms in alphabetical order of surname please."

"Which one?" one of the men joked which resulted in more raucous laughter breaking out before the men proceeded one by one to sign the appropriate paperwork that signalled the final act of their incarceration.

"We have a full press conference set up for outside the main entrance and your people are waiting for you" Rogers leading defence lawyer McWilliam confirmed as the formalities were completed.

"Excellent, I think it is time I made a proper return to public life" Rogers declared, rubbing his hands with anticipation.

"Also the Security Service will be providing an escort for you and your associates to Leytonstone on account of the potential safety risk due to the intensive press interest" McWilliam added with a wry chuckle.

"Oh don't you just love the irony" Rogers agreed with a big grin as he and the others were shown outside where a group of four seemingly identical looking large heavily built body guards with typical shaven heads, black suits and dark glasses were waiting to escort them.

"Morning lads" Rogers greeted his body guards "I do hope in my prolonged absence you haven't lost any of your edge."

"Don't worry sir" one of the body guards confidently confirmed "We can still handle pretty much everything."

"In which case" Rogers declared with clear enthusiastic anticipation "I think it is time I met the press."

Outside the main entrance to the Royal Courts of Justice, there was a scene of utter pandemonium as the press and the general public jostled for position whilst numerous Security Service officers tried their best to maintain order.

The fervour reached fever pitch however when Rogers, arms aloft and waving in triumph appeared from the main entrance, two body guards each side of him in an almost ceremonial escort whilst the remaining jubilant defendants followed closely behind.

"Please, I would like to make a statement" Rogers called, having to raise his voice as he was hit with a barrage of questions from the press as he reached the line of photographers and journalist's.

"How do you feel about your success?" one question was thrown at him that took Rogers attention.

"Vindicated, victorious, justified" Rogers declared with obvious determination "Today's verdict is not just a victory for myself and my friends" he indicated his associates lined up behind him "It is a victory for a judicial system that for too long has become mired in ridiculous mediocrity and dominated by over zealous law enforcement agencies bent on missions of subterfuge and disinformation against honest businessmen and citizens such as myself and many others who still remain languishing in prisons across the country in travesties of justice that seem to be standard practice in today's corrupt society."

"What are your plans now?" another reporter asked as the clicking of camera shutters with their accompanying flash bulbs going off seemed to reach a crescendo.

"For myself and my innocent colleagues" Rogers confirmed "I fully intend to spend today celebrating over some very fine vintage champagne, smoke a very large cigar and then tomorrow morning it is back to business, I have a lot of catching up to do so if ladies and gentlemen you will excuse me, I have a party to go to."

With that Rogers and his associates moved forward through the throngs of the press which with the bodyguards leading the way had the effect of accelerating the clamour to the point where they had to force their way through to the waiting pair of black Range Rovers that were ready to take them to Leytonstone.

Indeed such was the media scrum that as Rogers attempted to get in the front of his car one of the body guards was forced to grab one tabloid reporter roughly by the scruff of the neck and drag him away, punching him firmly for good measure.

Finally after a lot of commotion and chaos all of them were inside the vehicles whereupon with an official Security Service motorcycle escort to guide them away from the throngs, they set off up Whitehall and away.

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"Amazing scenes outside the Old Bailey this afternoon" the BBC reporter confirmed with an air of controlled excitement as he reported from outside the famous court house in the heart of the City of London as behind him journalists jostled for the best position to photograph a group of triumphant looking men leaving by the main door.

"After nine years in jail, Franklin Rogers, dubbed by the popular media as the 'Lord of Leytonstone' has been released from a term of five consecutive life sentences on appeal after DNA evidence used to originally convict him and seven other members of his notorious north east London gang was ruled inadmissible by Judge Sir Harold Bolton QC just half an hour ago."

"Oh hell..." Sir Hugo Carnforth, the Attorney General remarked from behind his desk as he watched the unfolding events on the television in his office before turning it off and reaching across the desk to the intercom to speak to his Personal Assistant.

"Carol, you are better than me at travelling distances" he asked "How long would it take to get here from the Old Bailey by Underground?"

"About twenty minutes Sir" Carol's voice over the intercom confirmed seemingly hinting that she already knew what her superior was thinking "On a motorbike however more like ten."

"Right... thanks" Carnforth responded with a sense of foreboding before getting up and going over to the window where looking down into the street through the Venetian blind, he was not in the least bit surprised to see a Security Service motorbike with sirens and lights in full cry pull up outside.

"Incoming..." he murmured to himself with the sense of a condemned man.

A couple of minutes later, Carnforth's reason for his premonition came marching into his office in the form of a furious Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner, Commanding Officer of the Metropolitan Division of the National Security & Police Service who looked like she was just about ready to throttle someone.

"Afternoon Commander" Carnforth rather weakly responded to her arrival and braced himself for the onslaught.

"You swore to me on a stack of dead grandmothers that there was and I quote 'no way whatsoever' that that evil piece of crap would ever see the light of day again" Tracy declared as she paced up and down in a furious manner in front of Carnforth's desk, her controlled anger obvious.

"I swear to you Commander I have no idea what happened" Carnforth defended himself and his Office as best he could "The DNA evidence from nine years ago was tighter than a ducks backside embedded in concrete and vacuum sealed" he responded.

"Have you seen him on the news?" Tracy pointed towards the television "Lording it up for all to see plus if that was not bad enough we had to provide a God damn security escort to get him back to Leytonstone."

"One of his bodyguards lamped a press photographer from one of the lesser tabloids on their way out, broke his jaw apparently" Carnforth commented.

"Maybe he isn't all bad then" Tracy responded, a little calmer now as she sat down opposite Carnforth and gave him one of her Paddington Bear style hard stares, something she had learnt from her husband the Commander "So, do tell me, why is probably the most dangerous man in Greater London since the Kray Twins is back out on the streets of my city along with his particularly unpleasant associates may I ask?"

"Do you want the official version or the unofficial version?" Carnforth asked.

"Let's have the official version first" Tracy prompted.

"A case that came up about three weeks ago in the United States cast sufficient doubt on the method of DNA testing used that it made that conviction unsafe" Carnforth explained with clear regret "Unfortunately the Home Secretary decided he was going to be all warm, fluffy and pro-active over it..."

"...in other words he was covering his arse in case of a miscarriage of justice or three..." Tracy interjected with words that were provided by years of experience of the darker shadowy parts of political manoeuvrings that went on often unseen across the City.

"... which in turn led to a review of all of the cases directly and indirectly affected" Carnforth continued "Unfortunately our old friend Mr Rogers and his dubious associates was one of the cases affected and the Home Secretary was forced under legal advice to approve the appeal going ahead which in turn resulted in the ordering of his release."

"With a nice fat compensation cheque in his back pocket on the way out no doubt" Tracy added cynically.

"Naturally" Carnforth confirmed "Where do you think most of the Justice Service's money goes these days?"

"Lining scum bags pockets mostly it would appear" Tracy replied "And that's just the damm defence lawyers. Anyway what was the unofficial version?" she asked.

"You didn't hear this from me" Carnforth advised with clear sincerity "but if I were in your position, I would be taking a discreet look the exact nature, source and history of that so called 'new' DNA evidence."

"Do you know what" Tracy remarked as she stood up and adjusted her uniform tunic "I might just do that."

"I have to officially warn you though Divisional Commander Caverner" Carnforth advised Tracy as she was about to leave "As far as the law, the Home Secretary and this Department is concerned, Messer's Rogers and Co are free men and it would be extremely unwise to be seen harassing, observing, investigating or even so much as breathing in their direction for some considerable time."

"Oh I can do subtle" Tracy confirmed with a knowing grin "I leave the unsubtle stuff to my husband" she explained.

"Good thing he didn't hear my caution then" Carnforth grinned in response.

"Yes it is, isn't it" Tracy confirmed as she left, closing the door behind her.

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Normally on a Tuesday afternoon the traffic in the main streets of Leytonstone was usually crawling slowly but with a full escort of Security Service motorcycles escorting them, Roger's convoy had no difficulty making their way up Leytonstone High Road to their next public engagement, another carefully arranged press conference outside Leytonstone Underground Station.

"Why here may I ask?" Rogers's solicitor McWilliam asked as the convoy pulled into Church Lane and stopped by the side of the road.

"Because right here, outside Leytonstone Station" Rogers indicated the entrance to the Underground Station nearby as he prepared to get out of the car "was where I was arrested and dragged unfairly off to jail almost ten years ago to the day and it is where I intend to restart my life with a declaration of defiance."

"I thought you did that outside the Law Courts earlier" one of the other defendants remarked.

"Oh that was just a warm up act" Rogers confirmed as he opened the car door "Here is where I truly announce to everyone that I am back."

Once again there was a clamour of press and onlookers who surged forward for a better view as Rogers with his minders either side led the way from the cars to the station entrance where Rogers stepped up on a box in front of the station name sign and signalled to the press his delight with an enthusiastic raising of his arms.

"Free!!" he triumphantly called loudly to a mixed response of cheers and boos from the crowd as the press being held back by a wall of minders took pictures and fired questions at him.

"Tell the world" Rogers called "Tell London and tell Leytonstone, the Lord is back and I intend to make things better for all my friends" he declared loudly like an overblown politician trying to get re-elected.

As he continued to bask in the spotlight of publicity and freedom, a man in amongst the crowd withdrew to a corner and extracted a mobile telephone in order to make a discreet call.

"Sir Richard Crowthorne please" the man requested as soon as he was connected whilst continuing to maintain a distant watch on the performance Rogers was continuing to put on as his minders randomly picked on over enthusiastic members of the press, grabbing them and throwing them back into the crowd with some force.

"He's out" the man then confirmed a few moments later "Rogers is currently putting on a full show as expected outside Leytonstone Tube and his minders are not taking any prisoners with the press."

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"It's a tricky situation" the Commander confirmed as he, Sir Richard Crowthorne the head of the Specialist Anti Organised and Political Crime Bureau, David Collins the Divisional Head of MI5 and Doctor Louise Fredericks head of the National Forensic Service looked down at the table before them in the setting of the top level National Security Conference in the Brighton Conference Centre down on the Sussex Coast.

"Indeed" Sir Richard confirmed with sincerity as he placed the fourth playing card face up on the table "Flush draw possibilities as well as a potential full house I would say."

"Check" Fredericks confirmed after a slightly nervous check of her two hole cards before tapping the table.

"All in" the Commander responded as he chucked in his pile of cheesy biscuits that they were using as poker chips in the game that was being played to relieve the boredom of a really dull conference.

"Sixteen biscuits to you my dear" Sir Richard confirmed to Fredericks.

"How good are you at poker Commander?" Fredericks asked as she stared across at the Regional Administrator General of the National Police and Security Service who merely responded with a casual shrug of the shoulders.

"I've been known to dabble a bit" he responded matter of factly to which Sir Richard stifled a cough as he knew full and well what the Commander was capable of as he was cleaned out in a game of poker by him when he was just eleven years old and his poker playing skills had only grown since then.

"On that basis then I think I will call" Fredericks agreed as she pushed in the last of her cheesy biscuits.

"Showdown guys" Sir Richard declared "Let's see your cards please."

"Read these and weep" Fredericks remarked as she laid her cards on the table revealing an ace and a king making two pairs.

"Oh very nice" the Commander looked on as he calmly turned over his cards to show a queen and jack of spades making him requiring just another spade to make a straight flush.

"So I need what?" Fredericks asked.

"You are winning as long as we don't see any ten or any spade" Sir Richard confirmed as he dealt the river card, the final community card onto the table "Ah, sorry my dear" he confirmed as he revealed a ten of spades "The Commander wins, again."

"Of course the irony is" the Commander remarked as he scooped up his winnings "I don't like cheesy biscuits."

"Beats being stuck in conference all afternoon" Sir Richard remarked "If I hear any more from the Home Secretary on positive community policing in an electorate friendly environment that embraces all sectors of the racial spectrum or whatever the bollocks he was going on about I am going to start screaming very loudly."

At that point the sound of a pager going off made everyone look around until Sir Richard realised it was his that had begun sounding "Bad news I expect" he remarked as he took it out and inspected it.

"Very bad news I fear" the Commander added as his pager too went off to which was added the sounds of further pagers and mobile telephones which began to filter throughout the bar restaurant area of the conference centre as numerous members of the Law Enforcement agencies present were alerted to some breaking news.

"Well, there goes the neighbourhood" Sir Richard remarked "Barman" he called "Can you turn on the television, BBC News if possible please."

"Certainly Sir" the barman confirmed as he went and switched on the television.

"I can't work this damn thing" the Commander declared as he gave up in frustration and casually chucked his pager on the bar "What's occurring?" he asked.

"That..." Sir Richard indicated the television with a strong note of regret as the BBC news came on.

"Franklin Rogers" the news presenter announced "who for nearly twenty years was accused repeatedly of being everything from a ruthless villain to a slum landlord was jailed nine years ago when a Security & Police Service investigation finally found a shred of DNA evidence that allegedly linked him to a number of brutal crimes. Today amid emotional scenes, the Court of Appeal declared that conviction unsafe and now Rogers, the self proclaimed 'Lord of Leytonstone' based on his considerable land and property holding in that area has been set free."

"Shi...ugar" the Commander hissed under his breath.

"I think you should call your wife" Sir Richard suggested "If she is not too busy spitting chips or fitting up the Attorney General that is."

"A very good idea" the Commander agreed as Sir Richard kindly passed him a telephone so he could make the call.

"What was wrong with the DNA evidence then?" Fredericks asked this being her area of expertise and professional curiosity meant she was taking an interest.

"Oh I don't know" Sir Richard confirmed "Whatever it is you can bet soundly that some serious cash changed hands in smoke filled rooms somewhere."

"Just been confirmed by my people back at the office" Collins rejoined them at the bar "Rogers is making a great show of his triumph, press conference at Leytonstone station, lackeys punching reporters live on the TV, the whole nine yards."

"Hello love" the Commander called as soon as Tracy answered his call "Have you finished swearing yet?" he asked.

"Ah you've heard then darling" Tracy responded as she swung from side to side in the chair in her office on the top floor of New Scotland Yard in central London.

"Pretty much every bleeper and telephone in the building went off about two minutes ago" the Commander confirmed as he looked around at a lot of worried faces in conversation across the bar restaurant area reacting to this breaking news "We are watching it on the BBC right now."

"I am going to have his picture put on a dartboard on the back of my office door" Tracy remarked "There is no way that he should have been successful, someone took a bung or somebody was got at somewhere."

"Do you want me to come back to London dear?" the Commander asked "Get an investigation started, shake a few trees and see who falls out?"

"Probably not a wise move" Tracy confirmed with a strong note of regret "I went around to see the Attorney General as soon as the verdict was announced."

"I thought you might" the Commander admitted "Is he still breathing?"

"For the moment" Tracy confirmed "I'll tell you one thing though, he was a very worried looking man and he repeated a warning I have heard somewhere before."

"Let me guess" the Commander recalled with a hint of sarcasm combined with experience "Back off, don't go anywhere near Rogers or any of his lads or there will be repercussions?"

"In a word, yes" Tracy confirmed.

"I do think it would be a good idea to get a small discrete team of Cassini's undercover surveillance lads to put tabs on our new friend Mr Rogers though" the Commander suggested "Not so much for any unlikely evidence he may carelessly throw our way but more for his benefit as I strongly suspect he is expecting it."

"And we wouldn't want to disappoint him now would we?" Tracy readily agreed "I'll drop by Cassini's office and see if he could oblige."

"I wish I was there with you" the Commander told her, the regret at them being apart clearly obvious "You could probably use a comforting hug by now, for that matter so could I" he admitted.

"You have to do what you have to do" Tracy responded "Besides who else is going to keep all those political no necks from the Home Office and Justice Ministry in check if not you."

"You have a point there love" the Commander agreed "The new Home Secretary keeps quivering with fear every time he sees me enter the same room as him, must be my reputation or something I guess" he mused wryly.

"What's this new one like?" Tracy asked "seeing as I haven't had the pleasure of feeling his collar yet."

"Strikes me as a bit of a political yes man I reckon who likes to hide behind bluster, jargon and hyperbole" the Commander admitted.

"Nothing new there then..." Tracy remarked.

"I have a good mind to pop around to his hotel room seeing as we are neighbours and all" the Commander suggested "Bring up the name Franklin Rogers in casual conversation and see what happens."

"Well be careful" Tracy warned "If Rogers really is as well connected as we think, I would be fully prepared to be led on a merry dance to nowhere."

"You know I would never dance with anyone but you" the Commander admitted "Anyway I have got to go, Sir Richard is waving his arms at me in that way that says national crisis approaching."

"He has probably lost his hotel room key again" Tracy remarked with a giggle "All right then, promise you will call me later?"

"I will" the Commander confirmed "I love you Tracy."

"I love you too" Tracy confirmed "Speak to you later love."

"So how has she taken the news of Mr Rogers's new found freedom?" Sir Richard asked as the Commander hung up the telephone with that happy look he always had after he speaks to Tracy.

"Erm, controlled seething I think" the Commander admitted after a moment of careful thought "She went to see Sir Hugo Carnforth as soon as the verdict was announced but I don't think that really got her anywhere."

"Not surprising really" Sir Richard agreed "He answers to a higher authority shall we say."

"Speaking of which" the Commander declared "I think it is about time the new Home Secretary and I properly met for a chat, you never know what may come up in conversation."

"That may prove a little more difficult than you might think" Sir Richard admitted slightly sheepishly.

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"Well I will say this for them" Rogers remarked as he entered the old Edwardian office building that was the headquarters of his business empire that had continued its legitimate activities all throughout his time in prison "the press are a darn sight more intrusive than they used to be."

"A lot has changed since you went inside Sir" William Harcourt, effectively Rogers second in command or 'Executive Director' to give him his more formal title agreed as he accompanied his boss up the ornate carved wooden staircase to the main offices on the fourth floor.

"Tell me something Bill" Rogers asked as he could feel the effects of old age in climbing up the stairs "How come in ten years of keeping the family business ticking over, you never thought to get a lift installed in this place?"

"Tried to boss" Harcourt confirmed "We couldn't get the planning permission, apparently the local council planning committee are not as open to bungs as they used to be."

"In which case I think we have some work to do" Rogers declared "Time to restore traditional values, I mean who ever has heard of a politician, especially a local councillor who doesn't take even the occasional bung now and then?"

"Times change boss" Harcourt admitted as they arrived at Rogers's office door, his name still emblazoned in gold script on the frosted glass of the door.

"Give me a few minutes then send the guys in" Rogers confirmed "I'd like to get reacquainted with the place first."

"There is a fresh box of your favourite cigars plus I filled the decanter with the best single malt" Harcourt confirmed "Welcome home boss."

"You are a good lad Bill" Rogers confirmed patting him on the back "Thank you."

Once Harcourt had departed, Rogers paused for a few moments before opening the office door and smiling at the familiar creak it made as he entered, much like the contents of the room, all very much as he had left and remembered it from all those years ago.

He duly sat down at the large antique carved wood desk and ran his hand across its weathered but cared for surface as if familiarising himself with a long forgotten old friend.

Looking over at the right hand side, he duly located the cigars and scotch from which he proceeded to unwrap a cigar and pour himself a generous drink.

Once he had lit and inhaled on the huge cigar, he raised his glass to his reflection in the wall mounted antique mirror.

"Welcome home old boy" he declared with a grin of pure delight.

With that first welcome drink gone, he quickly set about pouring a second at which point there was a polite knock at the door.

"Yes, come in lads" Rogers declared whereupon Harcourt duly led in a group of eight men including four of the newly released co-defendants who after the exchanging of warm greetings all took a seat around the room facing the desk.

"It's good to see you all again" Rogers declared rubbing his hands with anxious anticipation "I appreciate it that we are eager and raring to get back to work but first as my old man used to say walls have ears?"

"Err not any more boss" Harcourt confirmed as he produced a clear plastic bag containing a number of small electronic devices with associated wires and other parts "I had the place fumigated this morning and it would appear we have had an infestation of ferrets, presumably of the MI5 variety."

"Very busy little ferrets it would appear" Rogers agreed as he looked at the bag and its contents "We can expect plenty of harassment from both the Security and Intelligence Services over the next few days" he declared calmly "Needless to say I have friends in appropriate places who will be issuing some well chosen and carefully placed warnings to the right people but first a few important items of business."

"Ready when you are boss" Harcourt confirmed, a feeling also shared by the other men as they nodded in agreement.

"Firstly I want to hear all about the people most responsible for my incarceration" Rogers declared like the Captain of a ship "Then I want to set up a meeting with the best fixer we have on our books. Is Davy Thorpe still around?"

"Died of cancer a few years back I am afraid Sir" Harcourt responded "There is his son Garry though, his old man taught him all the tricks of the trade and he is very handy when it comes to any firearm you care to name plus some interesting other services he can supply if the cash is right."

"Get him here tonight" Rogers requested "I don't care what his price is, he will be worth it and I want only the best for the various jobs I have planned, also I want to set up a meeting with our friends in the Service."

"Sounds like things are about to get interesting" one of the other men remarked "I take it we should clear our diaries for the next few days?"

"In the last ten years in my absence" Rogers declared "despite your best efforts following years under my tutelage" he indicated Harcourt "the world has become soft, badly educated and quite frankly an utter disgrace so it is time to take back control, re-establish the old ways and get back to business but first there is the small matter of the person who I have most to thank for my last nine years in jail. So lads" he requested as he relaxed back in his big leather chair "tell me everything you know about a young lady by the name of Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner."

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"Bastards" Collins declared, clearly annoyed as he hung up the telephone before rejoining Sir Richard and the Commander as they looked down from the balcony overlooking the main conference hall to the stage below.

"Bad day at the office?" the Commander asked sensing Collins frustration.

"Some of my technical lads paid a visit to Franklin Rogers gaff whilst he and his associates were enjoying their moment of glory in court" Collins explained "A few very discreetly placed listening devices, very difficult to find unless you were to specifically know what you were looking for, trouble is someone did know what they were looking for and promptly removed them all."

"You don't find that kind of expertise in the Yellow Pages" Sir Richard remarked "Looks like Rogers is hiring in some very high quality talent into his little business empire."

"Well there cannot be many who specialise in that sort of thing" Collins remarked "I think it may be a good idea to spend a relaxing evening doing some ringing around, discreetly of course, see who is about on the scene these days."

"In the meantime" the Commander turned back to the balcony overlooking the main conference hall below "bearing in mind my usual discomfort on the subject of heights, what exactly is this 'problem' of which you speak?" he asked Sir Richard.

"That" he pointed directly down towards the stage at the front of the conference room where there were a number of prominent politicians in discussion including the dominant tall figure of the new Home Secretary but it was the comparatively short stubby man fussing around them that Sir Richard was specifically indicating.

"What?" the Commander asked "the slime ball in the badly tailored Armani suit?"

"Indeed" Sir Richard confirmed.

"So who is he?" the Commander asked.

"Ah yes, of course" Collins recognised the man in question "Lionel Frobisher, ostensibly the newly appointed Prime Minister's Private Secretary but in reality a proverbial political pain in the arse."

"Nicely summarised" Sir Richard agreed "Basically since that little worm was appointed by gawd knows who a few weeks ago, no one but no one sees or speaks to any senior member of the cabinet without going through him."

"Oh I can see us crossing swords, maybe even literally at some point" the Commander wryly remarked.

"The political columnists in the press reckon he is 'the next big thing' including being tipped as a future Home Secretary or party leader" Sir Richard confirmed.

"We will all be screwed if that happens" Collins remarked with a clear tone of disgust apparent "He is all warm, fluffy and liberal, very much pro freedom and none too fond of law enforcement agencies such as ours."

"Definitely worth going through his accounts then" the Commander suggested.

"Already tried it" Collins confirmed "The Political Monitoring Unit tried to do their usual background and profile research when he first came onto the scene, ten minutes later I get called around to the Houses of Parliament whereupon the Leader of the House told in the most diplomatic terms he could muster that I and my colleagues should go forth and multiply."

"I need to talk to the Home Secretary gentlemen" the Commander declared "and without Mr Frogspawn..."

"...Frobisher" Sir Richard corrected.

"...whatever his name is listening in" the Commander continued "I need him out of the way, at least for half an hour or so."

"I think I might be able to come up with something" Sir Richard agreed "It all depends on how good your breaking and entering skills are."

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Tracy was heading home, leaving the main entrance of New Scotland Yard when a dark black car pulled up alongside her in the street outside.

"Hello Sis" the familiar voice of her identical twin sister Jennifer called from the driver's seat "Hop in, I'll give you a lift home."

"Are you actually going my way?" Tracy asked as she went around and got in the front passenger seat.

"Err not exactly" Jennifer admitted nodding her head towards the back of the car which made Tracy look around where to her understandable surprise she found no less a person than the Prime Minister.

"Good evening Divisional Commander Caverner" the Prime Minister declared with a friendly smile that did little to hide his unsettled feelings which were apparent.

"Good evening Prime Minister" Tracy responded in kind "Tell me Sir, do they not have such a device called a telephone in Downing Street?" she jokingly asked.

"I apologise for the rather unorthodox and unannounced nature of this little conversation" the Prime Minister apologised most sincerely "however as you are no doubt aware, certain events have occurred today which quite frankly have taken many of us, yourself included I suspect somewhat by surprise."



"You can say that again Sir" Tracy wryly admitted as alongside her, Jennifer duly drove on.

"Has this got anything to do with that fruit loop that got released from prison this morning?" Jennifer asked "I was reading all about it in the Evening Standard, sounds like a right piece of work."

"That would indeed be the problem in question yes" the Prime Minister confirmed.

"Sir" Tracy addressed the Prime Minister directly "Trust me on this when I say that I cannot stress hard enough exactly how much of a threat his being free presents."

"All cautions that have all ready been expressed, some in even stronger language by amongst others David Collins of MI5, Sir Richard Crowthorne, the Attorney General and others since the news first broke" the Prime Minister confirmed.

"Let me put a round the clock surveillance team on him and his merry men" Tracy requested "Tap his phones, bug his house, anything, then as soon as he notches up something as small as a parking ticket I can throw his backside back in jail where it belongs so fast he'll have jet lag for a month."

"All perfectly good ideas" the Prime Minister agreed "with a couple of very good reasons why you can't do it."

"Here it comes..." Tracy remarked rolling her eyes upwards.

"Collins and his lads wired the whole of Mr Rogers place for sound first thing this morning when they received a tip off that the appeal was going to be successful" the Prime Minister explained "the problem is that by lunch time, one of his little pixies called in a cleaner and managed to remove all the devices, someone told them all about MI5's little visit."

"And the other reason?" Tracy inquired.

"Rumours, whispers and lots of frightened people in positions of power who will do anything, and I stress anything to ensure Rogers is left well alone" the Prime Minister confirmed regretfully.

"And in so doing, cover their arses into the bargain I presume?" Tracy remarked.

"Indeed" the Prime Minister agreed "Plus added to this rather explosive mix is the personal element..."

"What personal element?" Jennifer asked out of curiosity "Oh don't tell me this loony Rogers is another one of your husband's old collars?" she asked Tracy.

"Oh no, not this time" Tracy admitted "On the contrary, he is one of mine."

"Ohhh shit..." Jennifer responded as she realised the full significance of this revelation which in combination with what she had learnt from other recent events came as something of an unsettling surprise to her.

"OK, I get the back off message Sir" Tracy decided on an attempt at a compromise "How about instead I get a team together, do a full review of the original case, find whatever chink in the armour it was we missed and get him slung back in jail?"

"I'm sorry Divisional Commander" the Prime Minister apologised "I can't even do that although I would not be in the least bit surprised if someone decided to pretend they never had this conversation and maybe do a little unpaid overtime...?"

"Not that you would in any way be suggesting anything of course" Tracy casually remarked "and seeing as technically you are not actually here and therefore there is no possible way this meeting could be taking place..."

"I do believe we are singing from the same hymn sheet here" the Prime Minister confirmed.

"In which case I had better not go home now, not dig out my old case notes and certainly not read them" Tracy wryly mused.

"I couldn't have put it better myself" the Prime Minister remarked "but be careful, watch your back" he ominously warned "the same goes for your legendary husband as well."

"Always" Tracy confirmed "Always."

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"Larry!" Sir Richard called with much false affection as he approached Frobisher in the hotel room corridor on the floor where most of the rooms were dedicated to the conferences political delegates and their staff "How have you been?"

"I'm err fine thank you" Frobisher responded somewhat taken aback by Sir Richard's somewhat over friendly greeting "and it is Lionel actually" he promptly corrected him.

"Oh, sorry mate" Sir Richard uncharacteristically apologised "I was thinking, perhaps we got off on the wrong foot after all we all have this nation's interests as our main objective and I feel it is time we got together and discussed things like cross divisional strategies and the future, don't you think?"

"I must say I do find your change of heart a little bemusing" Frobisher remarked somewhat confused by all this.

"All right, I admit that maybe I am bit old fashioned" Sir Richard admitted as he discreetly guided Frobisher subconsciously down the corridor away from the Home Secretary's room at the far end.

"That's putting it mildly" Frobisher retorted "I have always been of the opinion that you and those of your generation represent the bad old days of law enforcement where decisions were taken in smoke filled rooms by lumbering dinosaurs in trench coats as they sipped fine brandy, the sort of quaint outdated and old fashioned way of doing things that should have been confined to the history books years ago and now only to be seen in late night documentaries on BBC Four."

As Sir Richard and Frobisher continued their conversation out in the corridor, the Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Terrance Davenport MP listened casually with an amused smile to the ongoing debate going on outside before returning to the sofa whereupon he looked on with surprise to see the Commander sitting directly opposite him.

"And I thought it was Sir Richard Crowthorne who had the talent for walking through walls" the Home Secretary declared.

"Oh he has other talents as well" the Commander confirmed with a wry smirk "Distracting certain civil service muffins for example."

"So I see" the Home Secretary agreed "Can't say I am sorry to see the back of that little weasel for a while, he really is a right royal pain in the arse."

"I thought it prudent that you and I met at last" the Commander brought matters to business as he was unsure how much time they had left before Frobisher realised something might be going on and that Sir Richard's bluster was just a distraction to get him out of the way.

"Given how many of my predecessors have it is rumoured wound up with their heads mounted on wooden plaques on your office wall" the Home Secretary mused with an amused grin as he poured them both a drink "You will forgive me if I don't appear totally relaxed at this unannounced little meeting. Therefore could I possibly inquire as to the subject?"

"Well I've stop collecting Home Secretary's for now" the Commander amusingly responded "My wife on the other hand probably has plans for the spare space on my wall between the Lewisham station sign and the painting of Horsham station in 1963 for the head of one Mr Franklin Rogers."

"Ah..." the Home Secretary responded "The penny drops..."

"And so did his charges by the looks of it" the Commander added with an obvious tone of disapproval.

"I'm still waiting for the official report on this mess" the Home Secretary admitted "but from what I gather it had something to do with a scientific report on a case in the US a few weeks back that apparently cast severe doubt on the reliability of the method used to collect and analyse certain types of DNA evidence."

"From what I recall the DNA evidence made up pretty much all of the prosecution evidence against Rogers and his obnoxious little crew" the Commander confirmed.

"Put sufficient doubt about the reliability of the DNA evidence in front of the Court of Appeal" the Home Secretary followed through the logic "Bang goes the prosecution case, he walks, QED."

"Or at least he walks for as long as it takes for my wife to catch up with him and break his kneecaps which believe me I would not put past her" the Commander responded sincerely "Believe me not only is Tracy more than capable of that but she is extremely pissed about the whole matter."

"What exactly is your wife's involvement in this matter if I may ask?" the Home Secretary inquired, intrigued by the Commander's statement.

"I presume that you are aware that the name of the officer who lead the Rogers investigation was classified, sealed and buried under a truck load of 'D' notices when he was sent down?" the Commander asked.

"Yep" the Home Secretary confirmed "It will be well into the second half of the twenty first century before those files ever see the light of day again."

"Tracy was the officer in charge" the Commander revealed "and Rogers somehow, don't ask me how though, knows this."

"Oh dear God" the Home Secretary responded with a genuine look of shock "You know Commander" he admitted "I was appointed to this job ten days ago, the very pinnacle of my political career, something I had been working towards for twenty years and then on that very first morning this headache landed on my desk."

"Hell of a welcoming present" the Commander agreed "So the question is what do we do about him?"

"Nothing" the Home Secretary admitted "We can't touch him, there is no evidence that will stand up in court and if any of us so much as pass by his front door with a funny look let alone try to drag his arse back to jail, he will have half the Government and law enforcement agencies in court faster than you can say slander against his character."

"And that is before we even consider the potential damage he could do with whatever he knows about gawd knows who" the Commander added "He has often boasted of his legendary network of informants and people on the inside."

"I am in a good mind to stir things up a little and order some form of independent inquiry into this affair" the Home Secretary admitted "I don't like it when people with whom I am supposed to work have their hands in the pockets of known hoodlums."

"I don't get it" the Commander remarked "You are talking sense."

"Oh you mean the usual double talk bollocks I usually come out with in public?" the Home Secretary asked realising the reason for the Commander's look of confusion "That comes of having to make all my speeches from pre-prepared texts supplied by talentless morons like our friend Frobisher out there. Normally I like to think that I am a pretty normal chap once you take away the fake party manufactured and spun public exterior."

"So providing you didn't 'officially' know about it" the Commander pondered "You wouldn't mind too much if I did a little asking around, kick a few doors in here and there and generally be a tad unsubtle as usual?"

"Oh, be yourself you mean?" the Home Secretary responded "Well given your legendary reputation I would never dare to stand in your way."

"You know what" the Commander declared "I can see us doing quite a bit of business together, cheers."

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"All right, it's in here somewhere" Tracy mumbled to herself as she ransacked her way through various dusty cardboard boxes under the stairs at home by the light of a torch.

"Can I help?" Jack, the thirteen year old adopted son of Tracy and the Commander asked when he came out of the kitchen and heard the strange mumbling coming from the cupboard whereupon he decided to investigate.

"Oh it's all right Jack" Tracy called back as she located the elusive box she had been searching for "I found it, could you take this from me?" she asked passing back a dusty old shoebox to him.

"Don't you guys ever thrown anything away?" Jack remarked as he looked at the dust covered box in his hands as Tracy extricated herself from the cupboard before brushing down her uniform.

"Rarely" Tracy admitted as she took the box back and they went through to the front room "Which in this case is just as well as I wanted to review some old case notes."

"Security Service official note books" Jack commented as he saw the contents of the box once they had sat down on the sofa and Tracy had lifted the lid on the box to reveal its contents, a number of maroon coloured leather bound notebooks emblazoned with the crest of the National Security & Police Service underneath which was the name of its owner, Lieutenant Commander Tracy Caverner.

"I have always kept my old books" Tracy admitted as she began to search through them "You never know when an old case may pop up again and you need a memory refresh."

"Like a certain Lord of Leytonstone for example?" Jack ventured "I saw the reports in the Evening Standard on my way home from school" he admitted "What loon let that Muppet out?"

"Exactly what I intend to find out" Tracy confirmed determinedly "hence this little delve into dusty memories."

"Now there is a dodgy looking lot if ever I have seen one" Jack remarked as he noticed the group photograph of a number of Security Service officers together, faded and battered indicating that it was of some age.

"That was my little lot" Tracy explained "Eight officers who together brought down the biggest name in the history of organised crime in London."

"Who I presume is the very same gentleman that just walked out of the Royal Courts of Justice this afternoon as though he owned the place as some of his heavies lamped the press?" Jack asked.

"The same" Tracy grimly confirmed before returning to the photograph "That there" she indicated one of the officers, the one standing immediately to Tracy's left "was Lieutenant Terry Garcia, girl next to him was Harry Michaels. They were going out together not that they ever publicly admitted it to us" she explained "One day they volunteered to go in undercover into one of Rogers casinos but someone, I still don't know who tipped off the heavies they were in there and two days later their bodies were fished out of Camden Lock."

"So you got Rogers for that then I take it?" Jack asked.

"Nope" Tracy confirmed "The bodies were barely out of the water when I get summoned to the top floor and told in no uncertain terms that the case was dead and buried and it would be in the best interests for all involved to pretend none of it ever happened."

"Oh and I just know you did just that" Jack sarcastically responded.

"Well I let the dust settle for a couple of days" Tracy confirmed "Then once all had gone quiet, I and my fellow remaining officers whilst officially on leave decided to do a little private investigation of our own."

"That was when you found the clinching evidence" Jack concluded.

"It wasn't much" Tracy confirmed "a tiny fragment of DNA evidence which combined with one guy we finally managed to persuade to talk in exchange for protection. I took it personally to the Director of Public Prosecutions myself so that it didn't get accidentally 'lost' on route and then twenty four hours later in a very public demonstration of determination, I arrested Rogers and the rest of his obnoxious crew outside Leytonstone Underground station and the rest as they say is history."

"So presumably, I admit science isn't my strong subject" Jack summed up "It was that DNA evidence that was dismissed in court earlier today which resulted in him walking?"

"It would appear so, yes" Tracy confirmed with regret.

"Which brings us to this little box of memories" Jack looked back at the shoe box  
"You hope that somewhere in there is the answer?"

"This and my original copy of the evidence notes that I have locked very securely away for just such an occasion" Tracy confirmed "I had this deep down feeling something like this was going to happen so I made sure I kept copies of everything" she discreetly indicated the pendant around her neck that she always wore.

"Something for a rainy day?" Jack asked.

"You might well say that" Tracy agreed as the telephone rang and she reached across the coffee table to pick it up.

"Hello love" the Commander called from his hotel room as he sat back, turning down the television with the remote control at the same time.

"Evening my dear" Tracy responded, delighted to hear her husband's calming voice  
"How was your evening."

"I err dropped in on someone" the Commander confirmed "Popped in to see the Home Secretary, turns out he is not such a sanctimonious pratt after all, that is just the spin team public script he is forced to read."

"Interesting" Tracy responded "I had a lift home with the Prime Minister this evening, we had a nice little chat about current affairs. I got the distinct impression certain people in various positions of various organisations want us to bugger off into the sunset and leave Rogers and his cronies well alone."

"Same message here as well" the Commander grimly confirmed "Dave Collins and his boys at MI5 tried to get Rogers place wired for sound but before anything turned up they hired some very professional anti-surveillance experts and cleared the place out very thoroughly."

"This guy has got more protection than a Kevlar factory" Tracy grimly admitted  
"Perhaps I should drop by in the morning and say Hi for old times sake?" she suggested.

"I think that would be an extremely bad idea" the Commander responded "Did you put Cassini's boys onto him."

"He has four of his best watchers on a round the clock off the time sheets surveillance" Tracy confirmed "Cassini will be reporting to me in the morning about ten o'clock but somewhere nice and public as quite frankly given the warnings received I strongly suspect that even the Yard is not safe from eavesdroppers at the moment."

"Look love" the Commander declared "You be extremely careful until I get back, I am going to fake an excuse to get out of this conference in the morning and head straight back to London to be with you."

"Won't that look a tad suspicious coming so soon after Roger's release?" Tracy asked.

"Probably" the Commander admitted "but by the same token doing absolutely nothing may very well have the same effect."

"It's getting late" Tracy confirmed "I am just going through my old notebooks and seeing if there is some remote chance I missed something back then that might help."

"Well don't stay up too late love" the Commander warned her "I have a feeling tomorrow is going to be a long day. I'll get the ten o'clock Brighton Express and be with you before lunchtime" he confirmed.

"I love you" Tracy responded blowing a kiss down the telephone.

"I love you too" the Commander confirmed with a smile before hanging up whereupon he looked around the darkened empty hotel room with an equally empty feeling as somehow, though he did not know exactly how, he had a terrible nagging feeling that something awful was going to happen sometime in the very near future and there was not a thing he could do about it.

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Rogers had managed to get away from his associates and even his minders at last after an exhausting day as now he found himself alone on the roof of his office building looking out across the sea of twinkling lights in the darkness that was the broad width of the east end of London spread before him.

As usual he was taking the chance to indulge in a cigar and a drink as he looked out across the city, alone in his thoughts without the background noise of jangling keys and slamming doors that had dominated his life in prison for the last nine years.

Despite the traffic noise, distant sirens and aircraft flying overhead it seemed to him almost serene and peaceful and he was taking in the clear night air with abundance.

It was just as Rogers was contemplating going back indoors that he heard a polite knock on the roof access doorway before Harcourt, coughing apologetically appeared.

"Sorry to disturb you boss" Harcourt apologised most sincerely "Mr Thorpe is here as you requested."

"Tell the lads to take the night off and then send him up please" Rogers confirmed whereupon Harcourt returned inside the building leaving him alone once more until a few minutes later a man in his late twenties appeared, confidently striding from the doorway across the roof to the balcony where Rogers was standing.

"Good evening Mr Rogers" Thorpe declared "It is an honour to meet you at last."

"Thank you for coming at such short notice" Rogers confirmed as they shook hands "I was sorry to hear about your old man, he had an almost irreplaceable talent."



"Thank you Sir" Thorpe confirmed "He did however teach me everything he knew plus I have learnt some new tricks as well."

"I was hoping you would say something like that" Rogers responded with a satisfied almost evil smirk "I wish to hire your services young man. I am told that much like your father you have become the best Fixer in the City."

"Whatever you want, wherever you want it and no questions asked" Thorpe readily agreed "and no evidence trails either bar any you want to leave that is."

"I have a job for you, possibly the first of many" Rogers began to explain "Now they won't be easy and whilst I can be fairly certain there will be those in the Security and Intelligence agencies who will try and pin what I have in mind on me before the echoes have died down, I want to have full deniability."

"I think I can manage that Sir" Thorpe agreed "Indeed if you want anyone else framed for what you have in mind beyond any doubt I can arrange that too if you would like."

"Excellent" Rogers agreed "Tell me, have you heard of a Divisional Commander Tracy Caverner of the National Security & Police Service?" he asked.

"Hey, who hasn't" Thorpe responded casually "Head of the Metropolitan Division and not exactly top of my Christmas card list nor that of many others I know."

"Now I don't want to know where, who or how but what I do want is for her to be removed from the picture" Rogers explained "Big, public and spectacular with collateral damage unlimited."

"Interesting" Thorpe remarked "You know there may be a window of opportunity tomorrow morning. I was talking to a friend of mine earlier today and he mentioned something that may suit our purpose, all I need is to find the right people to actually carry out the job which should not be too hard."

"I like what I am hearing so far" Rogers agreed.

"Trouble is Sir" Thorpe continued "What I have in mind means hiring some very talented professionals which even before my commission is added on top means some serious expense."

"Money is no object lad" Rogers confirmed "On the contrary I am sure it will be worth every penny."

"Just as long as it is not in cash" Thorpe remarked wryly "Yes I heard about the funny money as well."

"How about gold bullion delivered into an unnumbered Swiss bank account like your old man used to do?" Rogers suggested.

"That will do nicely" Thorpe agreed with an evil chuckle as they shook hands and sealed the deal.

"Ah wonderful" Rogers responded as he looked back out across the city just as the clock on Leytonstone Town Hall began to strike twelve and he thought about what he had set in motion "Have we not heard the chimes at midnight?"

"Indeed we have" Thorpe confirmed "I'll have my secretary send you your bill at the end of the week" he remarked with a wry smile.

"And if this is as successful as your reputation says it should be" Rogers added "I shall be putting some more work your way over the next few days as I have a lot of unfinished business that needs taking care of."

"In which case perhaps I should start a tab" Thorpe agreed "Good night Sir" he declared as they shook hands once again before he departed.

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"You would think with the amount of taxpayers money they are wasting on this photo opportunity of a conference, the very least they could do is come up with a buffet that can serve a decent bacon buttie" the Commander remarked with disdain as he and Sir Richard surveyed the hotel breakfast buffet selection before them, neither of them holding much enthusiasm.

"My wife saw a programme on the television the other night about clogged arteries and heart attacks" Sir Richard admitted "ever since she has been going on at me about improving my diet."

"You poor sod" the Commander sympathised "Tracy has given up trying to change my diet, I know she cares but you just cannot change the eating habits of a lifetime I find" he admitted.

"What do you suppose the Home Secretary is having?" Sir Richard speculated as they looked further up the queue to where the Home Secretary was looking equally as unenthusiastic about breakfast as they were.

"Probably the high protein organic salad option" the Commander confirmed "According to the seating plan he is stuck next to that berk from the Food Standards Agency for the rest of the morning."

"And I thought having to put up with that worm Frobisher nosing about all the time was bad enough" Sir Richard remarked "You know I could almost feel sorry for the fella, err I said almost by the way."

"I'm a Commander, get me out of here" the Commander declared as he decided to give up on the buffet and make a bid for freedom "If anyone asks where I have gone say I was called out to an urgent emergency and I won't be back any time soon."

"Will do" Sir Richard agreed as the Commander discreetly slipped away out of the dining hall before heading up the back stairs to the fourth floor and his hotel room where in anticipation of his planned return to London, his case was already packed and ready to go.

"Checking out already Sir?" the Receptionist asked as the Commander handed in his room key.

"Yes my dear" the Commander confirmed "Urgent business to deal with, comes with the job I suppose."

"Between you and me Sir" the Receptionist quietly informed the Commander "You are the third senior Security Service officer to make a bid for freedom in the last hour, anyone would think this conference was not worth bothering with."

"Believe me it isn't" the Commander admitted "Must go, I have a train to catch."

Twenty minutes later having walked up the hill from the seafront, the Commander was stepping onto the main concourse of Brighton Station, its high arched Victorian roof stretching off into the distance below which the stations nine platforms were busy with a constant stream of arrivals and departures.

"Well I see you had the same idea as me" a welsh accented voice called from behind causing the Commander to turn around to see the tall figure of his opposite number from Wales, Divisional Commander Terry Evans, an old friend and colleague who like the Commander was also dressed in full dress uniform which presented quite a formidable sight, so much so that even the regular fare dodgers in the corner of the station started running to the ticket office to pay their fares for a change.

"You know me Terry" the Commander admitted "Law enforcement can never be achieved sitting in air conditioned rooms speaking double talk claptrap about addressing broad spectrum's of diversity or whatever it was they were going on about, its about being on the street feeling collars and kicking doors in. Good old fashioned leg work and all that."

"Couldn't agree more" Evans admitted "That and the fact the catering was appalling of course."

"You can say that again" the Commander admitted "Not a decent bacon buttie in the place."

"So Brighton Express back to London for you I take it?" Evans asked.

"Yep" the Commander confirmed as they both surveyed the departures information along with most of the rest of the people on the concourse "Yourself?"

"Cardiff Sprinter, back to Wales by the slow but interesting route" Evans admitted "where there is probably a pile of paperwork the size of Swansea sitting on my desk to plough through but at least I will be home, and yourself?"

"I'm missing good old fashioned London air" the Commander admitted "plus the good lady of course."

"Naturally" Evans agreed "Oh, looks like mine is up on platform one" he confirmed as the number appeared alongside the scheduled departure time of his train "I'll see you around."

"Indeed" the Commander confirmed "Take care of yourself mate" he called as Evans departed, making his way through the ticket barriers before going around to Platform One on the far left of the station where his train consisting of a First Great Western three car Class 158 was ticking over to itself as its passengers proceeded to clamber on board.

For the Commander, his train was the fast service to London Victoria which stopped at only East Croydon and Clapham Junction and was now being advertised as ready to board from Platform Five in the centre of the station and it was to there that he proceeded via the ticket barriers before walking down the length of the eight car formation of Southern Class 377 'Electrostar' stock and then boarding the leading coach and settling down in the first class section immediately behind the drivers cab.

A few minutes later as the platform staff gave the right away signal, the train departed amid the hum of electric motors and the Commander relaxed in his seat whereupon he took out his warrant card wallet from which he extracted his favourite picture of Tracy and looked at it, reflecting on the fact that in just over an hour they would be together again.

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"I'm just going out, you can get me on my radio" Tracy confirmed to the Control Room personnel on duty as she passed the door.

"Commander Fuller just called for you Maam" one of the duty dispatchers responded "Apparently the Administrator General's travel pass appeared on the system at Brighton Station four minutes ago."

"Ah, my dear husband is on his way back then" Tracy concluded "Stand by your beds everyone" she joked.

With that Tracy left, making her way via the lifts down to the parking level in the basement of New Scotland Yard where she got into a marked Security Service patrol car that she had earlier requested was made available for her use at this time.

As she emerged into the daylight from the vehicle access onto Broadway, her mobile telephone sitting in the hands free cradle on the dashboard bleeped as a text message came in.

"Trafalgar Square, twenty minutes" Tracy read from the telephone's display before setting off.

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Sir Hugo Carnforth looked up from his desk out of his study window at the view which showed his neatly tended back garden as far as it stretched to the high brick and flint wall which separated the grounds of the house from the city suburbs beyond.

The Attorney General was working from home that morning, something he often did in recent times as workloads through his office increased year on year and there were too many distractions back at his city office which meant he would never get anything done half of the time.

"Right, the Home Secretary wants an inquiry, then I guess he is going to get one" Sir Hugo declared as he returned to the files on his desk, many of them marked with indications confirming them to be extremely confidential.

Just as he began to look through the first file, a noise from downstairs caught his attention.

"Hello?" Sir Hugo called towards the study door but after a few moments during which he was responded to only with silence he thought no more of it and continued his work.

It was a couple of minutes later that he then heard what sounded like his kitchen stairs door creaking back and forth, so determined to find out what was going on in what should have been an empty house bar himself, he took it upon himself to investigate.

"Hello?" Sir Hugo called over the balcony downstairs having come out of the study to see if anyone was there but again found no one so decided to head downstairs towards the kitchen from where the sound of the door swinging in the breeze could be heard.

It was as he reached the bottom of the stairs and looked around that suddenly from the shadows behind him a masked man appeared and with a crowbar, struck Sir Hugo across the back of the head immediately sending him crashing to the ground unconscious.

"OK lads" the man who had struck Sir Hugo called to three similarly dressed associates who then appeared "Find the documents, nick some decent antiques and let's make this look good."

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Tracy decided to park the patrol car in Northumberland Avenue and walk the short distance from there to Trafalgar Square which, not uncommon for a mid morning, was crowded with tourists milling around admiring Nelson's Column, the large stone lions and the fountain that dominate the centre of the Square.

It was towards the north side of the Square overshadowed by the edifice of the National Portrait Gallery that Tracy proceeded.

There waiting for her as expected was Commander Cassini, the head of the Specialist Undercover Operations division who was to be found leaning up against the edge of the fountain in the shadow of Nelson's Column in the centre of the square.

"You know for an expert in covert surveillance" Tracy remarked wryly as she joined him "you do look a little out of place."

"Meetings out in public places are not exactly my forte" Cassini admitted "I tend to be a lurk in murky corners or the back of a van out of sight kind of guy but in your case and current circumstances I am willing to make an exception."

"Thanks for coming" Tracy confirmed "I couldn't risk a meeting back at the Yard, too many unfriendly ears about that place who if they found out you were staking out Rogers place would most probably go berserk."

"Understood" Cassini agreed.

"So what news from our old friend in Leytonstone?" Tracy asked.

"Pretty much most of the comings and goings my lads and lasses have observed in the last twenty four hours appear to have been fairly routine" Cassini confirmed as he discreetly passed to her a brown envelope containing surveillance photographs of various individuals "Almost everyone we have seen have been known associates, no one we weren't expecting except for one."

"Oh aye?" Tracy remarked.

"Last picture there" Cassini explained "Chap in his late twenties or early thirties I would say, he popped in for a visit into Rogers place just before midnight and left again about twenty minutes later, arriving and departing in a black cab. I have tried to get an i.d. on him but so far to no avail."

"What about the cab?" Tracy asked.

"Plates were fake and so was the Taxi licence number" Cassini confirmed "Very classy and not easy to set up so whoever this guy is I reckon he is very professional."

"Looks like Rogers is getting in some hired help from outside" Tracy concluded.

"From what I heard I had always assumed Rogers always kept his business in house?" Cassini asked.

"Normally yes" Tracy agreed "but things are far from normal, speaking of which..." she tailed off as they both looked off towards the far side of the Square where a Security Service patrol car with full lights and sirens was screeching to a halt "Did anyone call the cops?"

"Not me" Cassini confirmed "I have an allergic reaction to uniforms."

"Control from Lima Mike One" Tracy called into her radio "What is the story behind the unit now arriving at Trafalgar Square?" she asked.

"MI5 received a report that there was a known terrorist heading for Trafalgar Square" the duty Control Room Supervisor back at New Scotland Yard confirmed "We tried to get hold of you Maam but your radio was not responding."

"Sounds a bit fishy to me if you ask Maam" Cassini commented as they went over towards the patrol car from which two concerned looking uniformed patrol officers emerged.

"Morning guys" Tracy called "What's occurring?" she asked.

"Err no idea Maam" one of the young uniformed patrol officers admitted as he and his colleague got out of the car and they met almost in the centre of the Square "We just got a call saying to get to Trafalgar Square as fast as possible."

"Ever get the feeling someone knows more than you?" Cassini casually asked.

"Every day of the week" Tracy wryly admitted as she reached for her radio "Control from Lima Mike One" she called "I think..."

At that point a distinctive thunderous crack of gunfire was heard and one of the officers to Tracy's immediate left fell to the ground claspng a gunshot wound to the chest.

"Bloody hell!" Cassini exclaimed as he drew his gun in response and looked all around for the source of the gunshot.

"Control" Tracy called into her radio "Code Red, shots fired in Trafalgar Square."

"I'm hit" the other officer called as a second shot rang out and the throngs of people all around in response began to panic and run in all directions.

"Give me a hand here" Tracy called to Cassini whereupon they dragged the two shot officers out of harms way behind one of the large lions as a further three shots rang out across the square.

"Control" Tracy updated the situation "There appears to be a sniper on the roof of one of the buildings surrounding the south side of the Square" she confirmed "Multiple shots fired, two officers down, need immediate backup."

"This guy is dead" Cassini confirmed as he checked on the status of the two shot officers "This other fella I don't think is going to make it either, there is a hell of a lot of blood loss here."

"Trouble is if we go out there, we will be sitting ducks for this guy" Tracy responded as they continued to scan the rooftops along the south side for any sign of the sniper.

"Open window, second floor down three o'clock" Cassini called as he saw something.

"I see it" Tracy confirmed "You run for cover as soon as I start firing."

"Can you hit this guy from that distance Maam?" Cassini asked.

"Probably not" Tracy admitted as she checked her gun was fully loaded "but I can certainly get close enough to persuade him to rethink his options, so on three."

"On one" Cassini suggested "I don't think we have the time for three."

"All right, now then" Tracy agreed as she proceeded to break cover, aimed squarely at the open window in the far distance and opened fire whereupon Cassini made a run for it across the Square to where a small cluster of frightened tourists were sheltering.

"What the hell?" Tracy called out as a further two shots rang out this time from a completely different direction "Cassini!" she called "Get down, there are two of them."

"Oh bloody hell, I think it may actually be three" Cassini called back as further shots rang out seeming from all around.

"Control" Tracy called into her radio, now well aware that the situation was escalating in both danger and lack of control with each passing moment "Multiple shooters..." she tailed off as she felt an impact in her stomach.

Cassini who was protecting the tourists trapped in the shadow of the fountain could only look on helplessly as he saw Tracy struck by three separate shots before she collapsed to the ground whereupon the shooting stopped, only the echoes of those dreadful last few shots rumbling around the Square could be heard.

"Stay down, stay down!" Cassini urged everyone around him who initially were about to make a run for it during an apparent lull in the shooting but there was no way of telling if it was really over or if the snipers were merely waiting for another live target to appear.

"Control, this is Cassini" he called into his radio with clear but controlled urgency "Three officers down, I need full armed backup, evac team and medical support to Trafalgar Square right now."

"All on the way" the response quickly came from the Control Room whereupon Cassini decided to chance his luck and skip over, stooped down to where Tracy was lying in a pool of blood at the base of Nelson's Column.

"Oh dear God..." Cassini exclaimed as he saw the terrible state she was in with three gunshot wounds to the chest area, one of which was in her back.

She was still alive as her mouth was moving but a quick check by Cassini as the sounds of approaching sirens grew louder showed that her breathing was very shallow and it was obvious she had lost a lot of blood.



"Cassini, where are you?" the familiar voice of Bob, the head of the specialist Armed Response Unit section called as he and his team of weapons specialists in full body armour arrived, deploying from their van that had pulled up on the south side of the square.

"Over here!" Cassini called back whereupon Bob came over.

"Oh my God..." Bob exclaimed as he saw and instantly recognised who it was that had been shot "What's the S.P.?" he asked.

"Snipers, at least three I think" Cassini confirmed "They got those two guys over there with the first couple of shots then went gunning for the Divisional Commander here."

"Right" Bob responded as he quickly took charge and instructed his officers who had now swelled in numbers with the arrival of more "Alpha Team, I want the entire Square confirmed evacuated and sealed in the next two minutes, Bravo Team begin a full by the numbers search of every building, roof top and balcony overlooking the kill zone, the rest of you with me to provide close protection for the medical team and their patient."

The numerous ARU officers seemed understandably a bit stunned by what they were seeing before them which meant Bob had to gee them along a bit.

"Come on what are you waiting for? A written invitation?" he asked "Let's get moving, now!"

"Paramedics are here Sir" one of the ARU officers called indicating the ambulance under heavy escort that was now arriving.

"Right, let's get them a full escort just in case any of those lunatics are still waiting to take a pot shot" Bob declared.

"Hurry up, I think we are losing her" Cassini urged as he rechecked Tracy's condition which was becoming increasingly unstable.

Under heavy guard the paramedic crew were escorted across the square to where Tracy was lying on the ground.

"How many casualties do we have?" the lead paramedic asked as she began assessing Tracy's condition.

"Three in total" Cassini confirmed "The other two officers are gone though" he responded "There is just her still alive, just."

"Well we have three gunshot wounds, two exit wounds and a lot of blood loss" the paramedic confirmed "Do we have any idea of medical history?"

"The only person that would know that would be her husband the Commander I would think" Cassini responded.

"Someone had better call him and quickly I think" the Paramedic suggested as they continued to work on Tracy trying to stabilise her condition sufficiently enough for her to be able to be moved to hospital.

"I'm on it" Bob confirmed "Control from Lima Delta Alpha One" he called "Urgent message."

"Control receiving, go ahead" the response came.

"Get an urgent message through to the Administrator General, Commander Fuller, Divisional Commander Jennifer Caverner and while you are about it see if you can find Sir Richard Crowthorne and tell them to get here fast" Bob confirmed "Especially the Commander as it is not looking too good."

"We will try and track them down for you" the Control Room dispatcher agreed "Control out."

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"Has anyone ever heard of Nabutulala Land?" Jennifer Caverner asked across the office of her VIP Protection Division.

"New one on me Guv" one of her officers remarked.

"Only we are supposed to be transporting an ambassador from there this afternoon and I can't even find this place on the map" Jennifer admitted.

"Sounds African to me boss" another of her officers commented as he reached across to answer the telephone "VIP Protection Division" he confirmed "Err yes she is right here. Boss! Line three, it sounds urgent."

"The Prime Minister has probably lost his wallet down the back of one of my motors again" Jennifer wryly remarked as she returned to her desk and picked up the telephone "Caverner" she declared.

"It's Crowthorne" Sir Richard called from in the back of a car heading at speed with a Security Service motorcycle escort up the M23 passing Gatwick Airport "Tracy's been shot in Trafalgar Square" he announced "I am heading back to London now, I strongly suggest you get yourself and Simon to Charing Cross Hospital on the PDQ."

"Err what about the Commander?" Jennifer asked, having to sit down at the shock of this news.

"Can't get a hold of him" Sir Richard confirmed "He is on his way up to London on a Brighton Express but all the tunnels between there and here plus his lack of ability with the thing means we haven't been able to reach him on his mobile."

"Do we know what time he is scheduled to arrive at Victoria Station?" Jennifer asked.

"About twenty minutes time" Sir Richard confirmed "I should be there about twenty minutes later."

"I'll have him met with a full armed escort in one of my motors" Jennifer responded "If Tracy was deliberately targeted, there is no guarantee that he is not next on the list."

"Tracy is being taken to Charing Cross Hospital's secure unit" Sir Richard confirmed "Dave Collins is covering the place with his MI5 lads, Bob has the place surrounded with a ring of steel of the heavily armed variety and I have notified the Prime Minister."

"Right" Jennifer responded "I'll grab the Commander and Simon and meet you there."

"Better hurry" Sir Richard strongly suggested "Her condition is being listed as critical, she may not make it."

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"We are now approaching London Victoria" the automated announcer declared as the Commander's train pulled into platform sixteen, the murky almost subterranean nature of it contrasting sharply with the bright late morning daylight outside.

As the train arrived, the staff on the ticket barrier that leads to platforms fifteen through nineteen were understandably surprised when a group of six fully armed ARU Unit officers arrived.

"Meeting a passenger off of the Brighton Express mate" Bob declared.

"Go ahead..." the gate line supervisor agreed opening the side gate although he wasn't entirely sure what alternative he had.

"Which carriage did they say he was in?" Bob asked his officers.

"Front one apparently" one of his officers confirmed as the approached the end of platform sixteen where the train was slowing to a halt at the buffer stops.

"Oh dear..." the driver remarked casually as he drew his train to a halt and saw the ARU team approaching with clear determination "Someone is in trouble."

On board the train as the Conductor made his customary terminating announcement, the Commander got up from his seat and proceeded to the doorway ready to alight as the train stopped.

"Is this your herd?" the Conductor asked the Commander as they saw the ARU team approach the train with clear purpose in their step just as the doors were opened.

"I wasn't expecting a welcoming committee I must admit" the Commander remarked as he stepped out onto the platform "Morning Bob, either someone is getting over protective, you and your boys were out for a stroll and dropped by to say hello or something serious has happened.

"I am afraid the latter Sir" Bob grimly confirmed "I regret to report sir your wife has been shot and seriously wounded."

"What?" the Commander responded, he had already had a deep feeling something was terribly wrong simply judging from Bob and his teams presence and demeanour.

"We are here to escort you to Charing Cross Hospital" Bob explained "We have a car waiting outside and Sir, I think we had better hurry."

"Absolutely" the Commander agreed whereupon he duly proceeded from the platform to the ticket barrier flanked either side by his armed escort all of whom towered over him as they made their way across the main concourse and out of the front entrance.

Immediately outside, a crowd had gathered to see what was going on with a black bullet proof ministerial escort car waiting outside Victoria Station with an accompanying escort of four Security Service motorcycle outriders and a patrol car both to the front and rear.

In a sudden rush the Commander was escorted from the entrance of the station and into the back of the waiting car with such speed that to the onlookers he was almost a blur.

Once he was inside the car, Bob got in the back on the other side whilst the rest of his formidable looking ARU team filed into the two accompanying patrol cars before amid a wail of sirens the convoy moved speedily off.

"OK Bob, what the hell happened?" the Commander asked, clearly anxious for news.

"From what I gather" Bob explained "Your wife was having a meeting in Trafalgar Square with Commander Cassini. Someone then phoned in an apparently false report that a known terrorist suspect was in the Square which was when a patrol car with two officers from the Stockwell office showed up."

"Go on" the Commander prompted.

"According to Commander Cassini, someone probably with some sort of snipers rifle opened fire, shooting the two patrol officers then a second and possibly a third gunman waited until Tracy was taking cover behind Nelson's Column before taking her down with three shots from a completely different direction."

"What's the damage?" the Commander apprehensively asked.

"You would have to ask the medical people that I am afraid Sir" Bob admitted "She took three direct hits and by the time we showed up a couple of minutes later she was unconscious and it was obvious she had lost a hell of a lot of blood."

"Who has been notified of what has happened?" the Commander asked as the convoy continued to make rapid progress through the city streets towards Charing Cross.

"Sir Richard Crowthorne is coordinating information now" Bob confirmed "He is on his way back to London in a high speed car with official escort right now. I believe he has notified only those that need to know for the moment including the Prime Minister."

"And publicly we are running with?" the Commander asked.

"Press and TV news media have agreed to the Prime Minister's request to keep this just an officer involved shooting" Bob confirmed "No specifics until you say so otherwise."

"Bob" the Commander asked as he looked out of the side window at the street scene of London passing by at speed at which point it was clear the realisation of what had happened was starting to sink in "What am I going to do if she dies?"

"She is not going to die Sir" Bob tried to reassure him but he had already seen what condition Tracy was in and in reality his hopes were not high.

"You said snipers?" the Commander asked as numerous thoughts went through his mind all of which were in a messed up jumble at that point.

"Three we think" Bob confirmed "My boys did a full rooftop search as soon as we arrived on the scene but they were long gone."

"I'd like to call in Commander Elizabeth Baker in on this, she has the knowing of a lot of things about snipers and all that" the Commander suggested "Could you arrange for her to be brought down to London at her earliest convenience?"

Bob looked on with concern as it was apparent the Commander was suffering some sort of delayed shock, his hands were trembling although he tried to hide it and his speech was not as confident or coherent as it usually was.

"Let me take care of it Sir" Bob confirmed "Your place is with your wife I think" he suggested with clear insistence as the car pulled up outside the rear entrance to Charing Cross Hospital.

"Thank you Bob" the Commander agreed.

"No problem Sir" Bob reassured him as he reached for his radio "Gold Control, Alpha One has arrived, ready to exit the vehicle."

"Gold Control" the response came "Route through the hospital to the fourth floor is secure."

"Here we go" Bob called whereupon he got out of the car before going around to the other side and opening the other door for the Commander to get out himself.

"All right" the Commander declared as he took a deep breath "Take me to her."

With an armed officer on either side, the Commander made his way through the hospital and up the back stairs to the fourth floor where he was met by Fuller and Jennifer.

"Where is she?" the Commander asked with an obvious sense of desperation to see Tracy quickly.

"In theatre" Jennifer confirmed "Been in there about forty minutes, they won't say anything."

"Right..." the Commander declared with determination.

"Err Commander, you can't interrogate the medical staff as if they were the Home Secretary refusing to admit to an unpaid parking ticket" Fuller warned seeing the look in the Commander's eyes.

"Well I can't just stand around here doing nothing" the Commander protested "Do we know when she is likely to be out of there?"

"Doctors reckoned it will be at least another hour" Jennifer confirmed "There is a lot of damage to patch up."

"Right, show me the scene" the Commander declared.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa!" Fuller called, waving his arms.

"I think you might have missed out one whoa there" Jennifer remarked aside.

"You can't be involved in this investigation Sir, you are personally involved" Fuller informed the Commander.

"This is Tracy we are talking about" the Commander pointed out "We are *all* personally involved."

"My sentiments exactly" Sir Richard Crowthorne agreed as he appeared from the corridor entrance and joined them along with the Prime Minister.

"Oh I don't know though" the Prime Minister cautioned "As soon as the press finds out exactly who it was that has been shot, there will be questions about impartiality should any investigation be headed by the husband of one of the most important victims involved."

"I just want to ask a few questions" the Commander confirmed.

"If you are thinking of going anywhere near Rogers or his crew I strongly suggest you think otherwise" the Prime Minister advised "Besides, your place is at your wife's side."

"What about Jack?" Fuller asked as he realised that someone was missing from this discussion.

"Oh erm..." the Commander tried to think but his mind was too full of jumbled thoughts which he could not put into any order.

"I'll go and get him" Jennifer confirmed as she reached inside her uniform tunic pocket for her car keys "I think he needs to see someone he knows before he finds out through the press what has happened."

"Thanks Jennifer" the Commander confirmed as she departed whereupon he sat down on a chair in the corridor and looked around seemingly lost as to what to do now.

"I've taken the liberty of putting a call into Divisional Commander Evans" the Prime Minister confirmed "We need someone with the experience and unconnected with this matter to take temporary charge of the Metropolitan Division and head up any investigation, at least until Tracy is back on her feet."

"He's a good man" the Commander agreed "I've worked with him before."

"Meantime Mr Crowthorne" the Prime Minister turned to Sir Richard "I think it is time that you got to work?"

"Indeed" Sir Richard agreed "and I think I have a fairly good idea of where to start."

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"Commander Elizabeth Baker" the tall uniformed officer declared proffering her identification to one of the patrol officers guarding the perimeter of Trafalgar Square which was now a sealed off crime scene "I am expected."

"One moment please" the patrol officer requested before turning to his radio "Gold Control from gateway, there is a Commander Elizabeth Baker from Specialist Operations here."

"Send her in" the voice of Bob was heard to call over the radio "We are over in the centre of the Square."

"Head for that tent over there Maam" the patrol officer confirmed to Baker.

"Thank you" Baker responded before picking up her larger heavy metal case and after ducking beneath the tape barrier, heading towards the centre of the Square where in the shadow of Nelson's Column a larger inflatable tent had been set up.

"Welcome to the party" Bob declared as Baker entered the tent and they shook hands "Glad you could come."

"Word on the grapevine is you had a sniper and an officer involved shooting I gather?" Baker asked.

"That's just the basic version I am afraid" Bob admitted "Just under two hours ago three officers were shot by at least two and possibly three snipers high up on the roof tops surrounding the square" he showed her a map of the area with the key locations of the incident clearly marked.

"What's the damage?" Baker asked as she studied both the map and a larger number of photographs of the scene that had already been collated and were on display.

"Two patrol officers dead" Bob confirmed "and Tracy Caverner listed as critical and in surgery right now fighting for her life."

"Dear God..." Baker responded with a look of shock "and you say these were shots taken by snipers around the Square?"

"Well that was what we were hoping you could tell us" Bob admitted "My specialist subject is close quarters weapons, your expertise is more on the long distance variety and well lets face it you are the best qualified officer in the Service, the Commander asked for you specifically."

"How is he?" Baker asked.

"In shock" Bob confirmed "It took about half an hour for the realisation to hit him and then he basically collapsed into a gibberish talking wreck."

"Well given the circumstances" Baker admitted "perhaps having the Commander out of the picture for the time being might avoid complicating issues, we need subtlety here rather than his trademark kicking doors in and asking questions later methods for the time being."

"Sorry to intrude" called Divisional Commander Evans as he came through the tent entrance "I was on my way to the hospital to see how Tracy and the Commander were doing and thought I would drop by."

"Sir Richard Crowthorne informed us you were on your way Sir" Bob confirmed as they shook hands "This is Commander Elizabeth Baker our resident expert on snipers and their tools of the trade."

"Sir" Baker responded "A pleasure to meet you, I just wish it was under better circumstances."

"I got here as soon as I could" Evans admitted "I was on a train back to Cardiff when I got the call and jumped off at Southampton Central for a fast express back to Waterloo."

"So what do you think?" Bob asked.

"I think we have a very serious problem" Baker admitted "Come with me and I will show you what I mean" she led the way out of the tent carrying the blown up map of the area before standing in the centre of Trafalgar Square.



"OK gentlemen, tell me what you see" Baker asked.

"Buildings, traffic, fountains..." Evans remarked.

"So how far away do you reckon the *nearest* rooftop is to the first point of impact?" Baker asked.

"At a rough guess that would be over to the left here, that's what about four or five hundred feet?" Bob looked around and estimated the distance between where they were standing and the nearby South Africa House.

"Now I admit at the moment this is just rough guesswork based on what I have heard so far" Baker admitted "I need to do some more careful measuring and some calculations when I have more to work with but your first victim was over here right?" she went over to the nearby fountain to their right.

"Yes" Bob confirmed "Lieutenant Frazer."

"Sir" Baker addressed Evans "Would you mind standing over there where Frazer was when he was hit please?"

"Certainly" Evans agreed as he walked over to the spot marked with a red 'X' made from tape on the ground.

"Now look over towards the nearest building and tell me what's wrong?" Baker prompted.

"Well I can't" Evans responded pointing ahead "Nelson's Column is in the way."

"Which means the first shot or shots must have come from somewhere over there?" Bob ventured pointing towards the south side of the Square.

"Exactly" Baker confirmed "Well over a thousand yards away and with a constant heavy cross wind as well."

"That can be done I take it?" Evans asked not really knowing much about long distance shooting.

"Oh it can be done" Baker agreed "The trouble is what you would need to set up a gig like this, I mean we are talking very specialised equipment and handled by some very expert marksmen."

"How many people are there capable of such a long distance shot of that sort of accuracy?" Evans asked.

"Maybe a dozen in the whole world" Baker confirmed "The only good news being I can narrow down the list by one name as I have an alibi."

"But why multiple shooters?" Bob asked "Also why the random shots that were thrown about the place?"

"Take a look at this plan" Baker returned to the blown up map in her hand "Trafalgar Square is basically a large wide flat open space with high buildings all around the perimeter and only the Column and the fountains to provide any cover."

"So they initially open up from this direction" Evans traced a line from the south side of the Square to where the first officer was shot on the plan and then add the crossfire so that sends everyone scattering for cover behind the monuments."

"Exactly" Baker confirmed "Cover the whole Square from three sides and what you have is effectively an air tight kill zone where you drive your intended target into an area they think is cover against the two marksmen you have in place then up pops number three right behind you and bang."

"So Commander Caverner was the intended target all along" Bob concluded grimly.

"I'd say so" Baker agreed "so I do hope you have that hospital she is in locked up tight as whoever set this up had access to some top drawer expertise and equipment and that sort of thing does not come cheap."

"So this is not over?" Bob asked.

"I don't think so" Baker commented "In fact I fear this is just a beginning."

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"Well that is another day over" Jack admitted to Megan as they emerged from the main entrance of Leytonstone High School along with the best part of a thousand other school children.

"And you are still none the wiser about trigonometry are you?" Megan remarked seeing the still confused look Jack had on his face which had been pretty much the same for the entire afternoon.

"Err no" Jack admitted.

"Looks like you have got a lift home" Megan nodded ahead to the school gates to where an unmarked Security Service car was waiting, the removable blue flashing light on the roof the only give away that separated it from any other car in the street.

"I wasn't expecting one" Jack admitted "but the way the Central Line has been the last few days I'm happy to take it, just the one thing though" he noted as he saw the driver of the car get out to reveal it was Jennifer Caverner looking rather concerned and worried, far removed from her usual persona "That is the wrong Ms Caverner."

"Hello Jack" Jennifer called as he arrived at the car "Jump in."

"I'll call you later" Jack informed Megan as he began to sense something was wrong and that he had better hurry.

"You better had" Megan reminded him "Talk to you later" she called before heading off to catch her bus home whereupon Jack got in the front passenger seat of the car.

"What's happened?" Jack asked with sincerity as Jennifer joined him in the front of the car and started the engine.

"What makes you think something has happened?" Jennifer asked out of curiosity.

"The look on your face, the fact that it is you picking me up in a Ministerial car no less rather than Tracy or the Commander and that deep seated feeling I always get when trouble is brewing" Jack summarised.

"There is no easy way to say it I am afraid" Jennifer admitted as they drove off heading back towards central London "Tracy has been shot" she confirmed.

"What?" Jack responded.

"Gunned down in Trafalgar Square late this morning" Jennifer confirmed "She has been in surgery pretty much ever since."

"Rogers's lot?" Jack asked.

"Now why do you say that?" Jennifer responded, curious as to what Jack knew of Tracy's previous history with regards to Franklin Rogers and his dubious associates.

"Last night she was looking through her old Service notebooks from back when she apparently put this guy Rogers away" Jack explained "Given how vicious this guy sounds from both the press coverage since his release and what she said it does seem an obvious and logical choice."

"With one little problem" Jennifer responded "We have all been given a gilt edged set in stone and written in blood keep off the grass warning with regards to the infamous Mr Rogers."

"Well I haven't" Jack declared with a determined look.

"Don't even think about it lad" Jennifer strongly advised "You will just wind up getting your head blown off."

"Like that has ever stopped me before?" Jack responded.

"Well first things first" Jennifer confirmed "Let's make sure Tracy is all right, and then we can go and kick some doors in if you insist."

-----

"Thanks for coming" Divisional Commander Evans called as Doctor Fredericks, the head of the National Forensic Service arrived at Trafalgar Square and he escorted her through the tape cordon to the centre of the scene "Sorry to have to pull you away from the conference."

"I'm glad to be away from it" Fredericks admitted "I just wish it was under happier circumstances" she added grimly.

"Can't argue with that" Evans agreed "I've got the Metropolitan forensic teams working all around the area covered by the shooting" he indicated ahead to the area around the base of Nelson's Column where a number of white overcoat clad forensic officers could be seen at work "I wanted someone experienced and from high up to co-ordinate our efforts if you don't mind?"

"Not a problem Sir" Fredericks readily agreed "So what have we got?"

"Well Commander Baker is doing the searching at the moment for the exact positions but from what we have been able to piece together so far, we had three shooters on the south, east and west side of the square which between them covered the entire area down here" Evans explained as he carefully showed her around the scene.

"Specifically targeted shots or random firing?" Fredericks.

"It looks like it started with two specifically targeted shots which was then followed by random shots which sent them scurrying for cover then gunman number three over here opens up and gets them from behind" Evans explained.

"Overlooked on all sides, nowhere to hide, sitting ducks by the looks of it" Fredericks concluded as she looked around "One thing is for certain we are not dealing with idle pot shot amateurs that is for certain."

"A couple of the bullets have embedded themselves in the fountain side over here" Evans led her over to where one of the forensic team was working "Maybe we can get some ballistics information from them?" he asked.

"If we can get them out without damaging the slugs then quite possibly" Fredericks agreed as she took a closer look at the distinctive holes in the stonework into which she shined a pen torch that reflected off of the bullets buried quite deep within.

"This could take a while Maam" the forensic officer remarked "They are embedded in there quite deep."

"Or we could just remove the whole stone and take it back to the lab as is" Fredericks suggested after pondering the problem for a few moments, "The right tools and conditions rather than ad-hoc out here may help to preserve vital evidence."

"One small problem" the forensic officer pointed over the edge of the fountain "Remove that stone and things will get a bit wet around here."

"That I can take care of" Evans confirmed as he turned to a uniformed officer as he was about to pass by "You, err what's your name?" he asked.

"Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson Sir" he confirmed.

"Get the city engineers on the telephone, call the Mayor if you have to but I want this fountain emptied inside of fifteen minutes and a stone cutter here inside of twenty" Evans requested "also see if you can rustle up a tea van while you are about it."

"Yes Sir" Hendrickson confirmed before departing to make the calls.

"The Mayor will go nuts when he hears the Security Service are cutting large chunks out of important national monuments" Fredericks remarked.

"Given recent events do you think I really care what he thinks?" Evans asked with a wry smile.

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"Well I best be heading back" the Prime Minister confirmed to Sir Richard out in the hospital corridor "I don't think there is much more I can be doing here."

"There is one thing you can do for me" Sir Richard responded which stopped the Prime Minister just as he was about to leave "Get rid of that weasel Frobisher, he gives me the creeps."

"Oh you too?" the Prime Minister responded which caused Sir Richard to raise a slightly surprised eyebrow "Honestly I wish I could but the best I can probably do is give him a project to manage to keep him busy."

"It will have to do I guess" Sir Richard agreed "Oh by the way, have you heard from the Attorney General by any chance? I thought he would have been on the telephone to me before the echoes of the gunshots had died down."

"Actually no now I come to think of it" the Prime Minister admitted "Probably on a golf course somewhere and not heard the news I expect, we are only releasing the full details in the West End Final edition of the Evening Standard and in the BBC but that does not hit the headlines for about another hour so maybe he doesn't know?"

"I'll think I will give him a call" Sir Richard admitted "Good day Sir" he called as the Prime Minister nodded in acknowledgement before with his ever attendant bodyguards he left, disappearing out of sight down the corridor.

Sir Richard stood alone in the corridor for a few moments thinking before reaching for his mobile telephone and after searching through the directory, making a call.

"Hello, can I speak to the Attorney General please, it's Sir Richard Crowthorne" he requested of the secretary who answered the telephone.

"I'm sorry Sir" the secretary replied most apologetically "He is unavailable."

"The Divisional Commanding Officer of the Metropolitan Division of the Security Service is near fatally shot, everything is being shipped to hell in a handcart, the High Court just released a highly dangerous man back onto the streets and you are telling me the Attorney General is not available?" Sir Richard responded with calm controlled frustration more than anger "I strongly suggest you make him available."

"Well that could be a problem Sir" the secretary confirmed "Sir Hugo has not come into the office all day and he has not been answering his telephone when I have tried to reach him."

"Would I be right in thinking that is a bit unusual for him?" Sir Richard inquired as a thought occurred to him which he did not like where it led.

"He always calls in to let me know if he is going to be working from home all day" the secretary confirmed "Sometimes he spends the mornings working at home and then comes in around lunch time."

"How does he normally travel into the office?" Sir Richard asked "Car, tube, bus?"

"Ministerial car" the Secretary informed him "Usually booked the day before through the VIP Protection Division."

"Right, thank you" Sir Richard responded before hanging up.

He took a few moments to look around the silent and deserted hospital corridor as he thought for a few moments before dialling another number.

"Jennifer, its Sir Richard" he called as soon as Jennifer Caverner answered the telephone "I appreciate that it is not exactly the best time but do you know if Sir Hugo Carnforth, the Attorney General had one of your cars booked for any time today."

"Erm let me think" Jennifer responded as she tried to put the day's traumatic events aside for a few moments whilst continuing to drive back towards Central London with Jack alongside her "Someone called from his office and cancelled the car about half nine or ten this morning I think, why?"

"Call it a bad feeling" Sir Richard responded, unwilling to go into any further detail until his fears and suspicions had been either confirmed or denied "All right, thanks" he declared before hanging up and then after a few more moments thought dialled yet another number

"Hello, is Dave Collins there?" he asked as soon as his call was answered

"Hello?" Collins called.

"You know Sir Hugo Carnforth don't you?" Sir Richard asked.

"Met him a few times, mostly business" Collins admitted "the usual deals done in smoke filled rooms which comes with this job."

"Call it a hunch..." Sir Richard explained.

"Uh oh..." Collins remarked.

"...but I have this nasty feeling something is wrong" he continued "Meet me at Sir Hugo's place in thirty minutes and bring a key."

"Right..." Collins agreed "I take it you don't want me to tell anyone out about this."

"Well of course not" Sir Richard casually responded "Can you imagine how silly I would look if I am proved wrong?"

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For the last half an hour the Commander had been sat on his own in the waiting area just down the corridor from the operating theatre where Tracy was being operated on. All he had to comfort him as he sat there was his photograph of her that he always kept in his warrant card wallet as well as the good thoughts and support of those he had seen since first receiving the news of her shooting.

The Commander looked down the corridor as he heard the double doors at the far end open to see the tall if slight tubby figure of Divisional Commander Evans coming down the corridor.

"Hello old friend" Evans called as he joined the Commander "Don't take this the wrong way or anything but you look terrible."

"I think I am facing losing the better part of me in the next couple of hours, she may be dead already for all I know" the Commander admitted "I am not sure how to look if I were to be honest."

"Well don't worry about the Service" Evans reassured him "I've called in a few favours, admittedly some of them probably yours and am putting an investigation team together with Doctor Fredericks and Commander Baker on board."

"Sounds pretty formidable so far" the Commander admitted.

"We'll get them, don't worry" Evans confirmed "If you don't mind I am also appointing one of your senior Lieutenant Commanders as my local liaison, err Hendrickson is it?"

"Garry Hendrickson" the Commander recalled "He's good he is, knows the local villains and the area well, his old man was in the Met Police back in the 1950's if I recall."

"Any news yet?" Evans asked.

"She is apparently in the post operative recovery thing or whatever the hell it is called" the Commander admitted "She should be out soon with any luck, something which I think we are going to need a hell of a lot of over the next couple of days."

"This looks like something coming now" Evans motioned to the opposite end of the corridor where a surgeon was seen exiting the theatre section and removing his face mask approached the Commander with trepidation in his step.

"How is she?" the Commander asked, clearly desperate for news.

"She's alive" the surgeon confirmed "Err shall we talk somewhere a bit more private."

"I best get back to work" Evans confirmed "Give me a call if you need anything" he added before departing, leaving the Commander and the surgeon alone whereupon they went into a side office.

"As my old man used to say, what's the damage?" the Commander asked "and I would appreciate full open honesty here Doctor."

"I guess withholding the truth from someone of your experience would probably not go unnoticed?" the surgeon asked as they took a seat "All right, the whole truth."

"If you would be so kind" the Commander prompted.

"Tracy was shot three times from long distance by a large calibre weapon" the surgeon confirmed "Two of the shots went straight through her and out the other side making quite a mess of her internal organs on the way through, the bullet from the third shot lodged itself pretty close to her spinal column and it was that one that took the time to sort out."

"You managed to remove it?" the Commander asked.

"It is now in a plastic bag and on its way to your Ballistics Laboratory by secure courier as we speak" the surgeon confirmed "As a direct result of the injuries from the shooting she did however lose a lot of blood, it has taken quite a lot of work to patch everything back together both internally and externally, she also arrested on the operating table twice."

"If she was awake right now she would joke that arresting was one of her best talents" the Commander managed a small smile, the first near sign of happiness he had managed since first being told of what had happened.

"To be honest Commander" the surgeon continued "Your wife is only still alive because she was young, fit and healthy, most patients with that kind of damage would have given up and passed away long before now."

"Aye, she is a determined little lady I will grant you" the Commander admitted.



"That is probably what has kept her alive through this" the surgeon agreed "the worst bit, the operation to repair the damage is over. I know it sounds like a cliché you hear in those old movies but the next twenty four hours really are crucial, if she can get through that without any deterioration of her condition or any major traumas then she should make it, only..."

"Only what?" the Commander asked sensing a rather large but coming here.

"Until she regains consciousness I won't be able to tell if she will be able to walk" the surgeon explained slightly hesitantly "that bullet we removed was dangerously close to her spine and there may be some damage which could in the short term at least affect her mobility."

"But she will survive?" the Commander asked.

"If I were a betting man" the surgeon admitted "Yes I reckon so."

"Can I see her?" the Commander requested.

"She should be arriving in the ward around about now" the surgeon agreed "We have made available a single bed ward and I believe your Specialist Protection Branch are arranging for a constant watch of two armed guards to be outside the door."

"Right" the Commander confirmed as he and the surgeon got up before he was led out of the door and down the corridor.

At the far end of the corridor they turned to their right and then stopped in front of a door that had standing either side of it two officers from Jennifer Caverner's VIP Protection Division who duly let them in.

"Try not to be distracted or disturbed by all the equipment she is wired up to" the surgeon advised as they entered the room and the Commander took in a deep breath of shock at the sight that greeted him of Tracy lying on a hospital bed, numerous instruments and feeds wired up to her.

"Hello love" the Commander called as he went and stood by her bedside and took her hand in his whereupon the surgeon placed a chair behind him so he could sit down and be more comfortable "Busy day at the office?"

"Talk to her" the surgeon suggested "a familiar voice may be what she needs to come back to us. Sometimes it is said that even in a coma like she is patients can still hear what people are saying to them."

"How long is she going to be out for?" the Commander asked.

"Hours, days, maybe even weeks" the surgeon admitted "There is no rule on this sort of thing, the human body repairs itself at its own set speed depending on the individual. I'll leave you two alone for now."

"Thank you" the Commander responded "For everything."

"You're welcome" the surgeon confirmed before quietly and respectfully leaving the room.

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"You know this had better be good" Collins remarked as he got out of the car along with Sir Richard "I am supposed to be at an emergency meeting of the Joint Intelligence Committee in an hour."

"Like that bunch of dinosaurs gathered around a table nattering all day ever managed to achieve anything" Sir Richard casually dismissed Collins' concerns.

"Well that's as maybe but word is some of them are getting rather jittery" Collins confirmed as they walked across the road towards the well appointed Georgian town house that was the home of Sir Hugo Carnforth the Attorney General "Not least because someone has appointed that slimy toad Frobisher to it to represent the Prime Minister's interests."

"Oh tell me you are joking" Sir Richard responded as they approached the front gate "That worm couldn't make a decision if he had written on a cue card."

"Should fit in nicely then" Collins responded with a wry smirk as he pressed the call button on the door access panel.

"Hello?" he called "Anyone there?"

Both men looked at each other apprehensively for a few moments before Collins tried pressing the call button again.

"Hello?" he called again but again no response.

"No lights on" Sir Richard remarked as he looked up along the frontage of the house where in the encroaching evening, not a single light was visible in contrast to the other houses in that exclusive street.

"Shall I?" Collins asked producing his lock drilling tool from his jacket pocket.

"Well alternatively" Sir Richard responded as he looked more carefully at the ornate front door before opening it simply "We could just try the handle."

"OK, I am officially worried now" Collins admitted as he followed Sir Richard inside where they found themselves in an impressive ornately appointed hallway.

"Hello?" Sir Richard called, his voice echoing around the apparently empty house with only the sound of the ticking of a grandfather clock breaking the silence "Sir Hugo, are you there?"

"Perhaps he has popped down the shops for a paper?" Collins suggested.

"Or he could have gone down the Duck & Whistle for a swift half" Sir Richard agreed "but if he had, why did he leave his front door open?"

"I take the left and you take the right?" Collins suggested.

"Good idea" Sir Richard agreed "We can do more damage that way."

The two men split up and began to make their own way through the large town house which gave the impression of being well kept and maintained but yet no one appeared to be home and there was no sign of recent activity in any of the various rooms either of the two men looked in as they went.

It was as Collins was about to head up the large ornate wooden staircase that he heard something creak gently above him causing him to look up. It was then that he saw the body.

"Richard!!" Collins called loudly "I've found him."

"Where?" Sir Richard called as he emerged from a side doorway until he looked up "Oh dear..." he responded as soon as he saw the gruesome discovery that Collins had just made, the body of the Attorney General hanging by the neck from the large chandelier that dominated the stair well.

"Just as I thought today could not possibly get any worse" Collins remarked as he joined Sir Richard back on the ground floor and they looked up.

"Well it looks like suicide" Sir Richard admitted "But being a betting man I would not be willing to put money on it somehow as given what else has happened lately I reckon anything is possible."

"I better call in the Security Service" Collins confirmed "This will make their day I am sure."

"And I had better tell the Prime Minister" Sir Richard agreed "He will not be a happy bunny when he hears about this."

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"Well this is a pretty little mess love" the Commander admitted as alone sitting by Tracy's bedside amid the background noise of the various pieces of medical equipment that were constantly monitoring her condition, he talked to her, all the time keeping a hold of her hand and hoping that she may eventually come around.

"I really did think I was going to lose you for a while there" the Commander admitted "I suppose I may still do now I come to think about it, I was wondering what on earth I would do without you after all I can't cook and I sure as hell cannot work out the dishwasher or the washing machine."

"All I could think of as I was sat out there just waiting was of the very first time we met" the Commander continued "There was I, Chief of my own little kingdom, a lone warrior when one morning into my office you walk and it was like an angel had been delivered."

"You lit up that office like a beacon love" the Commander went on "In fact whenever you walk into a room it seems to light up when you appear."

"We've been through some scrapes together you and I" he admitted "Dodged some very unsavoury characters, made a difference as my old man would say. You certainly made a difference to me, without you watching over me I would probably have been dead long ago."

"So you see, you've still got a job to do, so I need you back and on your feet so until that happens I will just stay here by your side, hold your hand, talk to you and you just concentrate on getting better" he told her, just about managing to hold back an uncharacteristic tear in the eye.

"I love you Tracy" the Commander declared as he laid his head on the end of the pillow and kissed her gently on the cheek "Don't go, please" he quietly asked.

"As I was explaining to her husband about half an hour ago" the Surgeon informed Jack and Jennifer as they came down the main corridor "She made it through the surgery by the narrowest of margins, the rest is down to her."

"Where is the Commander?" Jennifer asked as they approached the secure wing of the hospital and the two armed guards at the corridor entrance allowed them through.

"He is in with her now I believe" the surgeon confirmed as they reached the door of the single bed private ward where Tracy was being kept.

"Erm, I think perhaps we should give them some time alone" Jack suggested looking through the window to see the Commander alone with Tracy.

"Perhaps you are right" Jennifer reluctantly agreed, stopping just short of opening the door.

"I'll stay here" Jack confirmed as he took a seat alongside the door "Make sure he gets something to eat as in the state he looks, someone needs to be keeping an eye on him."

"Right" Jennifer agreed "I suppose I really ought to be heading back into the office and check everything is all right there. With all these unscheduled excursions the Prime Minister has been making because of all this, I am willing to bet that my Department's duty roster is all over the place."

"If anything changes I will call everyone" Jack reassured her.

"Watch over them both Jack" Jennifer instructed as she turned to leave.

"Don't worry, I will" Jack confirmed.

The Commander had been asleep, still sitting on the chair with his head resting on the end of the pillow next to Tracy for over an hour when Jack finally decided to venture into the room.

"Hello?" Jack called as he shook the Commander's shoulder gently.

"What?" the Commander sleepily responded as he opened his eyes and looked up to see Jack standing alongside him.

"I thought I had better look in and see how you were both doing" Jack explained "Also I thought you might like to see this" he passed across a copy of the Evening Standard's West End Final edition which had the whole sorry story of the day's events writ large across its front page.

"Well I guess it's official then" the Commander remarked as he looked at the paper, a large headline 'Security Service Officers gunned down in Trafalgar Square sniper attack' alongside the official file photographs of the two officers who were killed plus a slightly larger picture of Tracy that also had been taken from the archives.

"When was the last time you ate?" Jack asked.

"Oh I don't know" the Commander admitted "This morning I guess."

"Well that was about ten hours ago" Jack looked at his watch that showed it was now passing half six in the evening "I tell you what, there is a canteen on the floor below, you go and get something and I will watch over her until you get back."

"Oh I don't know..." the Commander began to respond with uncertainty.

"All right, put it this way" Jack decided on a slightly different approach "If she was awake right now what would she say? You are no good to anyone let alone Tracy if you are starving to death are you?"

"You're right son" the Commander reluctantly had to agree as he got up which was when he noticed something unusual "That's odd..." he commented looking down at his hand.

"What?" Jack asked.

"Well when I was talking to Tracy earlier I was holding her hand" the Commander explained "Now she seems to be holding mine instead."

"Sub conscious reaction of some kind I expect" Jack remarked "Now about that food?"

"All right" the Commander responded as he carefully parted his hand from Tracy's and placed it carefully by her side "You stay here I will be right back, err do you want me to bring you anything?" he asked as he reached the door.

"No I am all right thanks" Jack confirmed as he replaced the Commander in the seat by Tracy's bedside "I have been feeding my foreign coins collection into the vending machine out there for the last hour and a half."

With a wry smile on his face, the Commander departed leaving Jack alone with Tracy.

"Well here we are" Jack declared "Never fear, Jack is here and if no one else will do anything about this then I sure as hell will" he confirmed with determination but admittedly with no idea as to what he could do beyond sitting there.

As the Commander entered the hospital canteen, his attention was caught by the television that was on in the corner, broadcasting the BBC News Channel but the breaking story was not only the recent revelation that Tracy was the third officer involved with the Trafalgar Square shooting but also another story that was just breaking.

"Oh please tell me you are joking" the Commander remarked as he saw the breaking news headline on the screen alongside a picture of that story's main subject as it reported the apparent death of the Attorney General.

The Commander's normal instinct at that point would have been to have found a telephone and immediately started up an investigation but then he remembered Tracy lying upstairs in a hospital bed still fighting for her life and let the matter pass.

"Ah well, someone I expect will take care of it this time eh Trace" the Commander remarked as he made for the serving area of the canteen.

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"Simply incredible" Rogers congratulated Thorpe in the back of a black cab heading around the south side of the M25 motorway.

"I told you I only supply the very best money can buy" Thorpe proudly confirmed "Speaking of which...?" he ventured.

"The money is being transferred into your account as we speak" Rogers was glad to confirm "My associate Mr Harcourt is seeing to it electronically right now."

"Where is the Bentley by the way?" Thorpe asked out of curiosity "I was most surprised when you turned up in a cab."

"Being driven around the opposite side of the M25 with a couple of dummies in the back" Rogers confirmed with a wry laugh "Should keep the dummies from the Surveillance Bureau occupied for the rest of the day."

"I'll say this for you Mr Rogers Sir" Thorpe remarked "You sure are one slick operator."

"Why thank you" Rogers basked in the glory of his own self imposed importance "and what of the men you subcontracted?"

"They were all out of the country on those fake passports you supplied within one hour of the hits" Thorpe confirmed "They won't be back in this country for a very long time, mind you given the size of their fees they won't need to be back any time soon neither."

"So now that you have proved your worth" Rogers moved onto his next subject for discussion "do you think you can handle a few more jobs for me over the next couple of days?"

"If the money is good, I am listening Mr Rogers" Thorpe amicably agreed.

"I don't know if your Father ever spoke of my business empire at all" Rogers began to explain "He did do some work for me over the years so maybe he mentioned it but as you may be aware I head up and own a considerable property and business portfolio in both legitimate and lets say some not so legitimate fields, you can guess which one of those two areas is the more profitable naturally."

"I think I could wager a fairly certain guess Sir" Thorpe responded with a mutual smirk.

"Well anyway unhappily whilst I was being illegally detained at Her Majesty's pleasure, it would appear my rivals, competitors, call them what you will have moved in on some areas of my business and to be ahem honest I want it back" Rogers declared his intentions clearly.

"And what did you have in mind?" Thorpe asked.

"I'd like to start off with a warning" Rogers confirmed "We have an opportunity here to remove my business rivals by force, send a warning to any other would be entrepreneurs who may be thinking of cashing in around on my manor and all whilst the Security authorities have their hands full elsewhere."

"A few dead crooks on the streets will be glossed over, probably not even noticed by the Security Service given what they have on their plate at the moment" Thorpe agreed.

"Largely thanks to your efforts ironically" Rogers reminded him.

"What or should I say who did you have in mind Sir?" Thorpe inquired, eager to know more about Rogers ambitious plans.

"This file contains all you need to know about certain people I want either warned off or just good old fashioned removed from the equation" Rogers confirmed "Make it look good, nice and public but as always I want full deniability."

"I think that can be easily arranged" Thorpe agreed "When?"

"Get some rest" Rogers suggested "Then first thing in the morning after a good breakfast I think it will be time for you to get to work."

"Interesting" Thorpe remarked as he read some of the details in the files he had been handed "I think I have just the people for the job and this one in particular" he indicated another part of the file "Oh yes indeed, something a little more unusual for him I reckon."

"Just send me you bill when you have an idea of final figures" Rogers declared "Remember lad, money is no object."

"At this rate I will have to work out a customer loyalty discount for you Sir" Thorpe remarked with a chuckle "So where will you be tomorrow?" he asked.

"Establishing my alibi!!" Rogers declared with a huge deep belly laugh.

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As the evening drew in and the sky over Central London began to darken, Commander Baker was up on the roof of one of the buildings overlooking Trafalgar Square, scanning around to see if there was any sign of where the sniper on the south side of the Square had been at the time of the shooting.

"What's that?" she asked herself as she stepped over various bits of clutter including wires and bits of roofing felt to approach the leading edge of the building where a short stone parapet ran along the front.

Approaching the parapet Baker's expert eyes noticed something that would probably have been completely missed by the vast majority, a couple of small very recent scratches in the surface of the stone, their presence being noticeable because of the very clean nature of the scratch to the stone compared with the weathered dull surface all around.

Having found these two marks, Baker looked around immediately below her feet in the gravel that covered the flat roof where exactly she was expecting she found a further mark, an indentation from something heavy that had been pressed down there recently in the felt beneath the loose gravel surface.

"Tape measure, where the hell is it?" she asked herself as Baker put her case down and opened it to reveal the tools of her trade, a large sniper rifle with long distance scope plus a small tool kit from which she extracted her tape measure and proceeded to take measurements of the size of the marks and the relative distances between them.

"I wonder?" Baker pondered to herself for a few moments as after noting down the measurements she looked down at the contents of her case before producing from it the tripod stand that her rifle fits on.



Unfolding and extending the legs of the tripod to the correct length she carefully placed it with two feet on the ledge and the third just hovering above the mark she had discovered on the surface of the roof and with a thoughtful look realised they were an exact match.

"Baker to Evans, come in" she called over the radio, standing up to look down into the Square.

"Evans, go" the response quickly came.

"Look to your right Sir" Baker called standing up and waving her arm in the direction of the Square ahead and below "I've found you south side sniper position."

"I see you" Evans responded waving back "Anything interesting up there?" he asked.

"Three marks from where a sniper's tripod stand was set up very recently" Baker confirmed "Measurements exactly match the model I use.

"Are you sure?" Evans asked.

"So sure in fact Sir" Baker confirmed "that in about ten seconds I could shoot you dead from up here, no problem whatsoever."

"I'll remember to duck" Evans remarked "I don't suppose there are any shell casings around up there by any chance?"

"Doesn't look like it Sir" Baker responded "But then again whoever did this are so professional they made sure they cleaned up after them, I know I would."

"Right" Evans declared "I'll send a photographer up to take a shot of those marks then I think you can call it a night, thanks for your help and I will see you in the morning."

"My pleasure Sir" Baker confirmed before signing off.

Evans took a few moments to look around before heading back inside the operations tent that was set up in the centre of Trafalgar Square where he found that Commander Cassini had arrived with Fuller and were chatting around the centre table.

"Evening gentlemen" Evans declared as he joined them "Commander Cassini I presume?" he asked.

"Yes Sir" Cassini confirmed still looking a little shaken.

"You all right lad?" Evans asked seeing how he was.

"Service Medical Officer has given me the all clear" Cassini responded.

"Not exactly what I asked but I suspect that is the best I will get" Evans admitted.

"Well I wanted to get back here and try and help" Cassini confirmed.

"If you insist" Evans responded "OK then lad, tell me what you know."

"This doesn't leave this tent" Cassini began.

"Agreed" Evans confirmed before looking around "Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson, get yourself a coffee then go home and see your missus, I will see you in the morning."

"Err yes Sir" Hendrickson agreed taken slightly by surprise before grabbing his uniform jacket and leaving.

"All right lad let's hear it then" Evans prompted.

"Divisional Commander Caverner requested that I and a few of my team conduct some very discrete covert surveillance on Franklin Rogers and his firm" Cassini began to explain.

"That would be the same Mr Rogers that everyone from the Prime Minister downwards has been telling us all in no uncertain terms to leave well alone I presume" Evans responded.

"Err yes" Cassini admitted slightly sheepishly.

"Well given the day's events so far I think we will let that pass" Evans remarked "In her shoes I would have done exactly the same, go on."

"Rogers is well known for being a guy with a lot of influential connections" Cassini continued "and that is believed based on recent cases we have been involved in to include contacts inside the Service itself so therefore she decided we should meet for me to pass any findings to her somewhere public off the company turf."

"Bugs in the staff canteen?" Evans ventured with a raised eyebrow of surprise.

"And probably not just of the usual bacteriological variety either I would suspect" Fuller added wryly.

"And that meet was here in Trafalgar Square I take it?" Evans asked.

"Yes" Cassini confirmed "At ten in the morning."

"Who decided on the location and the time?" Evans inquired as he paced around the table thoughtfully.

"Commander Caverner did" Cassini responded as he extracted his mobile telephone from his jacket pocket "By text message received about thirty minutes before" he showed Evans the message.

"Trafalgar Square, ten a.m., TC" Evans read the text message.

"Can I throw an interesting spanner in the works at this point?" Fuller asked as he produced a clear plastic evidence bag from a pile of similar items on the table in front of him and held it aloft "This is Commander Tracy Caverner's mobile telephone which after analysing it shows she received a text message at precisely nine thirty this morning which said..." he tapped a couple of keys on his laptop to display the message on a large screen at the head of the table.

"Trafalgar Square, ten a.m., GC" Evans read from the screen "GC?" he asked around.

"My initials" Cassini confirmed "Garibaldi Cassini" he admitted to which everyone else merely stared at him with some surprised looks. "My parents had a sense of humour all right?" he declared.

"No wonder you never use your first name" Fuller remarked trying not to giggle "Of course all this brings up two interesting questions which need to be addressed, err Cassini can I borrow your telephone please?" he asked.

"Yes sure" Cassini agreed passing his mobile telephone over to Fuller who then proceeded to attach it to his computer to conduct an analysis.

"Interesting" Fuller declared as he read the results from his scan on the screen "The two messages sent to Cassini's and Divisional Commander Caverner's mobiles originated from the same source but their signatures were masked in such a way that to an untrained eye they looked like they came from each other."

"Nasty little trick that presumably was used to bring her right into the line of sight of someone's snipers" Evans concluded.

"Then there is Garibaldi here" Fuller continued whereupon Cassini casually glowered at him for mentioning his embarrassing first name again "How many people know his full initials let alone his first name bar whatever is written on his personnel record which given you are the head of the Covert Surveillance unit means it is pretty much buried in a very dark deep cellar beneath a hundred tons of concrete, it's not even on the computer."

"So we are looking for someone with high level access within the Service" Evans summarised, "Someone technically advanced to pull off the telephone trick and three expert snipers plus their sophisticated equipment."

"And the money man, probably an intermediate fixer involved as well" Fuller remarked "This kind of expertise has set someone back some serious cash plus you would need someone who has the contacts to organise it, keeping a couple of levels between he or she who ordered the hit and the guys pulling the trigger, you don't find that kind of expertise in the Yellow Pages or the equipment needed on EBay you know."

"All right" Evans declared "Everyone home now" he ordered "Let's sleep on this overnight and see what we come up with, briefing at the Yard at eight o'clock sharp, I just hope that it is now sufficiently late that nothing else will go wrong."

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"Poor old sod" Sir Richard remarked as he and Collins looked on whilst a forensic team carefully lowered Sir Hugo's body to the ground "Always thought it would be his liver that would get him eventually, not something like this."

"So, you reckon it is suicide then?" Collins asked as they headed down the staircase to the ground floor where the body was now being laid upon a plastic sheet spread out on the floor so that the forensic scientists and the coroner could perform an initial inspection.

"I am assuming absolutely nothing" Sir Richard confirmed grimly as they stood a little way back from the centre of the scene as the Coroner examined the body.

"So what do you reckon Doc?" Collins asked "Rough idea of time of death?"

"Try nine thirty six a.m." the Coroner suggested.

"Unusually decisive of you" Collins remarked "Usually you are loathe to narrow it down to the nearest decade."

"Take a look at this" the Coroner carefully lifted up the left arm of the body "The face of his watch was damaged, probably as he descended from the balcony, arms tend to flail somewhat when you are in your death throes, plus it seems pretty consistent with the extent of rigor mortis that has set in."

"I don't suppose anyone has found a suicide note by any chance?" Sir Richard asked.

"I was thinking that was just a handkerchief in his top pocket" the Coroner indicated the front jacket pocket "But now I am looking closer at it" he ventured as he carefully tugged at the white object just protruding which revealed itself to be not a handkerchief after all but a piece of paper which he carefully unfolded, placed flat into a clear plastic evidence bag and passed to them to read.

"Fairly standard stuff by the looks of it" Collins remarked as they both read the note "Onset of liver disease, can't live with the pain, etc. Oh this is interesting" he pointed to the last paragraph "He blames himself for errors made leading to Commander Caverner's death."

"Well that rules out suicide then" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Eh?" Collins responded, a bit tired after the lengthy day that was now stretching into the late evening.

"Dickie Crowthorne's rule number three, never ever trust a typewritten suicide note" Sir Richard explained "plus two other key facts, first is Tracy isn't dead, well at least not yet anyway and secondly, he was slung over that balcony up there at nine thirty six, Tracy wasn't shot in Trafalgar Square until some time past ten o'clock."

"Sir, you may want to take a look at this" the Coroner called them back over as he turned the body over and was examining the back of the head.

"What have you got?" Collins asked.

"There is an indentation in the back of the skull" the Coroner confirmed "Ordinarily it would be written off or just ignored as being caused by the body hitting something as it descended on the rope but looking up there, I can't see anything obvious that could have caused this injury in that specific place, not with the way he hanged."

"All right" Collins declared "I feel a 'D' notice coming on so until either I, Sir Richard here or the Prime Minister say otherwise, this was a suicide brought on by advanced ill health."

"I'll call the Prime Minister and update him" Sir Richard confirmed "There goes my plans for a nice quiet evening" he admitted.

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Jack was dosing off underneath a copy of the Evening Standard in the corridor outside the ward as the time was passing half ten when he suddenly heard the doors at the end of the corridor open and Jennifer Caverner lead an elderly couple in his direction.

"You must be Jack" the elderly gentleman declared.

"Err yes" Jack responded as he got up rather taken by surprise by the arrival of Tracy's parents David and Mary Caverner who Jennifer had brought down to London so they could see her sister, their daughter for themselves.

"Sorry" Jack apologised as he got up and straightened out his school uniform "It's been a long day, for all of us. Pleased to meet you, I just wish it was under better circumstances."

"Indeed" David agreed grimly as they went over to the window that looked into the ward where they could see Tracy amid the medical equipment monitoring her condition and alongside her the Commander asleep, sitting in the chair with his head resting on Tracy's bedside, her hand in his "Perhaps now is not the best time?"

"Actually I think you might find he needs all the support he can get at the moment" Jack admitted as he proceeded to quietly open the door and led Tracy's parents inside.

"Well at least she looks at peace even with all the wiring" Mary remarked as they looked on whilst Jack went up to the Commander and gently shook his shoulder.

"You've got company" Jack quietly declared "It's the in-laws."

"Mmmm?" the Commander awoke and looked around "Oh, hello" he called.

"We wanted to see her" David admitted "I know there is probably not much we can do but still."

"Well she is stable" the Commander admitted "No change though, it is all up to Tracy now."

As the Commander and Tracy's parents continued to talk, Jack noticed the locket that Tracy always wore sitting on the bedside table and remembered the way she had indicated it the previous evening which got his mind thinking.

"I'll leave you guys to it" Jack suggested as he headed out of the room, the locket carefully palmed into his pocket unseen.

Outside the room in the corridor Jack closed the door behind him and slowly reached back into his tunic pocket from where he extracted the locket and opened it to see a small photograph of Tracy and the Commander on their wedding day, however as he turned it over, something else appeared secreted beneath the picture.

"You know I have one of those too" Jennifer suddenly was heard to call from behind him making Jack almost jump out of his skin whereupon he turned around to see Jennifer holding her own identical example still hanging around her neck "The question is what are you doing with that one?"

"Last night Tracy indicated there was something about the original Franklin Rogers investigation that she had kept in a very safe place" Jack explained "At the same time she sub-consciously indicated this" he held up the locket "and inside I seem to have found this" he then produced the small key that was inside the locket."

"Snap" Jennifer confirmed as she opened her own locket and from within it produced a near identical small complex key "My sister gave me this key over ten years ago, never explained what it was for though but I would have thought it is probably for some kind of safety deposit box that requires three keys to be opened."

"Well seeing as everyone else around here is politically blocked from investigating this Rogers guy" Jack declared "I think it is time I did a little homework."

"What makes you think you can make any difference?" Jennifer asked.

"Let's just say I have experience of hidden documents and the power they can harness" Jack explained.

"You'll need help" Jennifer confirmed "You will also need to be very careful."

"Not a problem" Jack responded "I have the telephone number of a couple of very powerful and influential friends who just happen to owe me a favour or two."

"In which case" Jennifer declared as she slightly reluctantly handed over her own key "I wish you the best of luck."

"Thank you" Jack replied as he prepared to leave "Oh one thing, perhaps it would be wise not to mention this conversation, especially to the Commander?"

"I shouldn't worry Jack" Jennifer looked through the ward window "I think we can safely say he has plenty of other things on his mind at the moment."

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Around the city there were many people directly involved alone in their thoughts.

Sir Richard Crowthorne was at home in his study with a glass of Scotch, unable to sleep and mulling on the tumultuous events of the last twenty four hours.

Divisional Commander Terry Evans was still at New Scotland Yard, in Tracy's office but working by the light of a solitary desk lamp on a separate side desk, choosing not to sit at the main desk itself as a mark of respect for its absent owner.

Across the City on the north bank of the River Thames, David Collins was in his office as well, sifting through background information on the Attorney General as well as what little intelligence he could find in the MI5 archives about Franklin Rogers, an investigation he was intent on carrying out irrespective of orders from on high.

Jennifer Caverner having earlier taken her parents to a hotel for the night was back on duty as always, driving the Home Secretary home from the conference, the Home Secretary himself in the back of the car was alone, looking through the early editions of the national newspapers on the events that had occurred, mostly with a semi-permanent shocked expression at what he was reading.

In the Forensic Science laboratories in Bethnal Green, Doctor Fredericks and her team of scientists were working late into the night on what little evidence they had to analyse to which was now added the investigation into the death of Sir Hugo Carnforth, a further large burden on an already extensive workload for her department and colleagues.

In a hotel room near New Scotland Yard was sat Commander Baker. Nothing for her to do until the morning except service her rifle which she always carried with her and watch some overnight television which did little to lighten the mood.

Even though he should have been asleep as he was supposed to be at school in the morning, Jack was at home alone reading through Tracy's collection of old Security Service official notebooks and making mental notes himself as he tried to get an understanding of the background to current events.

The darkest place to be that gloomy and rain lashed night however was the small hospital ward in which Tracy was lying, the silence broken only by the constant low bleeping of the machines monitoring her condition and the pattering of heavy rain on the window through which the Commander was observing the city skyline but at the same time seeing his own reflection, that of a man who feared that half of his life, maybe his very existence was hanging by a thread, knowing that if Tracy died, there would be little of him left but a near empty shell.

Contrasting this low mood in many places was that to be found in a study in Leytonstone where Franklin Rogers was lordling up his freedom and self imposed sense of importance and glory as he walked around in his gold embroidered dressing gown enjoying fine wine, smoking a large and very expensive cigar and listening to Wagner which he was playing from his collection of old 78" vinyl records extremely loudly.

Outside in a battered Ford Transit van, Commander Cassini and his second in command of the Specialist Undercover Surveillance Squad Iggy were watching Roger's building.

"You know its nights like this boss when I wonder why I quit being an ordinary uniformed patrol officer" Iggy remarked as they rain pelted down upon their van making it difficult to see through the windows.

"It's because as run of the mill patrol plod you would be out there in the rain getting wet whereas on my team you get to enjoy my delightful company in a company Transit with a borderline MOT and some rather cold coffee" Cassini wryly remarked.

"Listening to some old git going through his record collection when he should be rotting in jail" Iggy added philosophically "What the hell is that music anyway?"

"Ride of the Valkyries I think" Cassini responded "My wife is into all that classical stuff."

"He's not going to make a move tonight is he boss?" Iggy asked.

"No, I don't reckon so mate" Cassini agreed "Never mind, think of the overtime."

Whilst all these people contemplated what was happening and feared what might yet still be to come, shadowy forces were continuing to work, specifically in a small side street near Bayswater where four men in black with balaclavas were making their way through the back garden of a block of Victorian town houses that had long since been converted into sumptuous offices.

They reached the back door into the targeted property whereupon one of the men prepared to open the door, picking the lock but before he turned the handle he nodded to his superior that they were ready.

"Thirty seconds to disable the alarm" the leader reminded another member of the group who nodded in agreement.

"OK, go" the leader declared whereupon the door was opened and they quickly entered the building.

The response to their entry into the building was a bleeping noise from the burglar alarm control box mounted in a cupboard alongside the door to which one of the men proceeded directly and began to work on it, all the time the clock counting down the thirty seconds grace period they had before the alarm would be sounded.



"Come on..." the leader urged as the countdown entered its last ten seconds all the while the man working to disable the system kept going until the bleeping noise stopped and the whole system went dead with only two seconds left to go.

"Bloody hell mate, you cut it fine didn't you?" one of the others jokingly remarked.

"I'll try and get it down to one second next time for you guys" the man who had disabled the alarm joked.

"All right then lads" the leader declared "Let's get to work shall we?"

"Yes boss" the other three agreed in unison.

"Right, you two find those files" the leader directed "You, make this look like an amateur burglary gone wrong, you know the drill, nick some computers, stuff like that whilst I take care of the surprise package."

"How long boss?" one of the men asked.

"We all meet back here in exactly ten minutes and I strongly advise none of you to be late" the leader responded.

"Yes boss" the other three once again agreed as one before they set off through the building to carry out their assignments.

For the next several minutes there was much activity throughout the building as the men proceeded to ransack filing cabinets in certain offices before packing up carefully selected documents which they were to take away with them.

As this continued, the leader had taken a tool kit and a small black box containing a little electronic device of some kind and fitted it to the main incoming gas main before arming the device, its status confirmed by a small red light illuminated on its side.

With military like efficiency all four men met up at the appointed location exactly ten minutes to the second after they had started.

"Nice work lads" the leader declared "Let's get out of here shall we?"

Quickly and carrying the documents they had come to steal, they filed out of the building, back across the garden and out into a rear alley where a small van was waiting where they bundled into the back, all except for the leader who got in the front drivers seat.

Before setting off, the leader extracted a mobile telephone from the glove compartment and redialled a number that was in the memory.

"Alpha, this is Team Leader Two" the leader declared as soon as he was answered "Materials secured, device in place, you may cook when ready."

"Thank you" Thorpe declared from his vantage point on a roof top on the opposite side of the street to the building that had just been infiltrated "You might want to hold your ears" he suggested as he took out a remote control unit which after switching on, he pressed the red button mounted in the middle of it.

The peaceful night air in that part of the City was suddenly and dramatically interrupted when a large explosion erupted from the building, blowing out windows and sending burning wreckage down into the street which in turn set fire to a number of cars parked outside.

"Whoa!!" Thorpe responded as he looked on, almost blown off his feet by the enormous force he felt emanating from the explosion "Now that is what I call the big bang theory" he remarked before returning to the telephone "Thank you gentlemen, your work is done and your money will be wired to your accounts first thing in the morning."

As the area become enveloped in the sound of car and burglar alarms sounding as a result of the force of the explosion, the four men in the van quietly and discreetly departed, destined for a private jet on an unregistered flight plan which would take them out of the country never to be seen on these shores again.

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As dawn rose over the city, the Fire Brigade were continuing to damp down the badly damaged building, wisps of smoke gently floating up from its shattered structure up into the cold morning air.

"My, my, my, what a mess" Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson remarked as he arrived on the scene and looked up at the damage.

"Morning Officer" the Fire Brigade Incident Officer declared as they met in the middle of the street amid a sea of fire hoses which were criss-crossing across the road from where they had been used to fight the intensive blaze "Well I'll say this for them, they don't build them like this any more."

"What the hell happened?" Hendrickson asked as the Incident Officer guided him over to one side to allow a couple of fire fighters through.

"Looks like a gas explosion to me" the Incident Officer confirmed "If it wasn't for the tough old way they used to build these places there would have been nothing left. Blew out nearly every window for two hundred yards in each direction."

"Are you sure it wasn't something more sinister?" Hendrickson ventured as he looked around at the ongoing efforts by the Fire Service to make the area safe.

"We won't know much more until we can get in there mate" the Incident Officer explained "but the source and seat of the fire is right next to the gas meter. Strange thing is though we had another fire just like this one a few weeks ago."

"Really?" Hendrickson asked, surprised "When?"

"You remember that guy from the Treasury that got killed when his gaff blew apart?" the Incident Officer asked "Err Applegate I think his name was."

"Well I read about it" Hendrickson admitted "I was on annual leave when it happened though."

"This looks to me almost exactly the same" the Incident Officer explained "Same type of blast pattern only on a slightly larger scale."

"So who is the unlucky sod who better have a very understanding insurance company?" Hendrickson asked.

"Some solicitors place apparently" the Incident Officer confirmed as he passed Hendrickson a note with the ownership details of the property "Just as well really, meant it is only offices and no one was home when it went bang."

"Do you mind if I send one of our forensic teams down here later to work with your Fire Investigation Unit guys?" Hendrickson inquired as he looked at the name on the piece of paper he had just been handed and realised there was a significant potential connection "Call it a hunch but I have a feeling there may be more to this."

"Yeah sure" the Incident Officer agreed "It will be a few hours before the place is made safe to enter mind."

"That's all right" Hendrickson confirmed "With everything else that has been happening around here in the last day or two they have rather got their hands full at the moment" he had to admit.

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In the ten years that Rogers had been in jail, many competitors in the area of organised crime, an umbrella term for everything from money laundering through to smuggling and armed robbery plus a whole host of other often never seen crimes, had set themselves up across London.

One of the most prominent of these newcomers was Blake Morton, a particularly unpleasant and vile piece of work who did not care who got hurt as long as he bettered his set profit margin.

That morning as the sun was rising over the east end of the City he was being driven across London in the back of his Jaguar by his usual driver. Smoking a huge cigar, he was studying various plans he had in motion for a series of upcoming armed robberies in which he was certain, indeed he hoped that people got hurt as that would do his reputation as a self confessed 'hard bastard' no harm whatsoever.

The return of Rogers to the local organised crime scene had only served to enhance his resolve to make himself the top dog and the planned series of robberies he was working on was his first major salvo.

"Ere Brett, stick the radio on will you?" Morton called to his driver who reached down and turned on BBC Radio Four as the car turned right off the Euston Road and began to proceed down Regent Street.

"Fire Brigade officials have yet to comment on the cause of an explosion and subsequent fire at a solicitors office in Bayswater, west London last night" the early morning news broadcast announced "The explosion which occurred at just after three in the morning badly damaged the four storey property and also vehicles in the street immediately outside. Eyewitnesses believe it may have been a gas explosion but arson or terrorism has also not been ruled out as possible causes."

"I hope they were well insured" Morton casually remarked but then was forced to look up suddenly from his work when the car was forced to stop sharply.

"What the hell was that?" Morton asked, dropping his cigar into his lap and burning himself in the process.

"Some twat in a van Guv" the driver called back.

"Well get out there and explain to him the error of his ways" Morton angrily demanded whereupon his driver duly got out of the car brandishing a large and obviously well used baseball bat.

"Hey you!" the driver angrily called as he walked down the length of the stationary van, banging his bat furiously against the sides until he reached the drivers side window whereupon he smashed off the wing mirror "You blind or something?"

"Nope" the driver of the van calmly responded as he produced a gun and shot him calmly between the eyes.

"What the...?" Morton asked as having retrieved his cigar from the floor he looked up to see his driver falling backwards onto the street stone dead as the gunshot echoed all around the tall buildings of the nearly empty street.

Before he could react however two further gunmen appeared from the back of the van, dressed all in black with comedy face masks who proceeded to go to the back of the car, one each side and open fire with automatic weapons, riddling the vehicle with bullet holes and killing Morton.

"Job done" the van driver called "Let's go" he declared whereupon the two gunmen returned to the vehicle and it was driven away at speed almost before they had even closed the back doors.

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"Morning love" the Commander called gently to Tracy, kissing her on the forehead before sitting back down but as before despite looking ever so closely, there was still no sign of any response from her.

"Come on Tracy, come back" the Commander responded almost pleading "If you are back with us before tea time I'll get you your favourite fruit cocktail trifle, with extra whipped cream?"

The Commander wasn't sure but he thought the heart monitor's constant unchanging beat actually registered a momentary skip when he mentioned the trifle but it was more than likely his mind playing tricks as he had not really had all that much sleep in the last twenty hours.

"Hello my dear" Tracy's mother Mary called quietly as she and her father entered the room having knocked politely.

"Oh erm come in" the Commander gestured "No change I am afraid."

"Now don't take this the wrong way Commander" Mary remarked as she looked at the slightly bedraggled state of the Commander "but you're a mess."

"You sound just like your daughter" the Commander managed a wry smile in response to something that Tracy would typically have said.

"We'll watch over her for a while lad" David, Tracy's father declared "You go and get yourself freshened up a bit" he suggested.

"Erm" the Commander was initially reluctant before eventually relenting "All right" he agreed "I'll be back in a while."

With obvious reluctance in his step, he left the room, walking slowly outside into the corridor before quietly closing the door immediately behind him.

"Good morning old friend" a distinguished and familiar sounding voice called whereupon the Commander turned to see his Godfather and old confidant Roger Field approaching.

"Hello" the Commander responded, obviously very pleased to see him as they shook hands "It has been a while, how did you manage to get in here?"

"Old Dickie Crowthorne approved it" Field confirmed "I would have come as soon as I had heard what had happened but some other pressing business regrettably got in the way" he explained.

"Well you are here, that's the main thing" the Commander responded reassuringly.

"I won't ask how you are" Field declared "the answer to that particular question is obvious, the most important thing is how the good lady wife is?"

"She is holding her own I think" the Commander confirmed "Her parents are in with her now, I have been here almost since it happened, talking to her, you know, see if it makes Tracy come around."

"I cannot begin to imagine what you are going through" Field remarked "You two are inseparable."

"She is still alive, that is the main thing" the Commander responded thankfully "I just wish she would wake up."

"Any idea who is behind this?" Field asked in a suggestive tone that the Commander quickly picked up upon.

"Oh do I detect a leading question" the Commander remarked "Is this multiple choice?"

"Well it has rather come to my attention that a certain dark element from the past has returned and the whisper on the East London back channels is that your good lady may have had some involvement in removing the afore mentioned problem albeit only briefly" Field explained.

"You know for something that had a huge air tight lid slammed on it ten years ago" the Commander remarked "an awful lot of people seem to know it was Tracy who put Rogers away."

"Unfortunately the world seems to have become a very leaky place in the last few years" Field admitted with regret "and needless to say the bigger the brown envelope of cash that is wafted below the right nose, the larger and deeper the leaks become."

"Any information can be obtained if the money is good enough I guess" the Commander admitted.

"So the word going about is that now Rogers and his particularly unpleasant associates are back in town" Field continued "They want their old business back and are not going to be too scrupulous about how they do it neither."

"A sort of 'thank you for stepping in during my absence, now kindly get lost' kind of declaration?" the Commander asked.

"Something like that" Field admitted "The thing is he has been recruiting a lot of top drawer talent, pinching major league people from some of the longest established firms in the City."

"And no doubt paying good money for their services too" the Commander remarked "Anyone we know signed up to his bandwagon yet?"

"Nothing specific" Field confirmed "Admittedly I have resisted asking too many specific questions in case I get an unpleasant visit of some kind but apparently one name that has been mentioned is one David Thorpe formerly of this parish."

"What old 'Fixer Thorpe', now there is a name I have not heard in a long time" the Commander recalled "He could rustle up pretty much anything you wanted from a getaway car to an aircraft carrier in twenty four hours."

"Yeah, one of the best in the business" Field agreed "I still have some of those rare Cuban cigars I had him get me once."

"So Rogers has managed to get his hooks into Thorpe then?" the Commander concluded.

"Err no actually, he died of a heart attack a few years back" Field confirmed "but the word is his son Garry carries on the family tradition."

"Might be worth looking into" the Commander admitted "Unfortunately I and pretty much everyone else have been warned off Rogers and his dubious rabble."

"A situation that I think may change as events unfold in the coming hours, a war is coming and it is not going to be a pretty sight" Field evasively remarked "Perhaps you could pass on these bits of wisdom as I think for now your place is here with Tracy."

"I think I might just do that" the Commander readily agreed.

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"Control to Divisional Commander Evans" the radio in the patrol car that was transporting Evans to New Scotland called.

"It's for you Sir" the officer driving called to the back of the car before passing Evans the handset.

"Evans" he declared having put his files he was reading down to take the call.

"Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson asks if before you go to Scotland Yard, you could meet him in the north part of Regent Street" came the message.

"How far are we from Regent Street?" Evans asked his driver, not knowing central London's intricate geography all that well.

"We can be there in about two minutes Sir" the driver confirmed.

"All right" Evans agreed upon returning to the radio "Tell him I will be there shortly."

A couple of minutes later the patrol car was pulling to a stop about half way up the northern section of Regent Street at a taped off cordon where amongst the busy activity of emergency services in attendance could be seen the worried looking figure of young Hendrickson.

"Morning Sir" Hendrickson declared with a concerned look as he opened the car door for Evans "Err this way please" he reluctantly informed him before leading Evans through the cordon to a Jaguar car that was in the middle of the road surrounded by forensic scientists and scenes of crime unit photographers.

"What the hell happened here?" Evans remarked seeing the bullet ridden state of the car.

"Well my best guess would be someone has decided to eliminate some of the competition" Hendrickson confirmed to which Evans responded merely with a confused look "Err let me explain Sir" he added accompanying him to the back of the car.

"Yuck..." Evans remarked as he saw the badly bullet ridden body in the back of the car "Who's the stiff?"

"The gentleman who you see here with the bullet holes in him is or should I say was one Blake Morton" Hendrickson explained "That's his driver over there" he indicated a second body beneath a blanket in the street a short distance away.

"Looks like someone didn't like him" Evans remarked as he stepped back to allow the scenes of crime experts to resume their work.

"Less someone, more like everyone" Hendrickson confirmed "Morton here was a big name in the organised crime and black market community over in the east end of the City."

"A competitor for this Rogers character?" Evans suggested.

"May well be" Evans agreed "Whilst Rogers was inside, a lot of his err 'traditional' markets were encroached upon by newcomers and competitors such as Morton here."

"Hell of a way of saying keep off the grass though" Evans remarked.

"Yes well I reckon whoever ordered this hit wanted it to be very public and none too subtle" Hendrickson agreed "A warning to others perhaps?"

"Do we have any witnesses?" Evans asked as he and Hendrickson walked back to the car.

"A few who were woken by the sounds of a commotion in the street" Hendrickson confirmed as he consulted his notes "Some shouting after two vehicles collided, Morton's Jag and an unmarked blue van, gunshot heard, Morton's driver collapses to the ground then three guys in black with balaclavas or masks appear from the back, open up with multiple automatic fire on the car before escaping at some speed."

"And the chances of us proving Rogers ordered the hit?" Evans asked.

"Not a lot Sir" Hendrickson concluded "Still, it couldn't have happened to a more deserving chap I reckon, Morton was a poster child for viscous bastards everywhere. No tears will be spilt on his demise."

"You know lad, this could be an opportunity" Evans remarked as he and Hendrickson emerged from the taped cordon and got in the back of the waiting patrol car.

"I don't quite follow Sir" Hendrickson was forced to admit.



"Well the powers that be have told pretty much everyone to get lost on the prickly subject of investigating Rogers and his mob" Evans explained as he signalled to his driver to drive on "They said nothing about investigating this did they?"

"And if we should just 'happen' to find something about Rogers along the way that would be terrible luck would it not Sir?" Hendrickson ventured.

"I like your thinking son" Evans declared "You'll go far in this business."

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Jack had been working through most of the night reading through Tracy's old notebooks and material as well as doing some research on the Internet into Franklin Rogers, making extensive notes.

With the time approaching a quarter to eight in the morning, his thoughts turned away for a moment to breakfast and being on his own, Jack had to fend for himself that day which was fine as he was perfectly capable of making breakfast unlike his adopted father who usually managed to burn everything each time.

It was as Jack was filling and putting on the kettle that he was taken by surprise by the doorbell sounding so once he had switched the kettle on, he went to the front door and after standing on a box, peered through the spy hole to see no one there.

The reason why he could not see who had rung the door bell became apparent when he opened the door, where much to his surprise, he found Megan standing there.

"Well aren't you going to ask me in then?" she asked.

"Err yes" Jack stammered as he opened the door fully to allow her to enter "Erm forgive me for asking this but why are you here?"

"Well it was patently obvious you weren't going into school today" Megan explained "and knowing how you get into scrapes I figured you would need some help so here I am."

"Right..." Jack replied still not really comprehending what was going on before closing the door and deciding to accept her offer of help as he was probably going to need it before the day was out with the amount of unanswered questions he was accumulating "Tea or coffee?" he asked.

"Very civilised" Megan remarked "Tea please, milk and three sugars" she confirmed.

"Go through to the front room" Jack suggested "I'll be there in a minute."

"Doing some homework I see" Megan remarked as she entered the front room to see the coffee table covered with notebooks, jotted notes and the laptop computer which was showing a webpage profile of Franklin Rogers.

"A little background research" Jack admitted calling from the kitchen as he made the breakfast "Do you want some toast?" he offered.

"Absolutely" Megan agreed as she sat on the sofa and looked through the material on the table but trying not to disturb it too much "So you think this Rogers guy has something to do with Divisional Commander Caverner's shooting then?"

"Well look it at this way" Jack admitted as he walked into the front room and passed Megan a mug of tea "Rogers is released then less than a day later the officer who put him jail is all but assassinated, kind of a large coincidence don't you think?"

"So why doesn't the Commander call up every officer in the Security Service, roll on down to Leytonstone and kick this guys door in?" Megan asked.

"Because apparently this Rogers chap and his cronies have a lot of connections in some very high up places which means there are dire warnings being issued from all sides that this guy is not to be touched" Jack explained "MI5, MI6, the Security Service, everyone, all right almost everyone has been warned to stay well clear."

"So what are you doing then?" Megan asked "Seeing as everyone has been asked to stay well clear?"

"Ah but I said *almost* everyone" Jack responded "No one ever said a private citizen such as myself couldn't have a shifty did they?"

"All right then" Megan declared "So where do we start then?"

"Well all I have is Tracy's old notebooks, what little I can find on the Internet and some bits and pieces I found in the bottom of a cardboard box plus these..." he produced the two keys from the twin sisters locket and held them in front of Megan.

"What are those for?" Megan asked.

"I have no idea" Jack had to admit "That's what makes it interesting, two keys for an unnamed safety deposit box or something which may or may not contain something we can use to prove Rogers is guilty beyond all reasonable doubt."

"There must be a million boxes in London alone I would have thought" Megan remarked "It could take years."

"Ah well I have an idea about that" Jack confirmed "Meantime this lot is all I have to go on."

"So this is Roger's gang I take it?" Megan asked as she picked up one of the small pile of black and white surveillance photographs and casually looked at it before something caught her eye and she was forced to take a close look.

"That's them" Jack looked over at the photograph that Megan was now intensively studying, one man in the image in particular "Taken about twelve years ago I think when apparently he was rumoured to be setting up a Post Office van robbery in Hornchurch according to Tracy's notes."

"That's my grandfather..." Megan declared with a worried, almost shocked look before showing Jack the photograph and indicating one man on the right hand side of it.

"What?" Jack responded.

"David Thorpe" Megan continued to explain "He was a market trader, buying and selling, that kind of thing. He won big on an accumulator at the gee-gee's about five years ago and moved out to a villa in Spain but died of a heart attack a couple of years ago, at least that was the version I was told."

"Well that's a start I suppose" Jack remarked "but if he is dead that doesn't get us very far" he added reluctantly as he left the sofa and returned to the kitchen to attend to the toast that had just popped up out of the toaster.

"My Uncle Garry inherited his business when he moved out to Spain" Megan called through to the kitchen "He might know something on this Rogers chap."

"Have some toast" Jack returned to the front room and proffered Megan a slice "I think it is going to be an interesting and busy day."

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"Good morning ladies and gentlemen" Evans declared as he called the briefing to order from the podium at the front of the conference room at New Scotland Yard at precisely eight o'clock "Let's get this thing started."

With that declaration the select gathering of officers in the room sat down around the main conference table and gave Evans their full attention.

"No doubt you have heard ten different versions of the events of the last thirty six hours including what you may have read in the papers" Evans picked a tabloid at random and showed everyone briefly its typically sensationalist headline "These are the facts as we know them at this time."

Evans paused for a few moments as he looked at his notes before clearing his throat and beginning.

"Our first incident occurred late yesterday morning when three Security Service officers were shot in Trafalgar Square in a carefully calculated and deliberately targeted attack" Evans announced "At this point I would like to turn over this briefing to Commander Elizabeth Baker who is our resident expert in this field."

"Thank you Sir" Baker responded as she stood up and then went over to front of the room where she had arranged for a projection of the plan of Trafalgar Square to be displayed to demonstrate her points.

"After luring Divisional Commander Caverner to Trafalgar Square through a cleverly set up telephone intercept" Baker began to run through the timetable of events "in addition to which was added a false tip off which brought two patrol officers into the field of fire, a series of shots were fired from a position here" she then indicated on the plan "a rooftop on the south side of the Square which saw the two patrol officers shot and killed."

After a short respectful pause, she continued "At this point a second gunman on a rooftop on the west side of the square opened up with rapid random fire, this had the desired effect of driving Divisional Commander Caverner and others into a position of cover behind Nelson's Column."

"It was then that a previously unknown about third sniper over on the north west side targeted and shot the Divisional Commander three times in quick succession" Baker grimly concluded "At this time she is reported to be serious but stable and the Administrator General has not left her bedside since she came out of the operating theatre yesterday afternoon."

"Any word on the shooters or weapons involved?" Evans asked.

"In the ensuing confusion and public panic" Baker summarised "best guess is that they had a carefully planned escape plan and I would think they were probably out of the country within ninety minutes" she admitted.

"That is quite some distance between the shooter locations and where the targets were standing" Evans commented as he studied the plan "What sort of expertise and weaponry are we talking about here?" he asked.

"There were no shell casings left behind but I did find this" Baker confirmed as she put up an evidence photograph of the marks in the stone work she had found "These scratches were made by the supporting tripod that is fitted to a snipers rifle."

"I don't suppose you were able to identify the make and model by any chance?" Evans asked.

"Got an exact match" Baker confirmed before reaching below the table from where much to everyone else's surprise, she produced a large sniper rifle and placed it in the centre of the table, "One of these, well actually three of them in theory, the marks match the tripod supports precisely and the bullets that the ballistics guys managed to recover are of the correct type as well."

"So where did this one come from?" Evans asked.

"Oh, this one is mine" Baker confirmed "The thing is these things are not cheap, indeed this one with my own personal modifications cost three years of budget and there are only three of these registered in the country."

"Who has the other two?" Evans asked.

"One is used by MI5, the other is in the Security Service stores and both they and their registered users are accounted for which suggests well financed imported talent" Baker concluded.

"OK, thank you" Evans took over the briefing once more "The evidence points conclusively to the terrible fact that Divisional Commander Caverner was the intended target all along which brings us to the questions of suspects and motives."

"Franklin Rogers perhaps?" one officer ventured.

"Whereupon the world comes crashing down around us and you get dragged off to a dark sound proof room to be beaten around the head with a wet kipper until you promise never to mention that name ever again" Evans responded wittily "Official word, the gentleman in question and I use the term loosely is off limits."

"And unofficially?" Commander Cassini asked "After all we are talking about trying to find whoever was responsible for the murder of two Security Officers and the deliberate attempted murder of one of the most highly respected law enforcement officers in the country."

"Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson" Evans turned to the young officer to his left "If you would be so kind as to explain why things have got interesting in the last couple of hours?"

"Indeed Sir" Hendrickson agreed as he stood up "Blake Morton is the reason why, some of you may have heard of him" he put up an old surveillance photograph of Morton on the screen.

"Runs a gang of thugs out of a place in Dagenham if I recall?" one officer remarked.

"That's the fella" Hendrickson confirmed "He is a poster child for the vicious and the criminally insane and in the last few years his firm have moved into areas of mostly illegitimate business which traditionally have been areas where Franklin Rogers outfit were the leading lights."

"I bet he isn't too impressed by Rogers being let out either then seeing as they are business rivals" Baker commented.

"Not a problem anymore" Hendrickson continued "Earlier this morning in a lightning fast hit and run, three gunmen in a van ambushed his car killing Morton and his driver. All very public and clearly meant as a warning to other competitors to keep off of Rogers's turf."

"Couldn't he have just picked up the telephone?" another officer remarked with amusement.

"I for one am rather glad he didn't" Evans responded "I have taken a careful look at the wording of the official directives we have received regarding not investigating Rogers and his outfit, it says nothing about investigating subsequent crimes so this ladies and gentlemen is our starting point."

"Supposing the politicians get wind of this?" Cassini ventured.

"Then they will make a bee line straight to my temporary office whereupon I will simply refer them to the Commander but as he is currently unavailable as is for that matter his wife" Evans explained almost with an element of mischief in his voice "They will just have to take a number and get in line won't they?"

"Very good thinking Sir" Cassini agreed.

"So here is how we are going to do this" Evans declared "Commander Baker will head up the investigation into the specific shootings, find our snipers and if necessary provide protection for any potential targets we identify along the way."

"No problem" Baker agreed.

"Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson" Evans turned to the young officer "Time to start earning some serious brownie points. Get a small reliable team together to dig around, find the original evidence used to convict Rogers and his cronies, revisit every aspect and redo all the witness statements."

"See if something was missed Sir?" Hendrickson inquired.

"Exactly" Evans agreed "It's a long shot but it is worth a try."

"If there is mud to be dug up, I will find it" Hendrickson confirmed.

"Commander Cassini, I would like you to step up the surveillance we are not officially running on Rogers, his firm and anyone they meet" Evans requested "Expand it if you can to include firms and principals who are known to be rivals to Rogers empire just in case Morton was just the opening salvo in a hostile takeover bid."

"It will blow the overtime budget out of the water" Cassini warned "But I think we can manage it" he agreed.

"Thank you" Evans responded "What do we have from our colleagues over at MI5?" he asked.

"David Collins has his guys and gals collating everything they have on Rogers and his firm" Hendrickson confirmed "but I gather they think a lot of it has been 'got at' and there is not an awful lot to send over."

"Well the way things are going I will take any help they can offer" Evans agreed ruefully as Sir Richard Crowthorne entered the room "Especially when Sir Richard here tells you all about our next problem."

"I take it that is my cue then" Sir Richard remarked wryly as he took a seat at the conference table.

"Oh dear, here comes trouble..." Cassini remarked.

"Late yesterday evening the body of the Attorney General, Sir Hugo Carnforth QC was discovered by myself and David Collins at his home" Sir Richard went on to explain "Initial appearances were that he had committed suicide by hanging however after an examination of the body on site by the Medical Examiner, it was determined he was in fact murdered."

"Needless to say that latter fact does not leave this room ladies and gentlemen" Evans added.

"A suicide note was found with the body" Sir Richard continued as he passed a disk to Fuller for him to display on the screen "Typewritten which means I am not even thinking of giving it the time of day quite frankly."

"Also seems to get a few facts wrong as well by the looks of it" Fuller remarked as he read it.

"Time of death was nine thirty six a.m." Sir Richard continued "we know this because as whoever did this was hoisting Sir Hugo over the balcony, they bashed his watch. Yet the alleged suicide note seems to mention guilt over the shooting and subsequent death of Commander Caverner."

"Very clever considering the shooting did not take place for another ninety minutes or so and she isn't actually dead" Hendrickson remarked.

"I take it you have heard about the Morton hit?" Evans asked Sir Richard.

"I heard some organised crime heavyweight had had some car trouble earlier this morning as it was but not the name" Sir Richard confirmed "Not Blake Morton was it?"

"The same" Evans confirmed.

"Assuming these events are all connected" Sir Richard remarked as Hendrickson answered the telephone that had begun ringing at that point "then this is turning into a war."

"Two Security Service officers, one armed crime heavyweight and his driver plus the Attorney General dead" Cassini summarised "plus Divisional Commander Caverner near fatally injured, I would say it has gone beyond turning into a war somehow."

"Right, thank you" Hendrickson responded before hanging up the telephone, the tone in his voice and the way he hung up the telephone making everyone turn to look at him with a concerned look.

"Is this going to upset me at all?" Evans asked.

"Very probably I am afraid" Hendrickson confirmed "Thames River Division just fished out a body from underneath Blackfriars Bridge, the I.D. on it seems to be that of a William Holland, well known drugs baron from the Hammersmith area."

"At this rate there won't be any criminal gangs left in the City except Rogers firm" Cassini remarked.

"It does bring up the possibility of reprisal attacks as well" Sir Richard suggested "Some of these hard nuts don't like to be taken down a peg or two by anyone, this could trigger a civil war amongst the organised crime community."

"Commander Cassini" Evans instructed "I suggest you get your surveillance boys and girls in place right away before this turns any nastier."

"I'm on it Guv" Cassini agreed as he pushed his chair back, got up and rapidly departed.

"Commander Baker" Evans ordered "Find me those gunmen, find out who is paying the bills, supplying the hardware and then shut them down."

"Extreme measures Sir?" Baker asked, seeking clarification.

"Find them and take them out" Evans confirmed "I don't give a flying toss what the political no necks are saying about laying off, this has got out of hand and we need to stop it before anyone else gets hurt."

"Yes Sir" Baker enthusiastically responded as she too got up, picked up her snipers rifle which she slung over her shoulder and headed out of the room.

"Commander Fuller" Evans turned to the resident computer expert "Your reputation as the best computer man in the business has even penetrated the rural parts of Wales where I normally reside. Get to work, find me evidence, anything we can use to put Rogers and his crew behind bars."

"I'll start with the bank accounts" Fuller admitted "It's amazing what people will do when there is money involved."

"Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson" Evans turned to the young officer seated to his left "You are the public face of this investigation, I suggest that once you have your team together sifting through the old evidence, you put that advantage to use. Turn over anyone who may be able to dish the dirt not only on Rogers firm but also on anyone who is protecting him and if that means dragging anyone from the Prime Minister downwards in for questioning then do it."

"Putting the wind up politicians is more the Commander's speciality" Hendrickson admitted "but I will try my best."



The intercom on the desk buzzed at that point whereupon Evans leant forward to answer it "This had better be good" he declared.

"It probably isn't" the Personal Assistant admitted "There is a chap from the Prime Minister's office, a Lionel Frobisher? He wants to meet you most urgently in thirty minutes."

"Oh no..." Sir Richard remarked rolling his eyes upwards.

"All right, tell him to come here to the Yard" Evans confirmed before switching off the intercom and turning to Sir Richard "Who is he?" he asked.

"A political pain in the proverbial arse" Sir Richard confirmed "Appointed a few weeks ago as the Prime Minister's Personal Secretary and Cabinet Chief, no one gets near any of the top politicians now unless it is through him or he is standing on your shoulder like a parrot."

"I could go through his bank accounts as well if you like?" Fuller cheekily suggested.

"I like your thinking too lad" Evans agreed "Do it, dish the dirt on this guy but you did not hear that from me."

"I'll go and get my best shovel" Fuller responded.

"I meanwhile had better get myself ready to meet this parrot" Evans confirmed "All right everyone, lets get to work."

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"Well she appears to holding up well" the doctor declared as he finished the latest assessment of Tracy's condition "She has been stable since leaving theatre and her responsiveness is definitely up."

"She's going to be all right then?" the Commander asked more out of hope than expectation.

"Normally I don't like to be hasty in these predictions" the doctor advised cautiously "but based on what I have seen so far, admittedly we still need to do a full assessment when she regains consciousness but overall I think she is going to be all right with rest and recuperation of course."

"Thank you doctor, that is a huge relief" the Commander responded "But that rest and recuperation bit could be tricky, she won't like that, indeed the moment Tracy is back on her feet I fully expect we will have great difficulty in stopping her from going back to work to nail the buggers who shot her."

"I think we will cross that bridge when we come to it" the doctor remarked "In the meantime, keep talking to her, hold her hand and tell her you love her, it may help to bring her back to us sooner rather than later."

"Ironically the way I have been going on since I got here" the Commander admitted "If she did come too she would probably tell me to turn it down."

"I'll leave you two alone" the doctor declared "Call me if you need to ask anything."

"I will" the Commander responded gratefully "Thank you."

The doctor duly left the room quietly closing the door behind him leaving the Commander to return to his bedside vigil where once again he took her hand in his and held it firmly, feeling Tracy's pulse which was as reassuring a guide to her condition as any medical assessment he may hear.

"You hear that love?" the Commander reiterated "Rest and recuperation for you, perhaps we should take that holiday we have always talked about?"

"All right yes I know, probably a daft idea" the Commander admitted wryly a few moments later "Jack and I will probably wind up on a train somewhere whilst you look on before we wind up getting dropped in the middle of some crisis or major crime that we have to solve before the end of the day but then I guess that is what makes life interesting for us and I certainly have no idea what I would have done had you died and left me all alone."

The Commander looked at Tracy's face, despite the medical equipment attached to her, the expression was one of restful peace which seemed to have changed from the look of anguish and pain she seemed to exhibit when she was first brought out of theatre the previous day.

"Oh dear Tracy" the Commander admitted "I am running out of things to talk about, I really need to hear your voice now, you have a habit of lighting up every room you walk into with that smile of yours and at the moment it is very dark in here."

"Oh, I will tell you one thing" the Commander remembered "Jack's headmaster telephoned earlier, apparently he didn't show up for school this morning and neither did Megan. I suspect as does he that they have gone off somewhere probably doing a little private investigating of their own if I know Jack. I just hope he doesn't step in owt'."

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"Come in!" Evans called loudly in his deep welsh accented voice that left no one in doubt as to his intentions or his manner. A few moments later the office door opened and in confidently strode Frobisher, straightening out his suit as if preparing for a major confrontation.

"Divisional Commander Evans" Frobisher tersely declared "Lionel Frobisher" he introduced himself before the two men shook hands.

"Have a seat" Evans politely offered but it was clear from Frobisher's demeanour that this was not going to be a friendly chat.

"Thank you, I will stand" Frobisher determinedly responded "I will come straight to the point Mr Evans, you have been expressly forbidden from conducting any form of investigation of Mr Franklin Rogers or any of his associates and yet I have received representations from several people who say that the Security Service have had him under surveillance ever since he left the Courts of Justice after his successful appeal."

"Prudent precaution" Evans defended "The man is a well known and established member of the organised crime community in the Greater London area which puts him very firmly on our radar."

"Well get him off your bloody radar!" Frobisher demanded "In case it escaped your attention Divisional Commander, he and his associates were declared by the Court of Appeal as free men and we have an agreement that he is not to be harassed or investigated in any way, backed up I may add by a raft of Public Interest Immunity Certificates."

"Bollocks..." Evans responded tersely, sensing where this was going "The man is gold plated scum of the highest order..."

"Franklin Rogers is a legitimate business man" Frobisher retorted "he pays his taxes, supports a lot of charities, works with local authorities to improve the area, makes significant contributions to major causes, in short he is *the* man in Leytonstone and the surrounding districts."

"So we just give him a Get Out of Jail Free card and a free licence to order the maiming and killing of Security Service Officers, the Attorney General and gawd knows who else gets in his way?" Evans asked with clear disbelief at Frobisher's stance on this matter.

"The Attorney General's regrettable death was suicide" Frobisher insisted "and from now until doomsday that will remain an unchallenged and concrete fact painted into history."

"That would presumably be in whitewash I take it" Evans responded "as it sounds like someone wants their backsides protecting from something very unpleasant and when it comes to being thoroughly unpleasant I think you will find Rogers and his crew have that corner of the market thoroughly sewn up."

"There is far more at stake than a few unfortunate events here" Frobisher sternly warned "You would be well advised to bear that in mind" at which point he duly turned on his heels and departed practically seething with pent up rage.

"What a twat..." Evans remarked as soon as Frobisher had left slamming shut the door behind him so hard it had made the windows rattle.

After a few moments thought Evans reached for his uniform overcoat, put it on and with purpose in his stride left the office.

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"I don't know Megan" Jack admitted as they drank tea on a bench in Trafalgar Square and watched the tourists milling around as though nothing had ever happened there "As my adopted father would say, are we in the proverbial pursuit of untamed poultry here?"

"You mean a wild goose chase?" Megan responded after having to give Jack's turn of phrase some thought as to what it actually meant "Well maybe but at least we are doing something, from what I gather the Security Agencies are being muffled and told to lay off."

"If only we could find out where these keys fitted" Jack remarked.

"What we need is a locksmith" Megan suggested.

"Do you suppose a retired locksmith would suffice?" Jack asked.

"If it is all we have got" Megan admitted with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Come on" Jack urged as he stood up and took Megan by the hand "I've got an idea" he confirmed as he led the way across the Square.

"Where are we going?" Megan asked as she followed Jack closely as they headed off of the Square, across the road and towards Charing Cross Station.

"To find a retired locksmith" Jack explained as they stopped outside the hotel next to the Station.

"Here?" Megan asked as she looked up at the hotel frontage.

"Trust me" Jack urged before heading inside whereupon Megan, taken by surprise duly followed him in.

"All right so now what?" Megan asked as they stood in the sumptuously appointed reception area of the hotel looking around before they noticed that the Receptionist was watching them with a suspicious look.

"Time for a little improvisation I think" Jack declared as he extracted something from his pocket before confidently striding over to the Reception Desk.

"Erm can I help you?" the Receptionist asked, still clearly unsure as to what the two youngsters were doing there.

"Indeed you can" Jack confirmed as he flashed his New Scotland Yard security pass sufficiently quickly "I need to see one of your guests, a Mr David Caverner. Could you tell me what room he is in please?"

"It must be true what they say" the Receptionist remarked "Policemen really are getting younger."

"He is my grandfather" Jack admitted "Well he is the father of my adopted mother if you see what I mean, yes I know I get confused myself sometimes."

"Room 531, fifth floor" the Receptionist confirmed from her computer.

"Thank you" Jack declared whereupon he and Megan duly headed for the lifts over on the far side of the hotel lobby.

"Ever considered joining the Security Service?" Megan asked wryly as the lift doors closed and they began their ascent to the fifth floor.

"Pay's lousy plus you wind up being shot at with alarming regularity" Jack admitted "Well you do if you are my foster parents in any case."

"I just hope you know what you are doing" Megan remarked.

"So do I my dear, so do I" Jack readily agreed as the lift doors opened and they stepped out into the corridor "Right, where is room 531?"

"Down there I think" Megan pointed to their left whereupon they headed down a well lit spacious corridor until they came to the correct door at which after a brief pause to make sure he was presentable, Jack knocked.

"Jack, what are you doing here?" David Caverner, Tracy's father asked upon opening the door and seeing the two youngsters standing there.

"I need to call upon your expertise I am afraid" Jack admitted as David let them enter the room "Oh this is Megan by the way" he introduced her.

"Ah the girlfriend" David recalled.

"She is not my girlfriend, just a friend" Jack responded, always on the defensive about the subject and never admitting the truth to anyone let alone himself.

"All right then" David wryly remarked "Why are you holding her hand then?"

"I think you have been rumbled" Megan giggled in response.

"Well that is the introductions dealt with I think" David declared "What can I do for you two young things?"

"I believe you are the man to ask about keys" Jack explained as he reached in his pocket and produced the two small keys "Can you tell me what these are likely to fit?" he asked handing them over.

"Interesting" David remarked as he retrieved an eye magnifier from his pocket and proceeded to examine them more closely "Haven't seen one of these for a while let alone two."

"So you recognise them?" Jack asked.

"Safety deposit box keys" David declared as he continued to examine them "Not ordinary ones either, these are from a triple key box of a design that has not been manufactured in a very long time."

"Triple key box?" Megan responded "Does that mean there is a third key somewhere?"

"Indeed it does young lady" David confirmed "Most safety deposit boxes these days have just two keys, one is held by the box owner, the other master key is held by the bank or vault owner. The beauty with the old triple key system is that not only do you need the master key of the bank but you also have to have the third key as well meaning that both parties have to be present at the opening of the box, cuts down on the possibility of someone making off with all the contents without the joint owner's knowledge."

"So is there any indication as to where the box these keys fit may be?" Jack asked.

"Well I can tell you where it won't be" David explained as he handed the keys back to Jack who returned them to his pocket for safe keeping "Those triple key locks have not been made for at least twenty to twenty five years so it won't be any bank or vault that has been constructed or refitted in that time, you are looking for an older probably long established facility and I would be willing to bet there are not many around like that anymore."

"Perhaps an internet search might come up with something?" Megan suggested "Sounds like the sort of security advantage any business would be shouting from the rooftops."

"Could be worth a try" Jack agreed "We need to find an Internet Café."

"You two aren't getting yourselves into trouble are you?" David asked with a note of caution.

"In my life so far I have been shot at, nearly flattened by an exploding building, watched as my parents were murdered, been almost buried alive in a forgotten basement by a bunch of lunatics who were trying to take over the Government and once came second in a rigged three legged race" Jack admitted wryly "Believe me this is nothing even remotely approaching trouble."

"I never knew that" Megan responded "The rigged three legged race thing, not the exploding building and the lunatics trying to take over the Government I mean."

"Well I can't disclose all of my secrets can I?" Jack remarked with a wry grin "Anyway we had better get going, thank for your help" he declared.

"You are welcome" David responded "Would I be right in assuming that as far as certain Security Service officers of our mutual acquaintance are concerned this conversation never happened."

"Spot on" Jack agreed "Be seeing you" he declared before he and Megan departed.

"Well that was odd..." David admitted scratching his head before closing the hotel room door.

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"Bloody weather!" Harcourt remarked as he looked out of the windscreen of the van in which he was a front seat passenger, parked in a side street in Leyton. Ahead of the van about a hundred yards away was an old pub into which a number of men were seen going inside having walked there from the nearby Underground Station.

"Looks like our players are arriving" the driver of the van remarked "How badly does the boss want them damaged?"

"Enough to make them think twice about any plans they have of encroaching on our turf ever again" Harcourt confirmed as a Mercedes saloon drew up outside the pub's main entrance and a short heavily built man in his sixties emerged, his driver providing an umbrella to cover himself as he made his way to and inside the door of the pub.

"Right, that is the last one to arrive" Harcourt declared "Are we ready for this lads?" he called to the bunch of heavy men in the back of the van.

"You do realise the filth are watching this place don't you boss?" one of the men asked concerned.

"The more the merrier" Harcourt confirmed "Trust me Dave we are protected and besides it will help to spread the word that we mean business and anyone who gets in the way will get the same treatment."

"So we just roll on in and enjoy ourselves I take it?" the driver asked.

"Indeed we do" Harcourt confirmed with a look of eager anticipation "Fred, pass out the gear" he requested whereupon a box containing various bats and bits of wood was opened and its contents passed around amongst the men in the van, the largest baseball bat being passed to the front to Harcourt.

"All right boys" Harcourt declared with glee "Let's go clubbing!"

With that declaration, the gang duly piled out of the van and despite the rain hammering down, walked over towards the pub with clear purpose.

"Who the hell are these jokers?" one of Commander Cassini's surveillance officers remarked to her colleague as they watched from a window in a building on the opposite side of the street.

"Well I think we can safely say they are not from the Good Pub guide somehow" her colleague remarked as they observed the men going into the pub "Control this is Observer One Three, very urgent message" he called into the radio.

Inside the pub, the friendly banter that had been going around its occupants came to a halt as Harcourt and his men arrived in the bar.

"Hello" Harcourt gruffly declared "We come with the compliments of Mr Rogers."

"Heh, heh" nervously responded Edwin Griffiths, the leader of the men in the bar, the short heavily built man who had earlier arrived in the back of the Mercedes "Now listen lads, I am sure we can come to some arrangement."

"Well Griffiths, you should have thought of that before you did the Chapel Lane Post Office job on Mr Roger's territory without asking permission shouldn't you?"

Harcourt replied, waving his baseball bat around menacingly.

"No disrespect meant" Griffiths responded, desperate to diffuse the situation that was clearly about to turn violent "We had no idea he was getting out of jail otherwise we would have consulted wouldn't we lads?" he asked around his men who in return gave a general consensus of agreement.

"Trouble is you didn't" Harcourt casually explained "and that means you didn't pay either the consulting fee or our percentage of the takings so I am afraid we are just going to have to teach your boys a lesson."

"Oh come on" Griffiths protested "There is no need for unnecessary violence."

"Oh, there is nothing 'unnecessary' about it I think you will find" Harcourt evilly declared before suddenly swinging around with the baseball bat and slamming it hard into the side of one of Griffiths men.

This was the cue for a major outbreak of violence as the two sides set about each other, Harcourt's men having the upper hand as they had come prepared whilst Griffith's men had to use whatever came to hand be it furniture, bottles or anything else that was not nailed down.

"Looks like its kicking off big time down there" the female Surveillance Officer remarked as through binoculars she observed one of Griffith's men being unceremoniously thrown out through one of the pub's front windows and into the street, meanwhile the sound of a major confrontation in progress filtered out into the street outside.

"Well the cavalry is on its way" her colleague confirmed as he rejoined her at the window "Blimey these guys really know how to party don't they?" he remarked.

Down below them in the pub, Harcourt's men clearly had the better of the fight as many of Griffith's men lay bloodied, bruised and unconscious all over the place. As Harcourt surveyed their work, the sound of sirens in the distance began to become audible.

"Guv, it's the filth!" one of Harcourt's men called urgently.



"Right lads" Harcourt declared "I think our message has been suitably hammered home, lets get out of here."

With that, Harcourt and his men bundled out of the wrecked remains of the pub, back across the road and into their van before driving off at speed, the tyres squealing loudly on the cobbled surface of the street.

As the van vanished off into the distance, the two Surveillance Section officers emerged from the building across the street and went up to the front door of the pub which was now barely hanging on by one hinge before looking inside.

"Dear God..." the female officer responded upon seeing the state of the place and those within it.

"I think we can safely say the latest salvo in this little war has been well and truly launched" her colleague admitted as around the corner several Security Service vehicles arrived in response to their emergency call.

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"It's raining again" the Commander informed Tracy as standing next to the window he looked out at the heavy drops of water pattering against the glass and the gloomy sky beyond "I distinctly remembering the papers saying this was going to be a hot summer this year, evidently they forgot to mention that it didn't apply to the UK."

The Commander looked across at Tracy and for a moment thought she was almost managing a smile then but in fact there was no response, merely his imagination being hopeful for a response.

"At least on this one we are indoors love" the Commander admitted as he returned to her bedside and took her hand once again "I think just this once we will let everyone else do the foot work and get soaking wet, of course it means they will get all the glory but I can live with that more than comfortably."

There was a polite knock at the door which caused the Commander to look up and see Divisional Commander Evans peering around the door.

"Sorry to intrude" Evans admitted "I was wondering any chance of a word?"

"Come in" the Commander responded "Say hello to the missus" he indicated Tracy.

"How is she?" Evans asked as he pulled up a spare chair and sat down alongside the Commander.

"Holding her own I think is the technical term" the Commander admitted "You know I have this sneaky suspicion she can hear everything I have been saying, even the joke I heard the other day about how many Home Secretary's does it take to change a light bulb."

"Sixteen" Evans recalled "One to order the change of light bulb, one more to authorise the budget, a further two to authorise the overspend in the budget for the light bulb, five to form a Commons Committee to investigate why the aforementioned light bulb has gone over budget, a further two to launch the accompanying website, another three to continually re-announce the purchase as new money being invested when in fact it is the same money repackaged to make it look good and then another two subsequent Home Secretary's are required, one to scrap the project to replace the light bulb ten years after it was first announced and a second one to order a Public Inquiry into the waste of money that will blame it on the previous administration."

"That would be the one" the Commander admitted with a bit of a chuckle.

"Speaking of useless Civil Servants" Evans continued "I just had a very unpleasant experience with some guy named Frobisher."

"Oh him" the Commander responded "I believe Sir Richard can fill you in on who he is" he motioned towards the door as Sir Richard entered and joined them.

"Who is that then?" Sir Richard asked.

"Frobisher is sniffing around the Yard" Evans confirmed "Seems to think he is the be all and end all, that no one is allowed to so much as borrow a paper clip without consulting him first."

"Charming fellow isn't he?" Sir Richard agreed "Someone is going to give him a slap before the week is out I would wager."

"Take a number and get in line" Evans suggested "Is it some unique talent he has developed or has he always had the knack of getting the backs up of everyone he meets."

"I get the impression he has always been like that" the Commander admitted "Having said that I still have not had the 'pleasure' of meeting him face to face yet."

"Well he popped around about three quarters of an hour ago to enforce the keep clear of Rogers's message" Evans informed them "Following an interesting exchange of mostly polar opposite opinions, I told him he could take a running jump. I think I must have learnt that little knack from you" he admitted.

"Well I am the master at really ticking off politicians and civil servants regardless of their rank or mostly self imposed importance" the Commander admitted with a hint of pride apparent.

"Unfortunately all the time we have that weasel Frobisher around we still cannot officially investigate anything" Evans admitted "We are treading on egg shells as it is."

"Meanwhile Rogers and his thugs are getting away with all sorts if the latest reports are to be believed" Sir Richard reluctantly agreed "Tell me, any of you guys heard of an old lag by the name of Del Griffiths?"

"Old boy, late sixties, rather short and rotund" the Commander recalled "runs a firm out of a pub in Leyton I think. Robbery Squad apparently fancy a couple of his lads for the Chapel Street Post Office job a couple of weeks back."

"Yes well" Sir Richard explained "About half an hour ago someone sent along a van load of thugs to that very same pub in Leyton armed with pick axe handles, baseball bats, four by two, all very traditional stuff and then proceeded to bash the merry hell out of the place and everyone in it including old boy Griffiths himself."

"That Chapel Street robbery would have been on Roger's turf" the Commander concluded "I guess someone did not pay the usual fees and percentages so he sent his boys around with a little reminder."

"That is a hell of a reminder" Evans remarked "Does this sort of thing always happen in this town?"

"Not for a good many years" Sir Richard confirmed.

"Looks like someone wants to bring back some old fashioned bully boy tactics" the Commander admitted "What state is old boy Griffiths in do we know?"

"They just brought him in the back door of this place for his own safety" Sir Richard confirmed "He is two doors down the hall."

"Richard, stay here with Tracy" the Commander responded "I'm going to drop by and say hello."

"Are you sure that is wise?" Evans asked as the Commander got up and went over to the door.

"Probably not but what else do I have to do until Tracy wakes up?" the Commander admitted before leaving and discreetly making his way down the corridor to another single bed ward a few doors down where upon opening the door the Commander found the badly battered, bruised and bandaged Griffiths sat in a wheel chair by the bed.

"Fancy meeting you here" Griffiths remarked with a slightly raspy cough, one effect of the hammering he had received earlier.

"Well I was in the neighbourhood" the Commander admitted "From what I heard you had some visitors earlier today, having some domestic problems are we?"

"There was a little difference of opinion" Griffiths admitted "So someone sent around their reminder squad."

"Rolling up in a Transit van, tooled up to the nines with bits of four by two and baseball bats" the Commander added "Very classy, we had your place under surveillance for your own protection if you can believe it."

"I can believe that" Griffiths admitted "The law showed up awfully fast, if they hadn't we would probably have been dead by now."

"So leaving aside the fact we are probably going to tug a couple of your lads in for the Chapel Street job as soon as they learn to walk again" the Commander remarked "Who did you upset? Rogers by any chance?"

"Look mate, I can't say anything" Griffiths responded "I'd love to help really I could, especially after what they did to your wife, unacceptable and beyond the pale that was but I have my health to think of."

"Interesting statement" the Commander commented "That would seem to indicate you know that whoever bashed your lot up and shot my Tracy are one and the same."

"I'm not naming names" Griffiths responded sincerely "but perhaps you need to look around at some of the old firm fixers in the East End, particularly their relatives as someone is throwing a lot of money about to buy the best talent in town who in turn is hiring some extremely talented heavyweights, many from overseas."

"Thanks for that" the Commander admitted "You get better and then perhaps we will talk again."

The Commander left the room and stepped back out into the corridor where he was confronted by the sound of raised voices in strong argument.

"What the hell...?" the Commander asked incredulously as he looked down the corridor to witness Sir Richard, Evans and the recently arrived Frobisher having a strongly worded exchange of opinions, most of them contradictory.

"Improper and illegal investigations not authorised by my office is what my 'problem' is as you so aptly put it Divisional Commander!" Frobisher strongly protested.

"We've got thugs running freely all over town wiping out Security Service officers, the Attorney General, other gangs and their leaders and any poor innocent sod who happens to get in the way while they are about it" Evans responded equally as angry "We all know damn well who is behind this and yet you seem to want to castrate any legitimate investigation because it is deemed politically inconvenient."

"Well how about this for politically or indeed any other form of inconvenient?" Frobisher replied "You are suspended effective immediately."

"You don't have the authority to do that" Sir Richard quickly pointed out, jumping in before Evans could respond with something he might regret.

"And when I last looked Mr Crowthorne" Frobisher quickly rounded on him "You were no longer a member of the recognised Security or Law Enforcement agencies in this country bar an unofficial arrangement you may have with the Prime Minister so you can butt out of matters that do not concern you as well."

"Problem gentlemen?" the Commander asked as he intervened having stood back and listened to the arguments for a few moments before picking his moment to step in.

"And you are?" Frobisher asked.

"To you matey National Administrator General Edward Regent" the Commander responded "You must be Frobisher, I have heard so much about you, none of it complimentary."

"Ah, Administrator General" Frobisher declared "Perhaps you can exercise your authority seeing as your subordinate here will not recognise mine and suspend Divisional Commander Evans from duty immediately."

"But I have no reason to" the Commander explained "Divisional Commander Evans here has been acting under my authority to investigate a number of heinous crimes, not the least of which to me personally is the attempted murder of my own wife and the killing in cold blood of two other Security Service officers so if that upsets you then quite frankly tough cheddar old chap."

"Obviously terrible I appreciate" Frobisher falsely sympathised "but there is the bigger picture to consider here, the potential for unleashing of scandal and making this Government appear weak is substantial."

"I'd be careful if I were you matey" Sir Richard strongly cautioned "The Commander here has been known to eat insignificant Civil Servants such as yourself for breakfast."

"Oh please..." Frobisher responded "Gentlemen I am not interested in petty threats, I represent the Government and the nation's interests in this matter and what I say is what will be done."

"You know" the Commander responded calmly but with implied menace apparent in his eyes that had Sir Richard bracing himself to leap in quickly if required "If it wasn't for the fact that my wife Tracy is in there at death's door" he indicated the ward behind them "still alive but only just I point out, right now I would be throwing you out of this building, probably by way of the nearest window."

"But we are on the fourth floor" Frobisher pointed out with a nervous laugh.

"My mistake" the Commander admitted "I meant to say take you up to the top floor and then throw you out of the building by way of the nearest window."

"I think what my learned colleague is suggesting" Sir Richard interjected "is get out of here before someone gets damaged, namely you."

"I will be lodging a protest with the highest level of authority in the Security Service about this" Frobisher protested as he began to leave.

"Now let me think who would that be..." the Commander wondered, brushing his chin with his hand as if in deep thought "Oh yes, you will need the National Administrator General and when I last looked that was, oh dear, me!"

"You are all making a serious mistake gentlemen" Frobisher protested once again, this time from the far end of the corridor.

"Do I look like I give a toss?" the Commander wryly asked whereupon, his face red and full of anger Frobisher departed.

"Well I must say that is the most fun I have had with a Government representative in years" Evans responded "Oh, am I still suspended by the way."

"Of course not" the Commander confirmed "I can't leave Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson in charge of everything can I? He's good but not that good, yet..."

"Speaking of which, here he comes now" Sir Richard remarked as Hendrickson along with David Collins appeared and joined them outside the ward.

"Did I miss something?" Hendrickson asked sensing something had happened.

"We just had a visit from that pathetic excuse for a Civil Servant Frobisher" the Commander explained "He is the one heading away from the building right now probably at some speed with a firmly implanted flea in his ear."

"You also narrowly missed out on becoming acting Divisional Commander" Evans added to which Hendrickson responded with a slightly confused look "It's all right lad, I'll explain later."

"So do you guys want the bad news or the bad news?" Hendrickson asked with an apprehensive look.

"Given the way things have been going lately, I'll take the bad news first" Evans agreed.

"All the evidence amassed when we first put Rogers away is no longer in the Security Service archive along with all other material we had on him which admittedly was mostly speculative hearsay and circumstantial" Hendrickson confirmed.

"Can't say I am exactly overwhelmed with surprise on that one" the Commander remarked "So what is the bad news?" he asked.

"I checked with the Department of Public Prosecutions and the Appeals Office at the Royal Courts of Justice" Hendrickson explained "A full copy of the evidence that was presented both at the original trial plus the alleged new evidence presented in the appeal was submitted to the defence solicitors three weeks before the appeal took place."

"So get a warrant and kick their door in" Evans suggested.

"That's the problem" Hendrickson continued "Last night the Solicitors office in question burnt to the ground after a fault in their incoming gas main saw the place explode in a fireball taking everything inside with it, it was all destroyed. There is not even a door left standing anymore to kick in."

"Very politically convenient as our friend Mr Frobisher would say" Evans remarked with a look of resigned inevitability.

"Incoming gas main you say?" Sir Richard picked up on a key detail that Hendrickson had mentioned.

"Sounds familiar" the Commander agreed "The same way Applegate's place went up the other week and connected too."

"That means even if we were allowed to investigate Rogers" Evans summarised "We now have next to nothing to work with."

"Back to square one I suppose" Hendrickson responded as Sir Richard withdrew from the group to take a call on his mobile telephone "Unless Commander Baker can locate our snipers and follow the money I suppose?"

"Hello, Crowthorne speaking" he responded.

"Sir Richard?" Jack called from an Internet Café just off Trafalgar Square "It's Jack, look if there is anyone of influence or in a uniform anywhere in earshot, please don't tell them it is me calling" he urgently requested as he thought he heard and recognised the Commander's voice in the background.

"Understood" Sir Richard responded "What can I do for you?"

"We need some help" Jack explained "You are the man with the connections in this town and quite frankly we are going to need them."

"Sounds intriguing" Sir Richard responded with a raised eyebrow "What exactly did you have in mind?" he asked.

"Well we have got these two keys" Jack explained "Now according to Tracy's father, they are for a three key system safety deposit box but these haven't been made for many a year so Megan and I did some Internet research and have found that there is only one place in the whole of Greater London that still uses these so we were sort of wondering if you could help us get in."

"And where is this place?" Sir Richard asked as he got out a pen and found a bit of old paper to make a note of the details.

"Hawthorne & Pearce Investments & Securities of West Kensington" Jack read from the computer screen "Old family firm apparently, do you know it?"

"Oh yes, I know it" Sir Richard confirmed "I tell you what, there is a greasy spoon café around the corner from that place called Terry's Diner, meet me there in half an hour."

"Terry's Diner" Jack confirmed "Got it, thanks."

"What was that all about" the Commander asked Sir Richard just as he was about to return to Tracy's bedside but had overheard the conversation which from what he could hear of it had caught his attention.

"Oh that?" Sir Richard responded "Just arranging a birthday treat for the wife, nothing important."

"Dickie old boy" the Commander responded with a wry smile "For an ex MI5 man, sometimes you are a terrible liar" he joked before heading back into the ward and closing the door behind him.

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"All right people" Evans declared as he entered the investigation nerve centre "the wolves are at the door, lunatics with baseball bats are running around town eliminating the competition, Frobisher is hanging around like a bad smell, its lunchtime and we are five hours into this investigation so what have we got?"

"Couple of possible leads on the weapons used in the Trafalgar Square shooting Sir" Baker confirmed "They are not the sort of thing you can rent for an afternoon for twenty quid beneath a pub counter which means they had to come from one of the specialist dealers."

"I like what I am hearing" Evans responded.

"Well usually snipers work alone so normally something like this" she indicated the photographs of various models of sniper rifles she had collated, spread out across her desk "normally they are sold one at a time, bulk purchases of two or more are extremely rare and tend to get noticed."

"So you found something?" Evans asked sensing where this was leading.

"There was some idle chatter on the gun maniac bulletin boards about four weeks ago that someone had paid in cash for not one but three state of the art sniper rifles from a legitimate dealer in Tennessee in the United States" Baker explained "the main thing was that it turned out when the aforementioned dealer tried to pay in said cash into his bank account they were revealed to be very convincing forgeries."

"How much are we talking?" Evans asked.

"About three and a half thousand dollars US, each" Baker confirmed "Although the dealer gave the buyer a discount for cash and bulk purchase which brought it down to a nice round ten grand."



"And all in fake notes" Fuller remarked "Where have we heard that before?"

"Exactly what I was thinking" Evans agreed "Any luck with the file searches, accounts and so forth?"

"Other than what can best be described as the usual run of the mill legitimate every day transactions of Rogers legal business interests" Fuller confirmed "He has shifted no large or even small sums of money through his accounts in the last ten years."

"Which means either he really is legitimate and above board" Evans summarised.

"Yeah right..." Fuller responded, dismissing that notion in an instant.

"Or he has one hell of a large petty cash tin lurking somewhere" Evans concluded "Probably topped up with fake notes."

"There was over twelve million pounds worth of fake notes never accounted for from that forgery case last month" Fuller pointed out "It was never conclusively proved Rogers had anything to do with it but his foul stench was all over the place."

"Hendrickson, what about past case histories?" Evans asked.

"Well in the absence of pretty much all of the evidence" Hendrickson admitted "I gave a couple of the officers involved in the original inquiry that saw Rogers jailed a call and tried to jog their memories. They managed to give me a few names of the witnesses they managed to persuade to offer testimony against Rogers, I have a team trying to track them down now."

"Good work" Evans concluded "Actually lets pull that defence solicitor in while we are about it, what was his name?"

"Robert McWilliam QC" Hendrickson confirmed.

"Yes well he will have nothing else to do seeing his office is in tatters so drag him in" Evans confirmed.

"He is one of the best defence solicitors in the land, I don't think he will take too kindly to this" Fuller warned.

"Even still" Evans responded "I want him in and talking, arrest him if you have to."

"On what charge?" Hendrickson asked.

"Oh make something up" Evans concluded "Failure to pay his congestion charge, cattle rustling, anything, now what about the Attorney General plus the Morton and Griffiths gang hits?"

"The only talking witnesses we have for the Griffiths hit was two of Cassini's surveillance officers who were watching the pub when the heavy mob rolled up" Hendrickson confirmed "Admittedly they couldn't see much but they are the only witnesses we have to that. I have them downstairs now going through the known villains files see if we can match some names to the muscle."

"The three shooters who nailed Morton and his driver in Regent Street early this morning" Baker announced as she used the remote control to playback the CCTV overlooking the area at the time of the shooting on the large screen at the front of the room "They were using bog standard nine millimetre Uzi's which basically can be picked up virtually anywhere these days and replaced the sawn off as the weapon of choice for organised crime in the last few years."

"Ballistics come back on them yet?" Evans asked.

"Yep for all the good it will do" Baker confirmed "Computer analysis of the bullets taken from the scene show these as previously unrecorded weapons so it looks like someone has brought in a fresh batch of shooters which given how non-existent this country's border controls are nowadays thanks to those idiots in the EU is hardly surprising."

"And the Attorney General" Evans inquired "Any news on his death?"

"The Coroner has confirmed his time of death matches the time on his smashed watch, nine thirty six in the morning" Hendrickson confirmed as he passed around copies of the final autopsy report "Also confirmed is that he was knocked unconscious before he was strung up from the chandelier and the drop with the rope around his neck finished off the job therefore we can safely assume the note was planted."

"I took a look at the Attorney General's laptop plus the computers in his study at home and his office" Fuller confirmed "That note was not written on any of those machines so someone created it and then brought it with them before planting it."

"So if we were to find a suspect who had a computer" Evans ventured "Is it possible even if they deleted it to find out if that machine was used to type that note?"

"Oh yes Sir" Fuller confirmed "It's not something we advertise widely as we like to keep computer criminals warm and cosy in a false sense of security but believe me Sir, nothing is ever completely deleted. With a little work I can find it irrespective of how many times someone has pressed the delete button."

"All right" Evans declared "Let's get some lunch, no one ever solved anything on an empty stomach and then we shall come back to this in an hour."

"Sounds like a good idea to me" Baker admitted as she got up "I could murder a bacon butty"

"I always had you down as a salad and five portions a day type" Hendrickson admitted as they left the room.

"Commander Fuller, would you remain for a moment?" Evans asked as the other left whereupon Fuller sat back down.

"Here it comes..." Fuller remarked wryly.

"Here what comes?" Evans asked.

"The point where I am asked to use my skills to poke about in dark corners that only appear on maps with the scripted warning 'here be dragons' and some such" Fuller explained.

"Frobisher" Evans simply announced in a hushed tone.

"What that weasel from the Civil Service that keeps lurking around like a bad penny?" Fuller asked.

"And indeed the very same one the Commander threatened to evict from Charing Cross Hospital an hour ago by throwing him out of the window, on the fourth floor I might add" Evans confirmed.

"Sounds like the Commander's sense of humour is making a come back, I take it Tracy is all right then?" Fuller asked.

"Looks she is going to be all right, well after a period of rest and recuperation that is although she has still yet to regain consciousness but the signs are looking hopeful" Evans confirmed "This Frobisher character, he is seriously worried that we are going to stumble onto something and he is definitely protecting someone's back in addition to his own."

"According to Sir Richard and Dave Collins, when they tried to do some background research into this guy when he first came onto the political scene, they were unceremoniously told to go forth and multiply" Fuller warned.

"Yes well if you deserve one tenth of your reputation" Evans remarked "then you are far more subtle than they are and know far more back doors. Find out all you can about him, his likes, dislikes, associates, friends, pets, the whole story as if we can find something we can use, maybe we can get him off our backs and naming names."

"I'll see what I can find" Fuller confirmed.

"Good lad" Evans thanked him "But first, lunch."

"Absolutely Sir" Fuller agreed.

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"Well I will give you this, you sure know how to show a girl a good time" Megan remarked as she looked around the interior of the café they were in, sitting at a table near the front window.

"I paid for lunch didn't I?" Jack responded with a wry smile as he tucked into a grease laden bacon buttie.

"Your arteries are going to be a right mess in twenty years time you do know that?" Megan warned.

"Live for the moment" Jack responded "That's my motto especially when you consider how many scrapes I have managed to get into in my short life, I'll worry about the future tomorrow."

"Do I feature in this future of yours?" Megan asked.

"Absolutely" Jack firmly agreed taking hold of Megan's hand in reassurance "Just don't tell anyone all right, I'll just get all embarrassed about it."

"Eat your buttie you old softie" Megan giggled in response.

"Save some for me" Sir Richard remarked as he joined them at the table.

"I thought your wife was putting you on a diet or something?" Jack asked, his mouth still half full.

"What Sybil doesn't see won't worry her" Sir Richard admitted "Hello Megan, how are you?"

"Thoroughly confused if I were to be honest Sir" Megan admitted wryly.

"So where are these keys then?" Sir Richard asked.

"Got them here" Jack confirmed, managing to put his bacon buttie down just long enough to retrieve them and pass them to Sir Richard.

"Yep, they are the right type all right" Sir Richard agreed as he looked at them.

"You sound like you have seen something similar before" Jack remarked "In fact you seemed to know about the bank and this café before we did which makes me think there is something a little bit unusual about it."

"Well in addition to being one of the last family run old style bank and security businesses in the City" Sir Richard explained "Hawthorne & Pearce provide discreet banking and secure storage facilities to certain Government and Law Enforcement Agencies, safety deposit boxes for Secret Services agents, senior Security Officers, that sort of thing."

"Explains the two MI5 agents over on the corner table then" Jack remarked casually "Well at least I assume that is who they are considering they choked on their coffee when they saw you come in."

"Oh well spotted lad" Sir Richard confirmed as he looked over and recognised two of his former colleagues "There is a standing brief to watch the place thanks to the vast array of secrets contained therein and Terry's Café is a very convenient place to hole up in."

"So it would appear Divisional Commander Caverner has a safety deposit box at this place then" Megan summarised "What do you suppose is in it?" she asked.

"Something for a rainy day I expect" Sir Richard confirmed "Most senior officers in the various services have a box or some other secret place for those little keepsakes, mementoes and other dark secrets which they keep back in case something from their past comes back to bite them on the proverbial rear end."

"Which I think we can safely say has happened here" Jack remarked mournfully.

"I am going to ask a silly question here" Megan "but how do we know which box those key fit?"

"Not a problem" Sir Richard confirmed "I have an unofficial working agreement with the aforementioned establishment..."

"Huh?" Megan responded.

"The Manager is an old pal who owes him a favour" Jack translated.

"Several favours actually" Sir Richard admitted "Anyway, give me twenty minutes and I will see what I can do, get me a tea and full fry up in for when get back" he declared before getting up and leaving the café.

"What an odd fellow" Megan remarked as through the partially misted up window they observed Sir Richard dashing across the street in the pouring rain until he disappeared from sight inside the bank.

"He may be odd" Jack admitted "but he is a very useful and well connected person to have in your contact book."

"Good afternoon" Sir Richard declared as he entered the very old fashioned looking bank reception area and approached the inquiries desk "Could I speak the Manager please?" he politely requested.

"Hello Dickie you old rascal" Gareth Pearce the Manager of the bank called from the doorway of his office "I had a feeling you would be calling."

"It's been a while" Sir Richard admitted as the two men shook hands.

"This way please" Pearce indicated his office whereupon they went inside the very old fashioned looking managers office where Sir Richard took a seat and was offered a drink which he willingly accepted "I assume this is about the safety deposit box registered to a certain Ms Caverner?"

"Damm you are good" Sir Richard confirmed "I knew there was a reason why we do so much business with your firm."

"It's well known that many of our esteemed clients keep something by just in case of some old skeletons that come rattling along" Pearce admitted "As soon as I read about the dreadful fate that has befallen the Divisional Commander I checked our confidential client list and she was on it, needless to say your arrival in these hallowed halls is of no surprise."

"I need to see what is inside the box" Sir Richard confirmed "Actually to be more accurate a friend of mine needs to see what is in the box and very thoughtfully supplied the keys" he declared as he produced the two keys Jack had given to him earlier and placed them on the desk.

"This is rather irregular" Pearce confirmed "Normally these things are only permitted to relatives of the owner and only then in exceptional circumstances."

"Would having the owner in hospital at deaths door and the keys being in possession of and submitted to you by her adopted son do?" Sir Richard asked.

"I think that will do nicely" Pearce readily agreed.

"Cheers mate" Jack responded as the café owner refilled their mugs with fresh tea "Best get a full fry up on the grill for my friend too" he indicated out of the window across towards the bank from where Sir Richard was approaching carrying a very large briefcase.

"That looks rather heavy" Megan remarked as she watch Sir Richard come through the door before rejoining them.

"I think we can safely say that that your mother kept something for a monsoon season, never mind a rainy day" Sir Richard confirmed as he placed the very heavy looking case on the chair alongside him before sitting down himself.

"What's in it?" Megan asked as the café owner brought over Sir Richard's dinner which we received with much thanks and enthusiasm.

"I think that is something that perhaps better wait until we find somewhere a little less public" Sir Richard recommended as he proceeded to make a telephone call "Hello Barry? It's your Guvnor, get yourself over to Terry's Café with a company car in about thirty minutes, just give me the chance to finish lunch first."

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"Bad day?" Lieutenant Commander Hendrickson wryly remarked as he came and stood alongside defence barrister Robert McWilliam as he looked up in dismay at the badly wrecked state of his offices which were in the process of being made safe by the Fire Brigade.

"Forgive me Lieutenant but being a mere QC I often fail to follow the peculiar sense of humour members of your dangerous profession seem to come pre-installed with" McWilliam responded.

"My Guvnor wants a word with you Sir" Hendrickson explained the reason for his presence "That is if you are not busy."

"Your 'Guvnor' Lieutenant?" McWilliam turned to face Hendrickson "I think you have been watching too many episodes of The Sweeney."

"Well it would appear that at this time you are the only person who is in possession of all the evidence, both original and new that was presented at the appeal of a certain scumbag by the name of Franklin Rogers" Hendrickson explained "You see for some strange reason all of our files have gone walkies."

"Probably misfiled" McWilliam remarked "Try looking under all those rocks you hide all those miscarriages of justice dating back to the 1960's that keep me and my associates in business."

"Oh very droll Mr McWilliam" Hendrickson responded "Of course I am willing to bet that your copies of the documentation in question were no doubt safe and secure in your premises last night when they did the big firework."

"You know with foresight like that Lieutenant Commander" McWilliam remarked sarcastically "You'll make Administrator General by the time you reach your thirties."

"Nothing wrong with ambition Sir" Hendrickson responded "Shall we use our office seeing as yours seems to have a bit of a leaky roof?" he suggested as the Fire Brigade brought down the last small section of the roof that was still in place, sending it crashing down to the street.

"All right, seeing as my briefs have been burnt to a crisp" McWilliam agreed with a sigh of resignation.

"Sounds unpleasant" Hendrickson responded trying to keep a straight face at McWilliams's unintentionally funny response "My car's over here, sorry it's not a bronze Ford Consul Sir."

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"Bingo..." Sir Richard declared as he opened the briefcase to reveal the files inside, the first one of which on the top of the pile clearly marked 'Rogers, Franklin'.

"I take it this is the proverbial Rosetta Stone in all this?" Megan asked as she peered over the edge of the briefcase which was sitting in the middle of the Commander's desk in his office on the top floor of New Scotland Yard.

"Who is Rosetta Stone when she is at home?" Jack asked.

"It's a... oh never mind" Megan responded.

"Known and suspected associates" Jack read from one of the original files "Reads like a who's who of the last twenty years crime headlines in east London" he remarked "Here Megan, this David Thorpe, is that the relation you were going on about?"

"Sorry?" Sir Richard responded "I think I must have missed something there."

"This all started because in some of the bits and bobs Divisional Commander Caverner had at home that Jack was looking through when I went around to see him was a group photograph of Rogers and some of his gang taken about fifteen years ago" she explained "One of them was my Grandfather."

"Your Grandfather is David 'The Fixer' Thorpe?" Sir Richard asked.

"Was" Megan corrected him "He died out in Spain about three years ago, at least that is what I was told but now I am beginning to think I have been sold dud gen."

"You can say that again" Sir Richard confirmed "David Thorpe was a well known fence and fixer in the east end, supplying whatever you needed no questions asked to some very unpleasant people including Roger's firm."

"What sort of stuff?" Megan asked.

"Tools and equipment for any crime you care to name but mostly getaway motors and weapons for armed robberies was his speciality" Sir Richard explained "He was finally convicted about five years ago and died in prison a couple of years later."

"So if I were to mention that my Uncle Garry took over what I assumed was his legitimate buying and selling business when he apparently 'moved to Spain' then would I have unceremoniously dropped him in it?" Megan asked.

"Maybe, maybe not" Sir Richard confirmed "Either way he is probably worth a look by the right people" he remarked as he reached across the Commander's desk to the telephone and hit a button for an internal number.

"Commander Fuller" came the response from downstairs where Fuller was trying his hardest with not much success to try and find something on anyone even remotely connected with the case.

"It's Crowthorne" Sir Richard declared "If you are not busy, silly question I know could you possibly nip up to the Administrator General's office and if David Collins is around, drag him along too as we are having a little soiree, strictly invitation only of course."

"Sounds intriguing" Fuller remarked "Well I am getting nowhere here with this lot anyway so I'll be right up" he agreed.

"Was that Sir Richard on the phone?" Cassini asked as he came into the office just as Fuller hung up.



"Yes, why?" Fuller confirmed as he got up from his seat and folded closed his laptop computer ready to take with him.

"I want to run a couple of faces by him, see if anything goes ping" Cassini admitted "It's a long shot but maybe worth a try."

"Join the party" Fuller beckoned whereupon they both headed out of the office.

A couple of minutes later they entered the Commander's office where in addition to Sir Richard, Jack and Megan, Divisional Commander Evans had also joined the discussion.

"OK, we are all here" Fuller remarked looking around as they all gathered around the desk.

"All right then" Sir Richard declared as he produced the contents of the briefcase "Allow me to present gentlemen the original case evidence used to convict the Rogers firm ten years ago."

"Where the hell did you find this?" Evans asked with a mixture of relief, gratitude and surprise.

"I didn't" Sir Richard had to admit "These two did" he indicated Jack and Megan.

"Nice one guys" Fuller responded "When do you two go on the company payroll?" he joked.

"Well go on lass" Sir Richard prompted Megan "Tell them about your grand father."

"I'm not sure" Megan responded with obvious nervousness "I mean what if...?"

"Everything will be fine" Jack reassured her, holding her hand for support.

"All right then" Megan began "This is a photograph from Divisional Commander Caverner's records which shows this Franklin Rogers guy and his 'associates' about fifteen years ago. Third from the right is a chap called David Thorpe, my grand father."

"I've heard that name somewhere" Cassini recalled "Wasn't he a fixer in the east end, got sent down for an eight stretch in jail about five years ago I think."

"That was he" Sir Richard confirmed "Go on" he prompted Megan once again.

"Well my late grand father had a buying and selling business" Megan continued "One that I thought was legitimate until today but I guess he must have been using it as a front of some kind for his more exotic activities. Well when according to what I was told my grand father won a large accumulator on the horses and moved to Spain..."

"Wormwood Scrubs more like" Evans remarked.

"...the business he ran was handed over to his son, my uncle Garry Thorpe and now he specialises in lots of international trading, import and export, that kind of thing" Megan continued "Admittedly I haven't seen him for some years now, my father doesn't even talk about him."

"I know I am probably clutching at straws here" Cassini ventured as he reached into his inside jacket pocket and produced a couple of surveillance photographs that his officers had taken of the various comings and goings at Rogers place "but by any chance is this the fellow, only he looks quite similar to your late grand father in this photograph."

"Yes, that's him" Megan agreed "Blimey he is going a bit thin on top though since I last saw him."

"I think we may have found our middle man gentlemen" Evans declared "Do we know where he works out of, gaff, garage, warehouse?"

"He used to have a lock up in a row of railway arches near London Bridge" Megan confirmed "Approaches to Blue Anchor junction I think."

"Cassini" Evans requested "Get a discrete team together, put a watch on that place and when the coast is clear you and Commander Baker go in for a look see."

"Consider it done Sir" Cassini readily agreed before leaving the office with a purposeful stride, passing Hendrickson who was heading into the office at the same time he was leaving.

"Sorry to intrude Sir" Hendrickson apologised as he came in.

"No need to be sorry lad" Evans confirmed "In fact I was about to send for you."

"One particularly stuck up defence barrister is downstairs awaiting your pleasure Sir" Hendrickson confirmed "His was the solicitor's place that was burnt to the ground last night taking all the defence evidence with it unfortunately, also I think I had better warn you I don't think he likes Security Service officers too much."

"Well that is all right son" Evans replied "I don't like over paid self important defence barristers so we should get along like a solicitors office on fire."

"Oh there was one other thing when I came in" Hendrickson remembered "One of the guys who got well and truly lamped at that pub in Leyton this morning has come around and managed a name" he proceeded to find the name written in his note book "Some bloke named Harcourt apparently."

"Billy Harcourt?" Sir Richard responded.

"Do you know the fellow?" Evans asked.

"Only by reputation, never face to face" Sir Richard confirmed "What was this about a pub in Leyton?"

"A van load of blokes with pick axe handles, baseball bats, the usual turned up at some boozier in Leyton this morning and proceeded to smash the place and everyone in it into next week" Hendrickson confirmed "Apparently it is the home watering hole and general meeting place of an old crime firm run by some old boy named Griffiths."

"Sounds like Harcourt's kind of day out" Sir Richard agreed "William 'Billy' Harcourt was and indeed still is a very unpleasant piece of work that after doing time in Borstal for GBH when he were a nipper fell under the 'expert tutelage' of Franklin Rogers. Fond of using his fists and any bit of wood that happens to come to hand, he has been Rogers bag man for about fifteen or twenty years now."

"Pity he didn't fall under a bus instead" Evans remarked.

"Sounds positively charming" Megan remarked "Remind me not to have dinner with him or anything else for that matter."

"Would he be up to organising the Trafalgar Square hit?" Evans asked.

"No, not his style" Sir Richard confirmed "All brawn and very little brains, smash skulls in and ask questions later that is our Billy boy. If he had been organising the Trafalgar Square job he would have just torn in there with a van load of heavies armed with sawn off's and blown everyone within a two hundred metre radius to kingdom come."

"What about the Morton hit?" Hendrickson ventured "That was definitely far from subtle."

"All fine except for the shooters involved" Sir Richard agreed "Unless of course someone is supplying him some choice new hardware."

"So you are saying if we come across this guy we should worry?" Evans asked.

"Oh you want have time to worry" Sir Richard confirmed "If he smells the law hovering about, you might have time to duck but don't make any long term plans for the rest of the evening."

"I bet his mother is so proud of him" Jack remarked with more than a hint of sarcasm.

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Rogers was in the process of making sure everyone had a drink in the gentleman's club in central London when the concierge appeared at the door, coughed politely and went up to him.

"Hello Ben, what's up?" Rogers asked.

"An urgent telephone call for you Sir" the concierge confirmed "A gentleman, he wouldn't give his name, just said it was urgent and asked for you."

"Better not disappoint him then" Rogers confirmed whereupon the concierge handed him the telephone before discreetly stepping back "Rogers, go."

There was a lengthy pause as whoever was calling informed Rogers of what he had heard which once the caller had finished resulted in Rogers taking a few moments to consider his response before answering.

"All right mate" Rogers responded "I'll get my lads to take care of it, you return to you duties and I'll ensure there is a little something extra in your Christmas Stocking OK, thanks mate" he declared before hanging up.

A few moments more thought passed before Rogers looked down at the telephone and then dialled a number which in the briefest of moments connected him through to his right hand man Harcourt.

"Billy?" Rogers called "It's your Guvnor, listen put down whatever you are doing at the moment and get a couple of lads in a motor over to Scotland Yard, turns out our friendly defence barrister is talking to the law and I want to hear what he said."

"I doubt he will talk boss" Harcourt remarked "He doesn't know anything, in fact he knows even less now his place has burnt down."

"Even still, lets be safe rather than sorry" Rogers cautioned "Take him down to Thorpe's place and give him a thorough going over, its not like we weren't planning to retire him from the front line anyway and while you are about it I think it is time our little Security Service friend was put out to pasture as well."

"OK, I'll warm up a couple of the lads and a clean set of wheels now Guv" Harcourt agreed "I can give Thorpe a bell about our Security Service friend, I am sure he has something that will be of use."

"Sounds good to me, thanks" Rogers confirmed "Oh by the way, nice job with Griffiths lot earlier, sounded like fun."

"Yes it was rather" Harcourt had to admit "Bit like the good old days Guv."

"Indeed it was" Rogers readily agreed, raising a glass of finest scotch in a toast.

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"Good afternoon" Evans declared as soon as he walked into the interview room and pointedly sat down at the small table set in the centre where seated directly opposite was a thoroughly fed up looking McWilliam.

"Sorry to keep you waiting but as I am sure you will appreciate it has been rather a busy few days around here" Evans remarked.

"My time is precious Divisional Commander" McWilliam responded tersely.

"You can say that again" Evans remarked wryly "I've just seen how much you charge which brings up a question, how did Rogers and his bunch afford your somewhat expensively priced services?"

"Paid in cash actually" McWilliam admitted "I was quite surprised myself when the payment arrived."

"I bet you were" Evans responded "Interestingly according to my research here provided by the best boffins in the building you don't seem to have paid anything into either your personal or business accounts for over two weeks now."

"What gives you the right to go rifling through my accounts?" McWilliam protested.

"Ever since you became the legal representative of that no good scum bag Rogers" Evans calmly explained "So where is the money?"

"I err haven't been to the bank yet" McWilliam responded with some obvious hesitation.

"More likely you are taking the opportunity to hide it under the proverbial floor boards for a rainy day" Evans remarked "Not thinking about trying to dodge around the Inland Revenue are we only a chunk of dough that size must have a fair bit of tax payable upon it I would have thought."

"Of course not" McWilliam replied "My business is one hundred percent legitimate and above board."

"Oh in that case you won't mind if I just check with my brother in law then only he happens to work at the Inland Revenue as it happens and he owes me a few favours" Evans informed McWilliam which had the desired result.

"There's no need for that Divisional Commander" McWilliam quickly came back "Look, ask your questions and I will try and tell you what you know but without the evidence that was burnt it may well not be much."

"Oh by strange quirk of fate we were able to obtain copies of all the original prosecution evidence along with a few other juicy tit bits just an hour ago Mr McWilliam" Evans informed him "Now it is a simple case of filling in the blanks, specifically what exactly was this 'new' evidence that you collated and submitted to the Court of Appeal as strangely no one seems to be able to find it now the hearing is all over, done and dusted."

"All right" McWilliam gave in "Four weeks ago I get a telephone call from a guy who works for Rogers" he explained "Claimed that he had irrefutable new evidence from a trial in the United States that the method used to collect, analyse and match the DNA evidence used to convict Rogers and co was unsafe and could be used as the basis of a cast iron appeal."

"So this evidence just fluttered in through the window I take it?" Evans asked.

"No of course not" McWilliam protested "I was given a contact number of a guy in the United States Department of Justice who sent me through copies of all the documentation, a summary of which was also sent to the Justice Department and the Home Office for the attention of the Home Secretary."

"Now you see that is where it all gets murky yet interesting" Evans explained "I have just been on the telephone to the Home Office who confirm they did indeed receive a report from the US Justice Department but that it only contained a discussion document on potential risks of over reliance on DNA evidence, nothing at all mentioned any trial or appeal that may or may not have taken place over there."

"But I had the documents" McWilliam protested "They came despatched in a huge parcel, all official looking, they even had the official watermark on the paper that the documents were printed on."

"I should point out Mr McWilliam" Evans looked him squarely in the eyes "According to the Commander's opposite number in Washington D.C. there has been no appeal trials of any kind relating to any doubt over DNA evidence methods for over three years, furthermore at no time did their Justice Department send any consignment of documentation to any solicitor based in the UK. They would not have done in the first place, all such material would have gone via our embassy in the US to the Home Secretary direct and he never got them."

"But I had the documentation" McWilliam continued to protest, now at a total loss as to what was going on here "A couple of Rogers guys even ensured it was picked up from the airport and brought to my offices... oh dear" he realised the significance as the penny dropped "I have been had haven't I?"

"I'd say like a kipper mate" Evans agreed "Never mind, you are not the first nor will you be the last to be tricked by Rogers and his minions. One thing though I would check those banknotes he paid you with *very* carefully as those forged twenties that were floating around about six weeks ago may well have come from a printing works Rogers himself set up."

"As if my day could not possibly get any worse" McWilliam slumped in his seat, placing his face in his hands in total disbelief.

"Believe me Mr McWilliam, you will find Franklin Rogers has made the art of lying convincingly and talking his way out of the tightest of situations something of a science but hey look on the bright side" Evans tried to console him "If the money is fake then you don't have to pay any tax on it, you still can't spend it mind."

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"So this is the Commander's desk?" Megan asked as she relaxed back in the large chair, her small size meaning it almost dwarfed her.

"It is indeed" Jack confirmed "You are now sitting in what is probably the most powerful seat in the country."

"Wow..." Megan remarked as took in the moment "Just one thing, why is there a model train on the desk."

"Oh that?" Jack looked towards the front edge of the desk where a OO scale model of a British Railways Class G2a locomotive was sitting on its little section of scale track atop a wooden plinth "It is what I think Sir Richard calls a 'Commanderism', it changes fairly frequently. Between you and me I think the Commander swaps the models around about once a month to see if the Home Secretary is paying attention each time he pops up for a chat."

"Oh my gawd..." Megan looked across at the clock on the side "Do you realise its four o'clock?" My mother will be wondering where I have been.

"Don't panic" Jack reassured her "I have called in a favour with Sir Richard, he has called our headmaster and your parents and straightened everything out. Probably wouldn't do to make a habit of it though."

"Even still, I think we ought to be making a move" Megan suggested "I think our work here is done don't you think?"

"Perhaps you are right" Jack admitted whereupon taking Megan by the hand, they proceeded to leave the office, quietly closing the door behind them.

"Oh hello, who is the creep?" Megan asked as they headed down the main corridor only to notice the rather pensive form of Frobisher coming from the direction of the lifts with a look of steaming fury on his face.

"Ten gets you one he is a politician" Jack remarked "it is the cheap badly tailored suit that usually gives it away."

As they rounded the corner, they bumped into Evans coming the other way.

"Oh hello guys" Evans called "You off then?"

"Well I think our work is pretty much done here" Jack admitted "Oh by the way, there looks to be some sleaze ball floating around, smells like a political type so I'd watch your back Sir."

"Thanks" Evans responded "I can already guess who it is though."

His fears were duly confirmed as soon as he rounded the corner and saw Frobisher prowling around the corridor like a stubborn cat looking for a particularly elusive mouse.

"Ah, Divisional Commander, a word in your ear if you please" Frobisher demanded with a tone of controlled anger in his voice.

"Oh Mr Frobisher, fancy meeting you here" Evans responded with a notable tone of fake enthusiasm.

"Just what the hell gives you the right to arrest and detain one of this country's leading defence barristers?" Frobisher demanded to know.

"If you are referring to Mr McWilliam..." Evans began.

"You bet your job, badge and wife I am" Frobisher confirmed.

"...he has been helping us with our inquiries" Evans explained "Seems he hasn't had a really good day all things considered what with his offices being burnt to the ground in the early hours of this morning and now that he has confirmed a few key facts, he is as we speak on his way home with the grateful thanks of the Security Service for his co-operation."

"Nether the less, my office should have been consulted in advance" Frobisher protested "He is an extremely important person who has many connections within Government who will not look too kindly on him being dragged into New Scotland Yard to 'assist with you inquiries' as you so poetically put it."

"I let him off the potential case of tax evasion we accidentally stumbled across earlier" Evans responded "What more do you want, in fact what authority do you have in this matter only it seems every time I turn around there you are like the proverbial bad penny. If I didn't know better I would wager that you have something to hide."

"This is not about me" Frobisher quickly responded, eager to divert the subject of conversation away from himself "This is about due process. You are leaving Franklin Rogers and his business associates well alone as requested I trust?"

"Oh yes" Evans responded all innocently "I've not been anywhere near him, wouldn't know him from Adam if I passed him in the street for that matter."

"Good" Frobisher replied before something occurred to him which struck him as a bit odd "Am I going mad or did I just see two school children on the top floor of New Scotland Yard?" he asked.

"Sorry?" Evans responded as he quickly thought of an innocent answer "Oh them" he declared with fake realisation "They are helping us out, advising on our schools liaison programme, you know teach the kiddies about crime prevention, road safety, that sort of thing. All community based pro law enforcement publicity just as you would like."

"Yes I see" Frobisher remarked "Well keep up the good work" he informed Evans "Must dash, meeting with the Home Secretary."

"Give him my regards" Evans called after Frobisher as he hurried away down the corridor.

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Stepping outside into the street from a side entrance of New Scotland Yard, McWilliam pressed the button on the handle shaft of his umbrella and put it above his head to protect himself as the rain continued to pour down incessantly.

Thinking about what had just taken place, McWilliam crossed the street and, unable to see a cab available in sight, decided to head along up to Victoria Street where he hoped he might have better luck although given how badly his day had gone so far he was not overly optimistic.

As he emerged from the end of Broadway into Victoria Street, he looked despondently as his pessimism proved correct, there not being a single free taxi in sight in either direction which forced him to resort to his alternate plan, walking to Westminster and taking the Underground from there.

All the time he was walking along the street, McWilliam was being tracked, not only by a Security Service officer lurking in the shadows on the opposite side of the street but also by a fairly innocuous looking silver saloon car whose two occupants were waiting for the correct moment.

McWilliam looked up and down the street as he reached Parliament Square where he was about to cross the road, this being seen by the occupants of the car as the right time to strike.

"All right Charlie, go get him" Harcourt called to the driver whereupon the car sharply accelerated ahead with much squealing of tyres until it was brought to a sharp halt alongside McWilliam who had no time to either realise what was going on or defend himself before he was unceremoniously snatched off the street and then bundled into the back of the car.

"Right, got him!" Harcourt called up front to the driver, "Put your foot down Charlie, put your foot down" he called with a calm controlled sense of urgency.

"Right you are Guv" the driver confirmed, planting his foot hard back on the accelerator which saw the car move off again at high speed, leaving behind a cloud of tyre smoke and traffic swerving all over the place as Charlie forced his way through.

In the shadows of the building opposite where McWilliam had just been snatched from, the Security Officer who had witnessed the whole event did nothing, merely adjusted his uniform overcoat and carried on down the street as if nothing had happened.

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"Well Commander Baker, there it is" Cassini remarked as he passed her his binoculars so she too could get a close look at a lock-up located beneath and within the arches below the main line that runs to and from the south end of London Bridge Station.

Their vantage point was a recently refurbished but still vacant former warehouse building that overlooked both the railway line and the rabbit warren of arches and passageways that nestled beneath it.

"You know for a supposed major international importer and exporter of fine goods" Baker remarked as she scanned the area through the binoculars "It is not exactly the most salubrious looking place is it?"

"Maybe" Cassini agreed "but then again perhaps having a large illuminated neon sign saying 'Illegal Arms Smuggling & Criminal Fixing Service' might just be bit too much to expect."

"So how do we get in there?" Baker asked "That place must be a complete maze down there and with those narrow access streets we can't drive in, we would stand out like a sore thumb."

"Beats me" Cassini was forced to admit as he took the binoculars back "Either way the lights are on so someone is home which means for the moment we hold until they have gone home for the evening."

"Well the good news if you can call it that" Baker remarked as she looked around the surrounding area "is that I can cover you from pretty much any direction from this building" she confirmed as she opened her case and took out her sniper rifle.

"Are you married to that thing?" Cassini asked out of curiosity "only you never seem to travel anywhere without it."

"You would have thought so" Baker admitted "There are times when I see more of this thing than I do of my husband."

"Does he know what you do?" Cassini asked "I mean what you really do."

"Heck no" Baker responded "He thinks I work in the Peterborough traffic division."

"Bet that keeps car crime down" Cassini mused wryly as he continued to scan the area until he spotted something approaching.

"Hello, who's this?" Cassini asked as he trained his binoculars on a silver car that was slowly approaching the target premises, splashing through the rough pothole ridden narrow access track that squeezed its way between the various railway viaducts.

"Looks like we have visitors" Baker remarked as she rejoined Cassini at the window and looked below over his shoulder.

"Here, isn't that bloke who just got out that Harcourt guy we were talking about earlier?" Cassini asked as they observed one of the vehicle's occupants get out of the front passenger seat and go over to the front corrugated metal door of the lock-up where he knocked loudly three times.

"I reckon that's him" Baker agreed as they watched while two heavily built men emerged from the lock-up and with Harcourt, proceeded to the back of the car where they then unceremoniously dragged a bound, blindfolded and gagged man from the vehicle before bundling him inside.

"Remind me never to hire these guys if they set up a limo service" Cassini remarked "Looks like someone is in for an unpleasant evening."

"I didn't recognise whoever it was, did you?" Baker asked.

"No idea" Cassini admitted but then something else attracted his attention which certainly caught him off guard.

"What the hell is this?" Cassini asked incredulously as he and Baker both observed a Security Service patrol car pull up the access track and brake to a halt immediately behind the silver car.

"I haven't a clue" Baker remarked as she reached for her radio "Control from Lima Mike Nine Zero One" she called "Has anyone dispatched a patrol car to the lock-ups near Blue Anchor Junction by any chance?"

"Nothing is showing on the system" the dispatcher back in the main Control Room confirmed "In fact we received specific orders to give the area a very wide berth for the next few hours."

"Well someone better tell the driver of patrol car Lima Charlie Three Three Five as he is about to stumble into the middle of a whole heap of trouble" Baker declared.

"What is this guy doing?" Cassini asked as he watched the officer emerge from the patrol car before proceeding inside the lock-up.

"Trying to get himself killed by the looks of it" Baker admitted "Of course there is another possibility..."

"Like chummy here is Franklin Rogers man inside the Security Service for example?" Cassini ventured.

"It leaves a particularly unpleasant taste in the mouth" Baker admitted "but regrettably it fits the facts."

"Take a seat Mr McWilliam" Harcourt insisted as he was thrown into a rickety old wooden chair in a dusty corner of the lock-up and then bound to it before the blindfold was then removed.

"Who are you people?" McWilliam demanded to know, a tremble of fear in his voice.

"Oh I think you know full well exactly who we are and who I work for" Harcourt declared in a raised voice which became necessary as a train rattled past directly overhead.

"What is this all about then?" McWilliam asked, desperate for some way out of this seemingly desperate situation he had found himself suddenly thrust into.

"A little birdie tells me you got your collar felt by the law this afternoon" Harcourt announced "Now needless to say my boss has concerns, worries that maybe you have been a bit naughty and told the old bill about you and my boss's little arrangement."

"I swear to you I did not tell them a thing, honest" McWilliam pleaded.

"You know" Harcourt remarked as another train rattled past overhead "I'd love to believe you and send you on your way with a cheery wave and a sorry for the inconvenience but what you fail to realise is that this is a lot bigger than you could possibly imagine."

"I told you" McWilliam reiterated "I said nothing."

"You were in New Scotland Yard for almost two hours" Harcourt responded "That is a hell of a lot of time to say nothing in. I should remind you solely for your illumination of course that my boss and his associated investors are extremely powerful people with connections in all the right places."

McWilliam said nothing, he merely looked on with a mixture of fear and dread as they were joined by a uniformed Security Service officer, the same one who had arrived in the patrol car a few moments earlier.

"See what did I tell you?" Harcourt declared as the officer joined them "Very well connected aren't we Officer Everley?"

"And very good payers as well" Everley responded with an evil laugh.

"Indeed" Harcourt confirmed "It has been a pleasure working with you" he informed Everley before suddenly producing a silenced semi-automatic pistol and shooting the officer squarely in the forehead, killing him instantly and sending his lifeless body crashing to the floor.

"Oh my God, what have you done?" McWilliam called out with a mixture of shock and horror.

"Disposed of a potentially compromised, no longer required and rather expensive to maintain asset" Harcourt calmly explained as he re-holstered his gun and silently indicated to a couple of his men to remove the body "and if that does not convince you of just how powerful we are, I really don't see what else will convince you."

"Divisional Commander Evans wanted to know what happened to the defence copies of all the evidence presented at the original trial and the appeal" McWilliam relented and duly confirmed "Apparently all of the Security Service archives on the trial disappeared and they wanted access to my copies."

"I should bloody well hope their copies disappeared" Harcourt remarked "You don't know the trouble and expense I had to go through to get hold of them."

"Well all my records all went up in smoke last night when my office caught fire" McWilliam explained "but apparently they have now found copies of the original investigation material although the Divisional Commander wouldn't say where they came from."

"Interesting" Harcourt remarked as he took a step back to consider this surprising revelation "Well it would seem you have just become useful again" he then declared.

"Oh wonderful..." McWilliam responded with a distinct lack of enthusiasm "Can I go now?"

"Oh no, no, no, no, no..." Harcourt waved his finger menacingly "I need you to stay right here whilst I and the lads go and have a chat with the old man" he confirmed before nodding at his associates who proceeded to gag McWilliam and further secure his bonds to ensure he would not escape.

"Don't go away now" Harcourt sarcastically called before clicking his fingers whereupon he and his associates swiftly departed, leaving McWilliam alone with just the rumbling of passing trains to distract him.

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With the rain still pouring down outside, pattering against the window and the sun setting over the city, the Commander was dozing off in the chair at Tracy's bedside. He had not really had any proper sleep for over thirty six hours now and was starting to feel the results.

As the Commander felt his head get heavier and start to drift off to sleep he suddenly awoke again with a start when he felt something, his hand being squeezed. Looking across at Tracy he realised her hand was moving, slowly but definitely, squeezing his own hand.

"Tracy?" the Commander called leaning forward to look at her still closed eyes which for the first time seemed to be exhibiting some sort of movement, not much but there was definitely something there.

As the Commander looked closer, the constant steady rate of the heart monitor began to noticeably increase its rate.

"Doctor" the Commander responded before realising that he would not have been heard in that room with the door closed so he quickly got up before going over to and opening the door.

"Doctor!" the Commander shouted down the corridor in the direction of the medical staff office "Get down here, I think she is coming around."

A matter of moments later the duty doctor and other medical staff were rushing down the corridor and proceeding inside the room.

"What have we got?" the doctor asked as he calmly took charge of the situation.

"She moved" the Commander explained as he stood to one side but still kept a hold of her hand whilst the doctor checked her over "Her heart rate is going up, look."

"Hello, can you hear me?" the doctor called whereupon he and the Commander noticed that Tracy's lips were moving ever so slightly.

"Come on love, show us a sign here" the Commander urged.

"Yep, she is definitely becoming more responsive" the doctor agreed "Let us just hope that she does not come around too fast as that may cause more damage than it solves."

"Slow and steady I take it?" the Commander asked.

"That's the general idea yes" the doctor confirmed as he administered an injection whilst the Commander looked on apprehensively.

Very slowly however Tracy's eyelids began to flicker before they began to open ever so slightly as she started to come around.

"Hello Tracy love" the Commander called, hugely relieved to see her open her eyes at last.

"Take it steady please" the doctor warned before stepping back.

"Where am I?" Tracy very weakly asked as her eyes got used to seeing light again for the first time in almost two days.

"Secure section of Charing Cross Hospital" the Commander explained "You had us all worried for a while there love" he remarked.

"How do you feel Ms Caverner?" the doctor asked.

"Like I have been shot" Tracy responded, her voice still quite quiet and weak but noticeably she was now more responsive as she tried to sit up in the bed.

"Whoa there" the doctor cautioned "You are in quite a delicate state so I would strongly advise against any sudden movement" he informed her, instead providing a compromise by lifting up the top end of the bed so that she was at least partially facing upright.

"So have you got the buggers then?" Tracy asked looking across at the Commander and managing a weak smile.

"Err no, sorry love" the Commander admitted "It has all got very politically complicated I am afraid."

“You do need to rest” the doctor strongly advised “The damage to you caused by the gunshots plus the stress of the subsequent surgery was quite extreme.”

“So I guess I am not going anywhere anytime soon then?” Tracy asked.

“Not for a few days at the very least I would have thought” the doctor admitted “There are still a few tests we need to run on you which we could not do until you had regained consciousness.”

“All right” Tracy weakly gave in “You do your tests whilst my darling husband here gets out there and brings me the head of the bastard responsible for this mess.”

“I’m going nowhere” the Commander responded reaffirming his hold of Tracy’s hand.

“I can’t do anything stuck here” Tracy instructed “You are needed back at the office, kicking in doors and dragging people into interview rooms, you can’t do that in here.”

“All right love” the Commander reluctantly agreed “I’ll check in back at the office, see what is going on then I will be straight back, I promise” he confirmed before leaning forward and kissing her.

“See you later love” Tracy called as the Commander was about to leave “and be careful please.”

“I will” the Commander confirmed “I love you, see you later.”

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“Message from Charing Cross Hospital Sir” Hendrickson declared as he rushed into the office and handed Evans the note “Divisional Commander Caverner has regained consciousness, it looks like she is going to be all right.”

“At last some good news” Evans responded, delighted to hear the news “Well I have some more to add, I have just been on the telephone with my opposite number in the United States and it transpires that despite some very carefully put together background story in all the right places, this supposed new DNA evidence thing that Rogers used as his defence is about as real as my chances of being the next Captain of the Welsh National Rugby team.”

“Well my grandmother always said anything is possible” Hendrickson admitted “But she could have been wrong.”

“I think it is about time the gloves came off” Evans declared as he stood up and went over to the coat hook to collect his uniform overcoat “Take a leaf out of the Commander’s book, drag that thug Harcourt in and tell Frobisher to stick his complaints of political inconvenience where the sun doesn’t shine.”

“What, Croydon?” the Commander asked as he came into the office, just catching the end of Evans declaration.

“I was thinking more of a Bank Holiday weekend in Pontypool really” Evans admitted “Anyway, what are you doing here if I may ask Sir?”

“Tracy told me to get out there and kick some backsides in my usual inimitable style” the Commander admitted “and trust me you don’t want to argue with her. So where do we stand?”

“At the moment it looks like our way into Rogers organisation is through a weak link by the name of Harcourt” Hendrickson explained.

“Harcourt is Rogers chief thug” Evans added “he is going around taking out many of Rogers competition all across the city but thanks to the likes of Frobisher warning us off every ten minutes officially we can’t touch him.”

“Since when has this service ever taken notice of two faced little Muppets like Frobisher?” the Commander asked.

“Exactly the attitude I was about to adopt” Evans admitted “I have Commander’s Cassini and Baker watching the place of a Garry Thorpe, he is we believe Rogers ‘fixer’ who has been called in to provide the hardware, logistical support and we suspect brought in the talent and equipment for the Trafalgar Square shooting.”

“In which case” the Commander declared “I am going to get a change of uniform, have a car meet me outside in ten minutes and we will pop in for a chat.”

“I’m coming with you” Evans confirmed “By the way has your aim improved at all in the last ten years.”

“Err no” the Commander was forced to admit.

“In which case perhaps we had better have someone along who can shoot straight” Evans confirmed.

“I’ll go” Hendrickson immediately volunteered.

“Nice thought but I need you here watching the shop” Evans responded “But make sure you have the cavalry on standby in case things get stick all right?”

“Yes Sir” Hendrickson agreed before hurriedly leaving.

“Meantime I will check in on Commander Fuller” Evans confirmed “See if he has come up with anything new we can use against Rogers, Harcourt, Thorpe or even for that matter Frobisher.”

“You are not investigating Frobisher are you?” the Commander wryly remarked as he opened the connecting door through to his own office.



“Of course not” Evans sarcastically responded with a whimsical smile “That would be going against the rules wouldn’t it and I would have to answer to the Administrator General.”

“Yes you would wouldn’t you” the Commander agreed before heading off into his own office where he found Sir Richard sitting behind his desk.

“Don’t you have a home to go to?” the Commander wryly asked.

“Sybil is out at a function this evening, my office has just lost all power thanks to the useless Government issue Polish electricians they sent to rewire the place and its raining, again” Sir Richard admitted “But on the bright side, I’m delighted to hear Tracy is awake and going to be all right.”

“I am so relieved” the Commander admitted “I really thought for a while there I had lost her.”

“The way you looked and were acting at one point by her bedside” Sir Richard remarked “We were beginning to think we were losing you as well.”

“So what have you been up to all day then?” the Commander asked “I know you, you must have been doing something sneaky and under hand.”

“I got a telephone call from a certain resourceful young lad and his good lady” Sir Richard admitted “Turns out he is turning into a bit of a detective is little Jack. Anyway he managed to obtain a couple of keys that once we had followed the proverbial yellow brick road led us to Tracy’s archived copies of all the original case material.”

“The old something for a rainy day theory” the Commander confirmed “All senior and some not so senior officers of the Service usually keep something tucked away just in case something goes wrong one day.”

“Just as well really” Sir Richard admitted “If it wasn’t for that we would have no evidence left what with the Solicitors office burning down and the Security Service copies all disappearing three weeks ago.”

“I bet that will make Rogers a bit nervous” the Commander commented “After all he was probably thinking that with all the evidence gone, even if the new defence material was debunked there would be no prosecution evidence available anymore for a retrial.”

“And you can bet top dollar that he already knows about it” Sir Richard agreed “He seems to have people everywhere.”

“Well, how do I look?” the Commander asked as he fastened the gold buttons on his best dress uniform tunic.

“Depends where you are going” Sir Richard admitted.

“The business premises of one Mr Garry Thorpe apparently” the Commander confirmed before something occurred to him “Jack’s girl Megan, isn’t she a Thorpe?”

“Garry is her uncle” Sir Richard confirmed “The link was found when she recognised an old photograph in Tracy’s little archive as being that of her Grandfather David Thorpe who used to work for Rogers in a fixer capacity. Turns out Garry took over the ‘family business’ and also seems to have potential connections to arms smuggling amongst other colourful activities.”

“What a tangled web we weave” the Commander admitted “Where does this Thorpe guy work out of?”

“You’ll like this” Sir Richard remarked “His legitimate businesses operates out of a couple of lock-ups in the railway arches beneath the main line to the south of London Bridge station.”

“Ah, definitely my kind of place” the Commander responded as he checked his faithful old six shot revolver was loaded before putting it in his holster “I best get going.”

“I’ll keep an eye on the shop” Sir Richard agreed “Haven’t got anywhere else to be anyway.”

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“...so if I take that from that and then cross reference it with those figures over there I get...” Fuller mumbled to himself as he worked out some figures on his laptop screen.

“Looks interesting love, what is it?” Jennifer Caverner suddenly called as she had crept up behind him unseen due to the amount of concentration he was devoting to what he was working on.

“Oh hello dear” Fuller looked up whereupon they kissed “Oh this? I was trying to find something on this Frobisher character but I have never seen so many files hidden behind so many sophisticated firewalls.”

“I am afraid you’ve lost me” Jennifer admitted as she sat down next to Fuller and put her arm around him for much needed support.

“Ninety nine times out of a hundred, you can give me a name and within a day at most I can, through a comprehensive file search tell you all about them from what they regularly have for breakfast to their intimate banking details and the name of their pet goldfish” Fuller explained “but this Frobisher guy, there is virtually next to nothing beyond the official Downing Street press briefing biography which he probably wrote himself.”

“Well there goes my faith in computer security” Evans remarked as he joined them.

“Given how sloppy the security of data is with Government agencies and their contractors these days” Fuller commented “your faith does not have far to travel Sir.”

“Isn’t there anything you can find on this Frobisher guy?” Jennifer asked.

“I decided to try a completely different approach” Fuller confirmed “Instead of investigating him directly which was getting me nowhere, I decided to take a look at his associates and that is when I found this” he called up an electronic bank statement on the screen “This is an account in the name of an Edina Frobisher who it is claimed to be his wife and also constituency chairman back in his parliamentary seat of Dormanshire East.”

“Where?” Evans asked.

“A small Dunny-on-the-Wold type constituency over in the Norfolk Broads” Fuller confirmed “Basically a very safe seat that if it has a blue rosette on it, they vote for it. The question is if this is such a safe seat where basically like most of these the Member of Parliament only has to turn up there once every five years before bugging off to fill in his expenses claim, how come his constituency chairman was responsible for handling donations and campaign funds amounting to over two hundred and fifty grand at the last General Election?”

“That is a hell of a lot of posters and leaflets” Jennifer confirmed “Sounds like a bit of a money laundering operation to me.”

“Oh but it gets better” Fuller continued “This Edina Frobisher is the account holder and manager yet Frobisher is not married, never has been, Edina does not exist.”

“Sounds like some classic tax evasion scam” Evans remarked “Trouble is if we were to arrest every politician and councillor in the country who was bent or on the take there would be hardly any left.”

“Then I decided to look at exactly where all these generous contributions were coming from, see if I could establish a link there” Fuller carried on “The largest of these contributors is the estate of a wealthy manor house who’s owner supposedly died ten years ago leaving a legacy out of which certain people seem to be receiving a sizeable contribution on an annual basis” he confirmed as he produced a list on the screen of some very notable people in receivership of these donations.

“There are a few names I recognise” Jennifer confirmed as she read the list on the screen in front of her “I have even driven a few of these guys around town from time to time.”

“I am beginning to see why Frobisher doesn’t want any investigation” Evans remarked “There are some seriously well connected people here all of whom would probably be very un-cooperative if asked where their steady supply of readies was coming from, and that is just from the taxman’s point of view.”

“Well for the last hour or so I have been doing some digging around into this wealthy estate” Fuller explained “It belonged to a Lord Reville of Wanstead, however it transpires the title was sold about twelve years ago to an unidentified buyer who then picked up the estate cheap in lieu of death duties or something.”

“Wanstead is one stop up from Leytonstone on the Central Line” Jennifer remarked “Hell of a coincidence.”

“OK, wild theory time here people” Fuller declared “I can’t prove it at the moment but I think there is a very strong possibility that this supposed Lord Reville of Wansted title is actually owned by Franklin Rogers or one of his dubious associates, the ‘death’ of the title holder ten years ago conveniently coincides with when he was slung in jail and I think it may well be a front for making generous donations to people of influence to get them on his side.”

“Plus evade the taxman into the bargain” Evans remarked “Very clever but the question is can we prove it at least sufficiently enough to get Frobisher off of our backs?”

“I think that may not be necessary” Jennifer remarked as she looked up at the internal CCTV monitors which Fuller had on all the time to one side observing Frobisher’s movements through the building since his arrival earlier “Isn’t that the top floor?”

“Oh yes” Fuller confirmed “Frobisher has been hanging around like a bad smell for some time now, he’s been on his mobile for the last half an hour to someone and I am willing to bet it is not his mother or his non-existent wife for that matter.”

“Well I only ask” Jennifer confirmed “as the Commander is up there and any minute now...”

“Oh this should be fun” Evans remarked “Anyone got the kettle on, I am going to enjoy this!” he declared, rubbing his hands with gleeful expectation.

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As the Commander came out of his office, the first thing his experienced eye caught was Frobisher lurking around down the other end of the corridor but before he could reach the lifts, he was seen.

“Ah!” Frobisher called in a very demanding tone “Administrator General, a word please.”

“Oh I can think of two” the Commander drolly responded “and the second one is off.”

“Ah the legendary Commander’s wit” Frobisher responded as he approached “Or at least half of it anyway.”

“For a politician that was not bad” the Commander admitted “Now, what do you want as I am rather busy.”

“I demand a full internal review of the whole mess we find ourselves in” Frobisher demanded “In addition you will immediately place on suspension all officers of this service who have attempted against official orders from my office to investigate and harass Mr Rogers and his associates.”

“On whose authority?” the Commander asked.

“Mine” Frobisher responded, a little take aback by the Commander’s question.

“In which case sunshine you can go and shove it where the sun does not shine” the Commander confirmed with controlled anger apparent in his voice “You have no authority here and the day this service answers to useless two faced morons such as yourself will be the day hell freezes over.”

“You could lose your job for that remark” Frobisher angrily pointed out.

“Well so far I have come this close to losing my wife” the Commander admitted before grabbing Frobisher firmly by the arm and slamming him face first into the wall “All that thanks to people you and your grubby disgusting associates let free onto the streets because you are in his pocket and have things to hide methinks.”

“You can’t do this” Frobisher protested in pain as the Commander jammed his arm behind his back meaning he could not fight back.

“I seem to be doing well so far” the Commander admitted “So Mr Frobisher, here is the deal, I suspect you are rather good at them. You get your overpaid fat arse out of sight and out of this building, crawl back under whatever dark damp rock you crawled out from beneath and maybe, just maybe I won’t have two of my more muscular colleagues escort you down the cells where you will rot for a few weeks, assuming we remember we dumped you down there that is on charges of perverting the course of justice and obstruction of a law enforcement officer in the course of his duty.”

“You won’t get away with this” Frobisher responded as the Commander let go and he collapsed to the floor still protesting “and your threats will get you nowhere.”

“I don’t do threats Mr Frobisher” the Commander calmly informed him with some very firmly implied menace “I do promises. One thing you may wish to consider is that if my wife were standing here now, I very much doubt the current close relationship you enjoy with your kneecaps would have much of a future. Good day, I do hope we never cross paths again.”

With that parting declaration the Commander turned smartly on his heels, adjusted his uniform tunic and calmly walked away into the waiting lift car leaving Frobisher in a heap on the floor contemplating his potential fates.

“Well that will be one for the Christmas Party compilation tape” Jennifer Caverner wryly remarked as she waited by the drivers door of the car as the Commander appeared from the main entrance of New Scotland Yard “Fuller had the live CCTV feed from the top floor playing as you and Frobisher had your little chat just now” she explained.

“Frobisher and I had a little discussion I’ll admit” the Commander ruefully agreed “Anyway I bumped into Carlson from Traffic on the way down, he is having a couple of his less than careful lads tow away that guys car off to the pound as we speak.”

“Remind me never to get on the wrong side of you Sir” Evans remarked as he got in the back of the car with the Commander getting in the front.

“Very wise” Jennifer agreed “The last time someone like Frobisher tried to cross swords with the boss here, the city engineers spent three weeks scraping bits of various Civil Servants out of a very large hole in Westminster Bridge.”

“Speaking of Bridges” the Commander declared as Jennifer started the car “Lets go and pay a visit to this Thorpe guy and see what we can rattle out of him.”

“You got it Sir” Jennifer agreed as she started the engine and they accelerated away into the rain sodden early evening traffic.

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“This had better be good, I’ve got ten years of television to catch up on” Rogers declared in response to the rather business like sounding knock on his door whereupon Harcourt entered and proceeded to stand alongside him.

“We may have a potential problem Sir” Harcourt informed his boss who continued to remain relaxed in his huge easy chair smoking an enormous cigar.

“I’m not interested in problems son, I’m only interested in solutions” Rogers responded emphatically “Solutions mean problems solved, competitors and obstacles removed from the equation and my accountant counting more profit than can possibly be fitted into a fleet of bank accounts.”

“Someone seems to have found a copy of the original investigation evidence which is now in the hands of the Security Service” Harcourt informed his boss.

“I take it from this revelation that you have had a little chat with our legal friend?” Rogers asked.

“Indeed” Harcourt confirmed “We have him on ice so to speak down at Thorpe’s place.”

“And our friend in the Security Service?” Rogers looked up at Harcourt, taking the cigar slowly out of his mouth.

“Turned up right on time as planned” Harcourt confirmed “Let’s just say he is no longer on the payroll.”

“Anything that saves me money is always a good thing” Rogers agreed “I do hope you have left the body somewhere prominent for the Security Service to find?”

“He is still back at Thorpe’s gaff” Harcourt confirmed “Keeping our friendly lawyer company.”

“In which case I think it is time we sat back, relaxed and let the Security Service make the next move” Rogers declared as he once more relaxed back in his huge chair “Drink?” he proffered the decanter to Harcourt who understandably slightly confused duly accepted.

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"Remind me when this is over to file a formal complaint with the Meteorological Office" Cassini remarked as he and Baker looked across the narrow street in the direction of the archway lock-ups as the rain continued to pour down in almost monsoon like conditions.

"If you want a counter signature on that I'm game" Baker agreed.

Cassini was almost relieved when the telephone in his pocket began to ring which meant that his dash out into the rain was now postponed for a few moments more.

"Cassini here" he answered whereupon Baker could tell from his expression he was more than a bit surprised by who it was that was calling him "Err yes Sir, just off Spa Road, very well Sir" he confirmed before hanging up.

"Who was that?" Baker asked.

"Looks like we are about to have company" Cassini explained as he indicated down the narrow access road between the two parallel running viaducts towards a dark coloured saloon car that was approaching them, its headlights piercing the miserable rain sodden gloom of early evening, an atmosphere emphasised by the nature of the area they were in.

"Is that who I think it is?" Baker asked with some understandable surprise as she thought she recognised the Commander sitting in the front passenger seat of the car as it drew near and stopped.

"In living colour it would appear" Cassini confirmed "Looks like the Chief is back on the job."

"Evening guys and gals" the Commander declared as he and Evans got out of the car before joining them beneath the limited shelter of the doorway they were in "Lovely evening isn't it?"

"Begging my pardon for seeming to be out of place Sir" Baker asked "but what are you doing here?"

"Tracy came round about an hour ago" the Commander explained "She basically informed me in no uncertain terms that it was time I stopped moping around by her bedside and got back to work."

"Welcome to the more salubrious part of North Bermondsey" Cassini declared rather unenthusiastically.

"What I can see of it" Evans remarked "This weather is beyond atrocious!"

"Jenny, park the motor somewhere inconspicuous and wait until I call you" the Commander instructed Jennifer.

"Yes Sir" Jennifer confirmed before starting the engine and then driving away.

"All right Commander Cassini, what's the S.P. on this place?" Evans asked.

"Thorpe operates out of as far as we can work out at least five interconnected archways along this section" Cassini confirmed "Now I am not certain about this but I think he may also rent some others in the immediate vicinity but these just down here seem to be the front door."

"Anyone home at the moment?" the Commander asked.

"Yes and no" Baker responded having to raise her voice to be heard above the sound of a packed twelve car rush hour train passing immediately above them "That Harcourt guy and a couple of his really ugly looking buddies turned up about an hour and a half ago with some poor blindfolded sod but left about twenty minutes later without him, then there was the Security Service patrol officer who followed them in."

"Did you recognise this officer?" Evans asked as another lengthy train rattled past, the rain continued to hammer down and the wind pick up, whistling and howling around them.

"Not anyone I recall no" Cassini confirmed "Also the way he calmly strolled into that place suggests he wasn't snooping around, indeed we reckon he was expected."

"The mole in the Security Service perhaps?" the Commander remarked "Well one of them at least."

"You think there might be more than one?" Cassini asked.

"The amount of money, real or forged that Rogers seems to be allegedly splashing around, it wouldn't surprise me" Evans admitted.

"All right then" the Commander declared as he checked his gun "I think it is time to drop in and say hello."



"This could be dangerous" Cassini warned "What if Harcourt and his buddies come back?"

"You have to admit he has a point" Evans agreed "I'm getting too old for all that sort of excitement, the nearest I get back in the Welsh valleys is sheep rustlers."

"All right" the Commander agreed "Here is how we will play it, Cassini, find a good observation point and keep a good look out."

"No problem Sir" Cassini agreed.

"Commander Baker" the Commander turned to her "Notwithstanding the charming weather, find yourself a reasonably dry perch somewhere overlooking the whole area and everyone in it and stay in constant radio communication."

"I knew I should have brought an umbrella" Baker admitted.

"All right, does everyone know what they are doing?" the Commander asked.

"Err no not really" Evans wryly admitted.

"Good, let's go then" the Commander declared.

As the rain continued to stream down from an ever increasingly dark sky and the packed commuter trains of the evening rush hour passed overhead, Evans and the Commander made their way quickly across the narrow street to the archways on the opposite side where they gathered either side of the main door into Thorpe's premises.

"You do realise of course we don't have such legal niceties as a warrant don't you?" Evans reminded the Commander.

"And that matters because?" the Commander asked with a wry smile.

"Just thought I would mention it you know, just in case" Evans admitted "So how do we get past this here locked door then?" he asked as they both looked down at the substantial padlock that was preventing them from going any further for the immediate future.

"I believe the Prime Minister just the other day called for a return to more traditional methods of doing things" the Commander wryly remarked.

"In other words kick the door in?" Evans suggested.

"Exactly" the Commander confirmed as he took a step back before lining up his foot and striking the door hard whereupon it gave way fairly easily, splintering the elderly and partially rotten old door frame.

"Perhaps we ought to send the crime prevention guy around to have a word" the Commander wryly suggested as they stepped inside "for a business premises in one of the less appetising parts of South London, his security isn't up to much is it?"

"I think there is a light switch just here" Evans confirmed as he scrabbled around in the near dark until he found it which when switched on revealed the area beneath the railway arches to be stacked from floor to ceiling with boxes upon boxes of electrical goods and other wares.

"I think we have just found the E.U. kettle mountain" the Commander remarked "No wonder it is so hard to get a decent cup of tea in this city recently."

"I would venture though that these are not a consignment of toasters somehow" Evans drew the Commander's attention to a stack of crates immediately behind the domestic goods marked 'Military and Law Enforcement Use Only' on the outside.

"Here chuck us that crowbar over there could you?" the Commander asked which once Evans had passed it to him, he then used to steadily ease off the lid of one of the military looking crates.

"Now what do we have here?" Evans remarked as once the lid was off they both looked inside.

"Your classic nine millimetre Uzi semi-automatic assault weapon by the looks of it" the Commander confirmed as he lifted one of the weapons from the crate, still wrapped in its manufacturer's original protective packaging "Very illegal when I last looked."

"I didn't know you knew so much about guns Commander?" Evans inquired.

"I don't" the Commander ruefully admitted "I just read Commander Baker's report, the only weapons I truly know is this old thing" he indicated his faithful but elderly six shot revolver "and your common or garden sawn off."

"What was that?" Evans suddenly looked around as in a momentary quiet pause between the trains that were continuing to constantly pass overhead, they both heard a muffled noise coming from somewhere within the building.

"Could be mice I suppose" the Commander remarked as he produced a small wind up torch from his pocket and trained its light down between a row of tall shelves towards the far end of the next archway over from where they were "Whole place is probably riddled with them."

"I don't think that's mice" Evans responded as he took the Commander's torch and proceeded down the narrow corridor towards what turned out to be a couple of offices where to his surprise he came across the bound, gagged and seated form of the defence solicitor McWilliam.

"Who is this guy?" the Commander asked as he caught up and saw the same thing Evans had just discovered.

"Permit me to introduce Franklin Rogers defence solicitor Mr McWilliam" Evans declared as in response to hearing someone was there, McWilliam began to protest with muffles.

"What's he doing here?" the Commander wondered as he went around behind him.

"Not a lot" Evans wryly responded as he proceeded to remove McWilliams's blindfold and gag.

"Oh no..." McWilliam remarked with a sense of resignation as he saw who it was that had come to his apparent rescue "Out of the frying pan and into the fire. This is all your fault you know."

"That's the thanks you get for rescuing the fella" the Commander remarked sarcastically.

"They knew I had been brought to Scotland Yard and they knew I had talked to you!" McWilliam angrily responded.

"We do have suspicions that your pal Rogers has contacts, probably well paid ones in the Service" Evans admitted.

"Err possibly not any more" the Commander called from over the far side of the cavern with some concern as he came across the body of the dead Security Service office, crudely stuffed onto a vacant space on a shelf.

"Oh" Evans remarked as he joined the Commander and saw the body for himself "One of yours?" he asked.

"I don't recognise him I'll admit" the Commander remarked as he knelt down to extract the dead officer's warrant card and opened it "Of course if we have met he wouldn't have had that ruddy great hole in him mind."

"Excuse me!" McWilliam protested from over the far side of the room "Can we worry about us live ones first?"

"Shut it!" both Evans and the Commander called back in unison as they looked at the rather blood stained warrant card.

"A Lieutenant Everley of Putney according to this" the Commander asked as he reached for his radio "Lima Alpha One to Control" he called but all that he received in response was static.

"Must be this place" Evans remarked looking around the gloomy interior of the archway "or the weather, or the trains overhead..."

"Or all three" the Commander grimly admitted as another train passed loudly directly overhead as if to emphasise the point "Control, come in..." he tried again, once more with no success.

The same problem also meant Cassini and Baker could not contact them either and at that moment they had a really good reason to as they both observed with serious concern as Harcourt and his thugs returned in their car whilst another car drew up behind theirs from which Garry Thorpe emerged.

"Lima Alpha One, come in please" Cassini almost pleaded but once again received absolutely no response whatsoever so he tried a different approach "Baker, its Cassini, are you there?" he called.

"Yes I can hear you" Baker confirmed from her rooftop perch as she observed with understandable concern the situation developing below "I don't suppose you have managed to tell them they are about to have company by any chance as I can't get through."

"Can't get any response from them at all" Cassini confirmed "I think it may be time to send for the cavalry."

"Well..., well..., well..." Harcourt theatrically called as he and his seemingly ever present two accompanying heavies entered the warehouse with Thorpe "I do believe we have visitors, cook em."

"Right you are boss" one of the two heavies gruffly agreed before he and his colleague moved off deep into the interior of the warehouse.

"I hate to interrupt" the Commander called as he returned to where Evans was in the process of removing McWilliams's bonds to release him "but I fear we have trouble heading this way."

"Oh no, they are going to kill me I know it" McWilliam suddenly panicked as one of the heavies came into the part of the warehouse and made straight for them.

"My God he is a big fella" Evans commented upon seeing the formidable size of the guy approaching them but at that moment the sound of a crash and a scrambling noise behind them made Evans and the Commander turn around to see McWilliam making a run for it.

"Come back here you weasel!" the Commander called as he promptly gave chase deep into the inner caverns of the complex of arches and narrow passageways that made up the virtual rabbit warren of the various viaducts.

"What the...?" Evans responded as he proceeded to follow only to be stopped short in his tracks when the other heavy suddenly appeared from the shadows directly in front of him and clubbed him over the head with his huge fist, sending the Divisional Commander collapsing to the ground unconscious.

"Nice one Nigel" Harcourt remarked admirably as he joined the scene whereupon he knelt down alongside the unconscious Evans and took from him his weapon and warrant card "Take him to the car and be careful with him" he instructed.

"Right you are boss" the first heavy confirmed as effortlessly he lifted Evans up and proceeded to carry him away.

"Right, let's go and get the other one" Harcourt informed his remaining associate whereupon they set off down the murky passageway leaving Thorpe to look on with concern at these rapidly unfolding events.

McWilliam was desperate to escape, a desperation fed by the sound of someone's pursuing footsteps echoing down the various seemingly long forgotten passageways behind him.

Passing through from archway to archway, he carried on moving, not knowing where it was taking him, only knowing that keeping moving was his best and indeed probably only chance of survival.

Stumbling through old discarded packing crates and empty cable reels, McWilliam found a stairway that seemed to lead up to some form of exit judging by the rain water that was coming down it.

Hearing that his pursuer was getting closer judging by the approaching footsteps, McWilliam decided he had no choice and after throwing an old box aside out of his way, made his way up the rather slippery old brick staircase until he reached a rickety wooden door at the top.

Down below, the Commander had reached the area in and around the old staircase having tracked McWilliams's progress by a combination of seeing where things had very recently been disturbed as well as listening for his footsteps, not an easy task given the constant background noise of running trains and now the ominous rumbles of thunder.

"Where the hell are you going?" the Commander asked himself as he looked up the staircase before deciding to try his mobile telephone to see if he could get a signal.

"You couldn't make it up..." he remarked as after dialling the number for New Scotland Yard he got put in the automated queuing system so he decided to hang up and try someone else.

Working his way as quickly as his non-technically mind could work, he managed to find the direct dial number for Fuller's office.

"Simon?" the Commander called as soon he was answered "I need some help here."

"Boss?" Fuller responded with some surprise "I have a report on my screen that says back up is being sent your way, something about the heavy mob rolling in and you being out of contact to warn you."

"Tell me about it" the Commander confirmed "Listen, I am somewhere in the complex of arches south of London Bridge and to be honest I am lost."

"I tried pulling up plans of that area ten minutes ago when Commander Baker called in" Fuller confirmed "Unfortunately that area has been ripped up, rebuilt and then rebuilt again so many times the official blueprints I found consisted of several large black blobs with lines randomly drawn on it and a legend bearing the words 'here be dragons'."

"Great" the Commander responded "Ah well, wish me luck."

"Where are you going?" Fuller asked.

"Up a staircase to God knows where" the Commander admitted before hanging up and then heading up the old stairs.

At the top, a badly damaged wooden doorway blocked his way where it had been forced out of the way by someone and then fallen back into place. It took a severe shove with his shoulder against it to force it out of the way whereupon the Commander fell out onto a rough concrete surface only inches away from a passing speeding train.

"What the hell is this?" the Commander asked as he got back to his feet and looked around to see the remnants of an old station platform seemingly long since disused despite the railway lines running either side of it.

Looking across the other nine lines that ran parallel to where he was approximately a mile south of London Bridge amid speeding trains running in either direction, the Commander saw a figure trying to cross the tracks.

"McWilliam!" the Commander called as loud as he could as he realised the danger "get off the bloody lines you idiot before you get yourself killed!"

Unfortunately the Commander's voice was drowned out by the sound of another passing packed commuter train sounding its two tone horn loudly as the driver saw the trespasser near the line ahead of him.

"Come on pick up" the Commander called as he redialled the number on his mobile telephone "Simon?" he called as soon as he was answered "What looks like an old station south of London Bridge" he confirmed as he looked around the clearly visible remains of the old platforms "McWilliam is running across the tracks, I could do with some help out here."

"Err yes Sir" Fuller confirmed as he clicked his fingers at Hendrickson nearby to get his attention "That would be the old Spa Road & Bermondsey station closed in the 1930's but still used for engineers access."

"Oh hell that was close" the Commander remarked as he saw McWilliam jump across another line narrowly avoiding being run down by twelve coaches of Southern Electrostar train on its way to Bognor Regis.

"Railway authorities and the Transport Division have been alerted" Fuller confirmed as Hendrickson, on the telephone nearby gave a thumbs up to indicate that help was now on the way "We could do with McWilliam alive Sir."

"No kidding" the Commander agreed "Methinks he knows an awful lot more than he is admitting" he remarked but suddenly the call was cut off as the sound of a gunshot came down the line.

"Sir?" Fuller called with clear concern "Commander, are you there?"

There was nothing but silence in response whereupon Fuller pulled off his headset "Damm, we've been cut off."

"Control Room just got a call from one of our guys off duty heading home on a train out of London Bridge" Hendrickson confirmed "Apparently he saw some mad bloke in a suit jumping across the tracks like his life depended upon it and a guy in a Security Service Uniform standing between the lines somewhere near Bermondsey Junction."

"I'm going up to the main Control Room" Fuller confirmed as he left the room "Watch the shop."

"Yes Sir" Hendrickson confirmed.

"This is just not my day" the Commander remarked to himself as two of Harcourt's thugs emerged from the doorway out onto the former platform and began to randomly open fire across the rain and windswept tracks towards the distant figure of McWilliam only narrowly missing a couple of passing trains in the process.

The Commander himself had gone around the other side of the entrance way out of sight of the two men and could do nothing really except look on as the thugs were joined by their boss Harcourt.

"The guy will be toast Guv if he keeps that up" one of the men remarked indicating the fleeing McWilliam.

"Never underestimate the power of blind luck gentlemen" Harcourt responded "Get after him, I want his body in the Thames before supper."

"Yes boss" the two men gruffly declared as they moved off, dropping down onto the track bed oblivious to the danger being presented by the passing trains which now seemed to be thinning out in number and approaching speed, not that they noticed as they continued their pursuit, hopping from line to line.

As Harcourt headed back down inside, the Commander came around the corner and looked down after him before deciding to follow.

Harcourt carried on walking casually along the myriad of passageways that weaved between and through the railway arches seemingly oblivious that the Commander was following him a short distance behind until ducking sideways down a side passage.

"Drat..." the Commander remarked to himself as he saw Harcourt disappear from view which forced him to increase his pace until he reached the dark corner where he had lost sight of his quarry.

Cautiously looking around the corner revealed nothing more than an empty corridor with only the remains of a few discarded wooden boxes there but before the Commander could move on, Harcourt reappeared from the shadows and brought a large section of wood across the back of his head rendering him unconscious on the ground in an instant.

"Thorpe!" Harcourt called loudly down the corridor, his voice echoing all around as he stood over the unconscious body of the Commander "get your arse down here."

"You yelled" Thorpe called as he appeared at the other end of the passageway and proceeded to join Harcourt.

"You really ought to get the pest control guy from the council around" Harcourt remarked casually as he gave the Commander a swift dig in the side of the ribs with his foot to make sure he was still unconscious "the place is crawling with fuzz."

"Bloody hell Harcourt you nutter" Thorpe exclaimed as he soon as he saw who it was on the floor.

"Flattery will get you nowhere" Harcourt responded wryly.

"That is the God damm Administrator General there" Thorpe remarked "you know the guy whose wife your insane boss contracted me to have killed?"

"I guess it's just not his week then" Harcourt chuckled in response "Come on, lets get out of here."

"What about him?" Thorpe indicated the still unconscious Commander.

"Let him rot" Harcourt gruffly confirmed "Even if McWilliam lives he won't be much use, my Guvnor has more protection than a nuclear missile factory."

"I hope you are right" Thorpe confirmed as he and Harcourt calmly walked away "Your boss still hasn't fully settled his account with me yet."

"Don't worry" Harcourt confirmed "Unlike that traitorous brief McWilliam, my boss is a man of his word, trust me."

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"Cassini!" Bob called across the street from his van as it screeched to a halt in the middle of Spa Road and his ARU unit officers duly deployed "Where do you want us?"

"Well the best I can suggest is find a way into this rabbit warren and search it" Cassini suggested.

"All right ladies and gents" Bob declared "You heard the man, let's get this party started. Who brought the bolt croppers?"

As Bob and his team entered the nearest entrance into the complex of archway and passageways, Cassini looked up at one of the tall building overlooking the scene where up on the unoccupied top floor, Commander Baker was monitoring events through the sight of her rifle with some concern.

"Baker, its Cassini" he called over the radio "What can you see from up there?"

"Well the Commander headed back inside the Spa Road entrance about five minutes ago" Baker confirmed "The two goons are still chasing McWilliam across the tracks heading towards London Bridge."

"Transport Division are trying to get the trains stopped before someone winds up dead" Cassini responded "and Bob is heading in now to try and sort out the mess."

"Err oh dear..." Baker suddenly responded as she saw the inevitable finally happen as McWilliam, obviously more desperate than ever to evade his pursuers became more careless, tripped over a rail and fell straight into the path of an oncoming train that at the speed it was doing had no hope of ever stopping in time if the driver even saw what was going to happen at all.

"Ooooh nasty..." Baker remarked.

"I take it that was not good news?" Cassini came back upon hearing Baker's tone.

"You could say that" Baker confirmed grimly as she slightly reluctantly re-checked the scene below to confirm the worst news possible "I think someone had better bring a plastic bag and a shovel."

"Yuck" Cassini responded as he could only imagine the scene that had unfolded up above on the viaduct "I'll let the Transport Division lads know, they won't like it mind."

"Somehow I don't think McWilliam would be exactly to enthralled about it either" Baker agreed "Your two goons are heading off though, looks like they are making a run for it towards the Bermondsey end."

Inside the complex maze of passageways and arches, Bob and his team made swift progress through the various possible directions until one of his men suddenly called out.

"Got the boss here" the voice of the ARU officer called whereupon Bob stopped dead in his tracks and reached for his radio.

"Stay where you are lad" Bob confirmed "We will come to you, where are you exactly?"

"Err corridor off to the right of the staircase that seems to lead up to track level" the officer confirmed as he looked around before kneeling down to check on the Commander's condition "Looks like someone clobbered the boss over the back of the head, he is unconscious but I think he will be all right."

A few moments later Bob and the rest of his team caught up with the officer who had discovered the Commander and were helping him back up as he was beginning to regain consciousness.

"I'm getting to old for this" the Commander admitted as he felt the back of his head which was understandably somewhat sore from the blow administered by Harcourt some ten minutes earlier "Where did everyone go?" he asked.

"To be brutally honest Sir I don't know" Bob was forced to admit "Baker sighted two of the goon squad running about up to on the railway tracks along with that lawyer fellow McWilliam."

"We need to talk to McWilliam" the Commander confirmed.

"That may be a little difficult" Bob admitted.

"Oh he didn't did he?" the Commander looked up.

"Well lets put it this way" Bob admitted "According to Commander Baker if someone doesn't tell the driver soon enough, parts of the now late Mr McWilliam will be in Bognor Regis in about an hour and a half, not necessarily all connected together neither."

"Ouch" the Commander responded "Any sign of Harcourt or Thorpe?"

"No one else down here" Bob confirmed "Mind you I reckon you could lose an elephant in this mess so I'll have my boys keep searching."

"I presume Evans sent you down here?" the Commander asked as Bob helped him back to his feet and they headed off as Bob's men dispersed to complete their complicated search of the area.

"Err no, Cassini did" Bob responded "Why?"

"Because Evans and I came in here together but then we got split up" the Commander confirmed, "So if he is not outside, then where the hell is he?"

"A very good question Sir" Bob agreed "Team Alpha from Zero One" he called into his radio "Be aware that Divisional Commander Evans is missing and may be here somewhere so you lads and lasses keep a good look out."

"I don't feel too good" the Commander admitted.

"You've taken a very nasty bang to the head Sir" Bob confirmed "There is a car waiting outside, we'll get you seen to and let the others take care of this mess."

"Zero One from team Bravo" a call came through from one of Bob's officers "I think we are onto someone here."

"Where are you?" Bob asked.

"Passageway 'J' if that means anything in this maze" came the response "There appears to be a dead end and we are pretty certain someone is in there."

"Don't do anything until I get there" Bob warned "Just keep it sealed off for the moment and no heroics."

"Understood boss" came the confirmation.

"Looks like the hospital will have to wait a few minutes" Bob admitted.

"That's all right" the Commander confirmed as they set off down one of the dark narrow brick lined passageways "I've seen the inside of enough hospitals in the last few days to last me a lifetime."

It took them a couple of minutes of mostly trial and error for Bob and the Commander to make their way through the passageways to rejoin the rest of the ARU officers who were gathered around the entrance to a long dark unlit alleyway that thanks to its non-existent lighting could and probably did harbour all sorts of potential dangers.

"Anyone bumped into Divisional Commander Evans along the way?" the Commander asked as he took a look into the dark narrow passageway with little enthusiasm.

"No Guv" one of the officers confirmed "The only sign of life we have found seems to be hiding down there."

"Nice place for a trap" Bob remarked with an experienced examination of the situation "Are we absolutely certain there is no other way out of there, something we might have missed?"

“I guess we do this the old fashioned way then” the Commander admitted before kneeling down in the dust and dirt by the corner and peering into the darkness “This is the Security Service” he called loudly, his voice echoing all around “There is no way out, we are armed and you are surrounded. Put your weapons down and come out with your hands on your head.”

Everyone listened intently amidst the sound of trains rumbling overhead but there was no response whatsoever from down that dank dark passageway.

“I could get the Dog Squad down here” Bob suggested.

“You have one minute to come out or we send in the dogs” the Commander called loudly down the passageway “And if that doesn't work then there is always me and trust me pal I am not in the best of moods right now.”

“Err Sir the Dog Squad is at least ten minutes away” Bob cautioned.

“I know that, you know that” the Commander whispered in response “but he doesn't know that does he?”

“Good point” Bob agreed.

“All right I am coming out!” a voice called from in the darkness “I am unarmed.”

“Hands on the head” the Commander reinforced as in the gloom ahead a figure could be just seen approaching.

“I'm unarmed” the man approaching confirmed once more, hands on his head as instructed and as he became visible, he could be clearly recognised as being Thorpe.

“He's all yours Bob” the Commander confirmed whereupon with a silent nod of the head, Bob instructed two of his officers to restrain and search Thorpe thoroughly for any possible concealed weapons.

“He's clean” one of the officers confirmed a few moments later whereupon Thorpe was brought back to his feet, his hands tied behind his back.

“Bring him” the Commander responded “You and I are going to have a nice little chat” he informed him before reaching for his radio “Cassini, are you there?” he called.

“Cassini here Sir” he confirmed a few moments later, still standing out in the pouring rain watching over events as they unfolded.

“Any sign of Evans, Harcourt or his two thugs by any chance?” the Commander inquired.

“The ARU units have just finished a sweep of the entire complex” Cassini confirmed “No one there bar the guy you just found, methinks they have flown the coop and taken the Divisional Commander with them.”

“All right” the Commander responded after a couple of moments thought during which he gave Thorpe a very hard glare steeped in controlled anger “Have a car meet us outside the main entrance to this place in ten minutes.”

“Yes Sir” Cassini confirmed before signing off.

“Take a seat” the Commander insisted gruffly as he pushed Thorpe down into an old chair “I want to know everything about your little deals with Rogers, what that rent-a-thug Harcourt is up to, your weapons supplier, the whole works.”

“You seriously think I am going to tell you that?” Thorpe responded with a sarcastic laugh.

“You forget one key fact” the Commander calmly responded as he walked around Thorpe in a circle “You are the man who was hired to set up and supply the snipers who shot my wife so unless you have no particular attachment to your kneecaps” he menacingly informed him, drawing his gun and putting it to Thorpe's right knee “I do believe you had better start talking.”

“That was your wife?” Thorpe responded suddenly realising how much trouble he really was in “Oh shit...”

“Nicely put” the Commander retorted as he withdrew his gun from the vicinity of Thorpe's knee and stood back a bit “Now you were saying?”

“Look I admit I arrange things” Thorpe responded “Supply items of interest to the less law abiding side of society plus where necessary the people to use them.”

“So where did these come from?” the Commander indicated one of the Uzi automatics found a little bit earlier “You don't find these down Camden Market do you?”

“Bankrupt stock from some dead guy's estate” Thorpe explained “Along with all the rest of the stuff I have supplied Harcourt.”

“You mean Rogers” the Commander cut in.

“No, Harcourt” Thorpe reiterated “Rogers is a nobody, aside from the arrangement for the sniper job and a few other bits and pieces, I have only really dealt with his sidekick Harcourt, he is really running the show, Rogers just thinks he is.”

“So all the time Rogers was in jail, Harcourt was the top man in the family business then his boss comes back and now he is back to being number two again” the Commander summarised “I bet he isn't too thrilled about that.”

“With the occasional exception now and again” Thorpe continued “Rogers has always dealt in subtleties, Harcourt on the other hand is a cosh them now and ask questions later kind of guy.”

“So what makes him think he can get away with his recent activities?” the Commander asked “Only from what I can see our old friend Rogers and in particular Harcourt have been awfully busy in the last few days.”

“They've got protection” Thorpe explained “Roger's has contacts in the Government, the Security Service, the legal profession, you name it. The only reason Rogers is still going is because Harcourt needs that protection to carry on with his business.”

“Car is ready and waiting for us Sir” Bob mentioned quietly to the Commander.

“Bring him” the Commander confirmed “We'll continue this little conversation down at the Yard I think.”

With that two of Bob's ARU unit officers lifted Thorpe back to his feet before with the Commander following they headed out of the complex of archways and outside where Jennifer Caverner was waiting with the car into which Thorpe and Bob got in the back of.

“Go on ahead” the Commander called to Jennifer “I'll follow you” he instructed.

“Yes Guv” Jennifer agreed as she started the car before moving off slowly down the narrow road that ran between the various sets of viaducts.

The Commander proceeded to a second car immediately behind and got in the front passenger seat alongside its driver which once the door was opened revealed it to be Sir Richard Crowthorne.

“Evening Dickie” the Commander called “Fancy meeting you here.”

“Heard about the commotion” Sir Richard explained “Pity about poor old McWilliam. What's the damage?”

“The evening peak out of the Bridge is pretty much stuffed I gather” the Commander admitted “Oh you mean McWilliam? Definitely brown bread, quite whether there will be anything left to identify is another matter entirely.”

“I gather Evans has vanished?” Sir Richard remarked as he proceeded to drive on, following Jennifer's car at a short distance through the rain sodden streets of South London.

“Two went in, one came out” the Commander confirmed “Which either means when Harcourt gave us the slip he nabbed Evans or alternatively he is working with Rogers and Co.”

“I rang David Collins and got a check on your dead officer you found in there” Sir Richard continued “Turns out he has been receiving significantly more money than your average patrol officer of the service usually gets paid, about five grand a month more in fact over the last six months.”

“He can't have been that bright” the Commander remarked “If I were receiving illicit payments, I would have taken them in cash and stuffed them under the floorboards, far less likely to be found out.”

“Well it appears he was also a member of a casino that is in Roger's empire” Sir Richard continued “Ran up considerable debts which I guess is how he got his hooks into him.”

“All of which leaves a rather unpleasant taste in the mouth” the Commander remarked with a tone of sadness “and there is no way this guy would have been in a position to do what has clearly been done so far.”

“As far as I could tell from what we have found out about him” Sir Richard added “Being a patrol officer from over Loughton way means he hasn't set foot within the hallowed corridors of New Scotland Yard in the best part of two years which means there must be someone else higher up within the central core of the Service itself.”

“What the hell...?” the Commander suddenly called out as ahead the car carrying the arrested Thorpe was suddenly brought to a screeching halt at a crossroads by a large articulated lorry that was brought right across its path which in turn forced Sir Richard to brake hard as well in order to avoid a further collision.

Before anyone was aware of what was really happening, a number of masked men emerged from a van and proceeded directly to the lead vehicle, smashed the windows with the baseball bats they were carrying and proceeded to drag the stunned looking Thorpe from the back seat.

“Oh no you don't” the Commander exclaimed as he drew his gun and was about to get out of the car when one of the men saw him, turned calmly and aimed a sawn off shot gun directly at the windscreen.

“Down!” Sir Richard called whereupon they both ducked below the level of the dashboard only just in time as a shot from the gun shattered the windscreen before a second shot was directed at the front wheel shredding the tyre and immobilising the car.

“I hate shotguns” the Commander remarked as he brushed the shattered shards of glass off of his uniform “Are you all right?” he asked.

“The only casualty would appear to be my no claims bonus” Sir Richard agreed as the sound of commotion, slamming doors and revving engines was heard.

“Easy now” Jennifer called to the gunmen, her hands in the air as Bob and her stood by the car whilst behind the two men holding guns on them, Thorpe was being bundled into the back of the van.

“Right lets go” the leader of the armed men called as soon as Thorpe had been secured “Take care of the motors” he instructed whereupon two of the men proceeded to shoot out a second wheel on Sir Richard's car plus two wheels of Jennifer's car as well before they all bundled into the back of the van and sped away.

“Thanks a lot” Jennifer called sarcastically after them “Feel free to wreck my car anytime.”

“Everyone all right?” the Commander asked as he and Sir Richard joined them and looked down at the wrecked wheels of Jennifer's car.

“Yes I think so Sir” Bob confirmed understandably annoyed “Nice ambush wasn't it?”

“Nicked lorry to block off our path” the Commander looked around the scene as in the distance the sound of approaching sirens could be heard “Junction with no traffic cameras in a quite backstreet, sawn off's and of course the obligatory bashed up Transit van, very classy.”

“I do feel I should point out Sir” Jennifer remarked “that the route we were taking was only known to me, Bob here and anyone who has access to the computer system in the main Control Room at Scotland Yard which says to me that despite the dead guy you fellas found back there, we still have a very busy mole in our midst.”

“Exactly what I was thinking” the Commander agreed as he beckoned over to the patrol officers who had just arrived, their patrol car screeching to a halt in response to the emergency call they had just received.

“Trouble is none of us can do a thing whilst we have Rogers paid informants amongst the flock” Sir Richard philosophically remarked.

“I think I have an idea” the Commander admitted “It is time to set up a little fly trap for our mysterious friend and I think I know exactly what to use to bait it with.”

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"How are you doing?" Jack asked as he looked around the door of the ward at Tracy who was sitting upright in bed, still obviously in severe discomfort but at least now fully awake and aware of her surroundings,

"Oh hello Jack" Tracy responded "Come in, you can fill me in on what has happened whilst I was out. I hear you were busy this morning for a starter."

"I guess I should return this" Jack confirmed as he produced the locket which he handed back to Tracy slightly sheepishly.

"You found the other key then?" Tracy asked.

"Well three keys, one with the bank so with yours in my hand there seemed to be a fairly logical answer as to where the third was" Jack confirmed.

"So you have the files then?" Tracy inquired.



"With some help from a certain young lady of my acquaintance plus the able assistance of a certain Mr Crowthorne" Jack declared "The original case files are now safely in the hands of Mr Evans which is just as well really."

"Oh, why is that?" Tracy picked up on Jack's tone of voice.

"Well apparently the officially archived Security Service copies went walkabout a few weeks ago and the only other copy in existence along with I may add the additional defence evidence all went up in smoke last night when McWilliams's place burned down" Jack explained.

"I take it that defence lawyer has been dragged in for a chat then?" Tracy asked.

"Dragged in, interviewed and then let go again" Jack responded "Unfortunately then he was apparently snatched off the street before deciding to make good his escape from his captors by trying to dodge speeding trains out of London Bridge in the middle of rush hour."

"Trying?" Tracy asked sensing the worst.

"I gather what is left of him will be jet hosed from the underside of a train later tonight at Selhurst Depot" Jack confirmed "An express bound for Bognor Regis clocked him full on doing about sixty miles per hour, he didn't stand a chance."

"Poor sod" Tracy remarked "Well I guess that is what you get for defending scum like Rogers and his mangy crew."

"From what I have heard apparently Roger's lot seem to be pretty well organised" Jack confirmed "Apparently some thug by the name of Harcourt is running most of the show which with some politically connected people defending Rogers as Mr Sweet & Innocent means they are getting away with all sorts."

"Harcourt?" Tracy responded with an alarmed tone "Not William Harcourt by any chance?"

"I think that was the name mentioned" Jack confirmed "Handy with his fists not to mention a baseball bat and anything else that comes to hand according to Fuller, why? Do you know him?"

"Let's just say our paths crossed once" Tracy confirmed grimly "Where is my husband?" she asked.

"Went with Evans down to some old railway arches to check a chap by the name of Garry Thorpe" Jack informed her "The theory is that he is Rogers's fixer who organised the guys and weaponry that shot you."

"These arches wouldn't happen to be near the old Spa Road Station by any chance would they?" Tracy asked.

"I think so" Jack confirmed "Apparently that was where McWilliam was taken when he was snatched but he escaped up onto the railway line where he met his rather horrible end."

"Have you got a telephone on you?" Tracy asked as she looked around for her own mobile without success.

"Yes, here you go" Jack passed her his mobile telephone "You do know you are not supposed to use those things in a hospital don't you?" he asked.

"I think I have somewhat larger things to worry about than bugging up the medical machinery in here" Tracy admitted "Who is the bag man on this investigation?"

"Lieutenant Hendrickson" Jack confirmed "You are not going to do anything rash are you?"

"Of course not" Tracy responded with more than a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

Hendrickson had finally found a quiet moment in which to enjoy a large cup of steaming hot fresh coffee after the chaos of the last twenty four hours. As he sat down at his desk in the investigation room he savoured the moment before bringing the cup to his lips but just as he was about to take his first sip, one of the Control Room dispatchers started banging on the connecting window to try and get his attention.

"What is it?" Hendrickson called back with a definite hint of annoyance.

"Call for you on Line Three" the dispatcher confirmed.

"Unless it is God, the Queen or the Prime Minister I don't want to know" Hendrickson responded.

"No, it's somebody important" the dispatcher replied.

"Great" Hendrickson declared to himself as regrettably he put down the mug of coffee and leaned across the desk to pick up the telephone.

"Lieutenant Hendrickson" he confirmed "This had better be good."

"Hendrickson?" Tracy called "It's Caverner" she declared.

"Erm could you be a bit more specific as you seem to be standing in front of me?" Hendrickson remarked as Jennifer Caverner walked into the room at that exact moment leading to some confusion.

"The one with two bullet holes in her" Tracy confirmed.

"Err three actually" Jack pointed out.

“Was it three?” Tracy responded “Ah well if you say so, I blacked out after the second one went in.”

“What can I do for you Maam?” Hendrickson asked, somewhat surprised by the unexpected nature of the caller.

“Where is that mad husband of mine?” Tracy asked “and the standard answer of 'getting into trouble again' is not valid on this particular occasion.”

“He's upstairs with Sir Richard Crowthorne” Hendrickson confirmed “Someone gave Harcourt and his nutters the inside track on where they were taking Thorpe and boosted him in transit, literally so I gather.”

“Is he all right?” Tracy asked with obvious concern.

“He came through here about five minutes ago muttering something about a ruined uniform and threatening to wring Harcourt's neck” Hendrickson admitted.

“My husband has no idea of how nasty this guy Harcourt is” Tracy warned as she considered her options.

“From what we have seen in the last couple of days we are starting to get a pretty good idea Maam” Hendrickson confirmed.

“Please tell me my dear husband is not going to do something rather rash?” Tracy asked.

“I would like to say no Maam” Hendrickson commented “however based on what I have seen of his operating methods in the short time I have been working with him thus far which added to his legendary reputation for kicking doors in and asking none too discrete questions of very unpleasant people I think that possibility is somewhat likely.”

“All right...” Tracy thought for a few moments “Can I trust you Lieutenant?”

“Yes certainly Maam” Hendrickson confirmed now somewhat curious as to where this was leading.

“Find yourself some wheels” Tracy instructed “Patrol car, unmarked motor, van, bus, I don't really care. Also bring a fresh uniform and a weapon for me then meet me at the back door of this Hospital in twenty minutes and don't tell anyone where you are going or what you are doing.”

“Erm right Maam” Hendrickson reluctantly agreed “Twenty minutes” he confirmed.

“Are you insane?” Jack asked as soon as Tracy finished the call and handed him back his telephone “No actually, strike that question, you are a Caverner. Tell me is it a requirement that in order to be a member of this family you have to wind up being shot at with regular monotony?”

“Not necessarily” Tracy admitted wryly.

“Well that's a relief” Jack responded not exactly reassured “Only having only recently signed up to this infamous family I was beginning to think I was going to have to invest in some life insurance.”

“Remind me to tell you the story sometime” Tracy remarked as she attempted to sit upright and lower her legs over the edge of the bed, grimacing with pain “I called up my insurance broker not long after the Commander and I first met to renew my life insurance. When I told them who my immediate superior officer was they spent the next five minutes laughing hysterically from which moment onwards I could never get insured again.”

“Very reassuring...” Jack remarked to himself.

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“Are you sure this is going to work?” Sir Richard asked as the Commander placed a set of files on the end of Tracy's desk before then placing a copy of the Evening Standard on top of them.

“Traps I tend to find depend upon the quality of the bait to ensure success” the Commander confirmed as he looked around the office to make sure everything appeared in order and there was nothing untoward to give away that it was indeed a trap for the unwary.

“But using the real files, isn't that just a tad risky?” Sir Richard asked looking down at the desk where the files were nestling between the in-tray and Tracy's wedding photograph in its antique silver frame.

“For someone to be in New Scotland Yard and have access to the level of information that Rogers and Co have got their sticky mitts on” the Commander confirmed “It has to be someone well clued up and pretty savvy so using fake files just won't do, especially if its the same person who waltzed off with our archived ones a few weeks ago, they know what they are looking for.”

“OK guys” David Collins confirmed as he entered Tracy's office “We've got this place wired for sound and vision, who do I send the bill for MI5's overtime to?” he asked.

“That was a bit quick wasn't it?” the Commander looked around the room with a bit of concern.

“Oh not really” Collins admitted slightly sheepishly “We just reconnected the bugs we fitted in here a few years back, quite simple really.”

“Sorry...” Sir Richard responded “I kept meaning to tell you about them, we had them fitted just before that whole Omega Committee deal went down a few years ago when it looked like the whole Service bar the Transport Division was about to be sent to hell in a hand cart.”

“Well just remember to have them all disconnected when this is over” the Commander reminded Collins “There are some things between a man and his wife that really ought to remain off the record you know.”

“The mind boggles...” Sir Richard commented.

“Right, I think that takes care of everything” the Commander declared “Let's get this party started shall we?”

“I've got a couple of my surveillance lads outside in a side street by the Post Office in a company van” Collins confirmed as all three men left the office, the Commander carefully closing the door behind them “and Commander Cassini with a couple of his guys are just down there” he indicated down the corridor where Cassini popped out from a side door momentarily and acknowledged them.

“Now all we have to do is send out an invitation” the Commander confirmed as they entered the lift and the doors closed.

A couple of minutes later they were all down in the main reception area where the Commander approached the main reception desk with clear purpose.

“Evening Janice” the Commander called to the receptionist “If anyone asks I am finished for today so I won't be back until at least the morning” he confirmed.

“Yes Sir” Janice responded “Shall I forward any messages?” she asked.

“Err yes please” the Commander confirmed “but only the really urgent ones mind, oh and if you see a slimy Civil Servant by the name of Frobisher hanging around, do me a favour and make his life a misery will you?”

“I've already met him” Janice confirmed with a notable tone of revulsion “Believe me it will be a pleasure Sir.”

“Remind me to recommend you for promotion” the Commander remarked.

“Oh don't do that Sir” Janice replied “I love this job, I mean where else in the City can you meet the great, good and evil of this place plus occasionally get shot at? I still have the tin hat under the desk from last time.”

“Good night” the Commander declared before he followed Sir Richard and Collins out of the main door of the building and down the path outside past the famous revolving three sided sign and then across the road towards the Post Office.

Parked in the shadows of the side street was a dark coloured van with blacked out rear windows into which once then had ensured no one was watching, all three men climbed inside.

“All right” the Commander declared as he sat down alongside two of Collins's technical surveillance guys who were watching their monitors with the live feeds from the cameras fitted in Tracy's office “Let's see what turns up” he announced as he took out his mobile telephone and dialled a number.

“A fiver says this doesn't work” Collins remarked to Sir Richard.

“Call it a bottle and you have a bet” Sir Richard agreed as they watched the Commander on the telephone waiting to be connected.

“Ah Gladys there you are” the Commander responded as soon as he had answered by the main Control Room's longest serving and most reliable dispatch officer “I don't want you to let on it is me on the phone” he instructed “so just listen carefully and don't ask questions.”

“Yes Sir” Gladys responded in a hushed tone.

“I want you to put a radio call into the internal courier service duty officer and ask them to send a secure case and officer in thirty minutes to Tracy's office to collect a set of extremely important files for secure transportation over to Thames House” the Commander instructed “but this is where the technical bit comes in. I need you to 'accidentally' broadcast this request across the whole radio network rather than use the internal courier's specific channel or telephone.”

“I understand Sir” Gladys confirmed “Well actually no I don't but I'll do it anyway.”

“Thank you” the Commander confirmed before hanging up “Well ladies and gentlemen” he declared “eyes down for a full house, the dice are rolling.”

“Control to Delta Charlie Nine duty officer” Gladys was heard to call over the Commander's radio a few moments later as they all listened intently “Got a secure pick up for you.”

“Delta Charlie Nine, go ahead” came the response from the duty officer over at the Internal Courier office.

“Can you collect a shipment of files classified extremely important from Divisional Commander Caverner's office at New Scotland Yard and transport them to Thames House in about thirty minutes please” Gladys confirmed “Full secure transport please.”

“Documents, Commander Caverner's office at the Yard to Thames House in thirty minutes with full security” the duty officer confirmed as he noted the details “Confirmed, Delta Charlie Nine out.”

“Well that is the invitations sent out” the Commander confirmed as he turned his radio set to a different frequency so he could receive reports from Cassini and his people secreted all around the top floor of New Scotland Yard “Now all we have to see is who gatecrashes the party.”

On the top floor of New Scotland Yard all was quiet for the next five minutes, it being well past seven o'clock in the evening meant that most of the Service senior staff had long since gone home and the area was quiet.

Now only the hum of the electric lights and the gentle patter of rain at the windows disturbed the peace and quiet which made Cassini almost nod off as he continued to watch discreetly down the corridor from the ajar door of a storeroom.

“Is there anybody there...” Cassini remarked quietly to himself as he looked down at his watch which showed that almost ten minutes had now passed since the radio call had gone out during which absolutely nothing had stirred on the top floor with the exception of a large spider that had crawled out from its hiding place and scampered down the corridor a few minutes earlier.

He was beginning to think that nobody was going to appear when the ping of the lift bell suddenly broke the silence followed by the metallic creaking as the doors opened and into the corridor stepped a uniformed figure.

“Control from Eagle One” Cassini whispered into his hidden radio “We have guests.”

“Simon” the Commander called to Fuller “You got anything on the CCTV?” he asked.

“Ah there he is” Fuller declared as he managed to clean up the picture and improve the image quality just a bit.

“Who the hell is that?” Sir Richard asked as he squinted at the screen as they all watched an unidentifiable figure walk cautiously from the lifts down the corridor towards the senior offices.

“Hard to tell” the Commander confirmed “We could probably see with more light, trouble is if I had asked for the all the lights to be left on after closing time it might have alerted chummy here to our little trap.”

“No plan is ever perfect I suppose” Collins remarked.

“Eagle One to Control” Cassini called quietly “Target has entered the outer office.”

“There he is” Fuller confirmed as the MI5 camera hidden in Tracy's office showed the mystery visitor enter the office and make immediately for the desk where he then proceeded to look around it until he came across the files he was looking for.

“Come on pal” the Commander urged “look up and smile for the camera, let's get a look at who you are.”

“I have an idea” Fuller declared as he got on a radio headset “Any traffic unit in the vicinity of Victoria Street, come in please.”

“Lima Foxtrot One Three Five receiving go ahead” came a response from a Security Service patrol car that was approaching the south end of Victoria Street from the Parliament Square direction.

“Can you do us a favour lads” Fuller instructed “As you go past the back of New Scotland Yard, bang your lights and sirens on at full volume for us?”

“Err yes certainly” came the response “Do I want to ask why?”

“No, trust me you don't” Fuller confirmed “Thanks guys.”

“Gotcha!” the Commander declared with triumph as when the patrol car passing outside activated its sirens at full cry, it caused the mysterious visitor to look up suddenly in the direction of the window and as a direct result straight at the hidden camera.

“Freeze that” Sir Richard instructed whereupon Fuller put a freeze frame shot of the face of the intruder up on a separate screen.

“Anyone know this guy?” the Commander asked.

“I've seen him around the Yard” Fuller admitted “but I couldn't put a name to him I am afraid.”

“He's got the files” Sir Richard confirmed as they all watched the mystery officer pick up the files, put them in a briefcase he had brought with him and then discreetly leave the office.

“Cassini” the Commander called over the radio “You got eyes on our target?” he asked.

“He's heading for the lifts right now” Cassini quietly confirmed.

“Keep tabs on him within the building” the Commander instructed “If my hunch is right he will be making a fairly swift exit and I fully intend to be right behind him.”

“You are not about to do something rash by any chance are you?” Sir Richard asked with a look of concern.

“Since when have you ever known me to do something like that?” the Commander responded with some sarcasm.

“About every twenty four hours on average I think” Sir Richard admitted.

“I'll be fine, trust me” the Commander confirmed as he got ready to make a swift exit from the van.



“Control from Eagle One” Cassini called as he headed down the back stairs “Target is in lift number two and approaching the ground floor. He should be with you in about one minute.”

“Get me an identification on this guy” the Commander instructed as he checked his gun was loaded and ready for use “Then go through his record and his life with a very fine tooth comb, also give his drum a spin as well.”

“His drum?” one of the MI5 technicians asked.

“Dear God man” Sir Richard responded “Did you never watch The Sweeney when you were growing up?”

“Before I was born Sir” the technician admitted.

“Now I am feeling old all of a sudden” the Commander remarked “See you later gentlemen” he declared before getting out of the van.

Outside the weather was cold, dark and wet to which the wind whistling between the buildings all around did nothing to alleviate the gloomy atmosphere as the Commander crossed the street to where Cassini was standing in the shadow of the famous three sided revolving sign.

“There is our boy” he indicated down the street towards a figure over on the far side, his back towards them in an overcoat and carrying an umbrella in addition to the briefcase as he made his way towards the main entrance of St James's Park Underground Station.

“Got him” the Commander confirmed “Have you lads and lasses keep me shadowed but don't have the cavalry sent in unless absolutely necessary or if I give a signal all right?”

“Understood Sir” Cassini agreed.

“Thank you” the Commander responded before pulling his uniform overcoat in tighter to try and keep out the worst of the horrendous weather “Wish me luck” he declared before heading off across the street in the same direction.

A couple of minutes later the Commander was coming down the steps onto the platform of the eastbound District and Circle lines in the lower levels of St James's Park station where he could see looking ahead the mystery officer looking slightly apprehensive as he waited by the platform edge, tapping his feet and holding on tightly to the briefcase in his right hand.

Also visible entering the platform from the staircase at the other end were a couple of Cassini's plain clothes surveillance team who took up a position casually standing on the platform a short distance away from the target.

The relative peace and quiet of the platform area was initially disturbed only by the rustling of newspapers being read and the sound of footsteps as people moved about but soon a distant rumbling could be heard followed by a piercing beam of light as a six car train of 'D' type District Line stock approached before coming to a halt at the platform whereupon the doors opened and the intending passengers duly boarded.

Whilst the mystery officer boarded the second carriage, the Commander discreetly got on the last car with the two men from Cassini's group on the front.

A few moments later with their audible alarm the doors slid closed before the train moved off. As the carriages rocked along the track through the dark running tunnel the officer looked ahead across the carriage from his seat looking at his own reflection in the window opposite and keeping a tight grip on the briefcase that was sat on his lap.

Indeed so intense was his concentration on the matters at hand that he completely failed to notice that the connecting doors at both ends of the car had opened and three people were now approaching him.

“You have been a very naughty boy” an all too familiar voice declared suddenly causing the officer to look across to his right with a shocked look to see the Commander sitting there next to him “Lieutenant Cartwright” he added after taking a quick look at the officers identity badge.

“Is it worth me making a run for it Sir?” Cartwright asked sensing impending doom.

“There are half a dozen officers waiting for you at the next stop” the Commander calmly confirmed “and considering that as far as they, I and indeed half the Security Service are concerned you are seen as a traitor, possibly even implicated in the death of two fellow officers plus the attempted murder of their Commander in Chief, my wife I get the distinct impression their handling of you will not exactly be err subtle shall we say?”

“Yes Sir” Cartwright agreed realising that any options he had were limited and those he did have were all none too appealing “Would a deal be out of the question Sir?”

“OK” the Commander confirmed calmly but with his trademark implied menace simmering beneath his words “You tell me where and when you are meeting Rogers and I won't use your head to test how tough this new reinforced glass they are fitting to refurbished District Line stock really is.”

“An interesting offer” Cartwright confirmed “Can I assume at this point some of my colleagues are proceeding to go through my life, taking it apart?”

“Not only your colleagues but also some of the best dirt diggers from MI5 are currently rooting through your life, family, connections, bank accounts, the whole nine yards” the Commander agreed.

“Leytonstone Station” Cartwright confirmed “One hour, east entrance.”

“OK gentlemen” the Commander called up to Cassini's two officers who were stood alongside “Take him away and try to see that our friend here does not run into too many door posts on the way.”

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“This really isn't a good idea your know” Jack suggested as he pushed Tracy along the hospital corridor in a wheelchair.

“No choice I am afraid Jack” Tracy admitted as she grimaced a little in pain “Think yourself lucky I compromised on the wheels.”

“You can barely stand up” Jack responded as they approached the rear entrance where just outside through the glass doors a red Security Service patrol car was seen to pull to a stop amid the torrential downpour.

“Ah Lieutenant” Tracy called as Hendrickson came through the door “I do hope you remembered my spare uniform, this one seems to have become a bit work stained” she joked as she looked down at the uniform tunic around her shoulders which was not only blood stained but also had a couple of distinct holes in it.

“In the car Maam” Hendrickson confirmed as he held the door open whilst Jack pushed Tracy's wheelchair outside to the car.

“Ah God damm it that hurt!” Tracy exclaimed in excruciating pain as she lifted herself with help from the others from the wheelchair into the front passenger seat of the car before once inside Hendrickson closed the door and went around to the drivers side whilst Jack got in the back,

“If I may ask Maam” Hendrickson reluctantly inquired as he started the car “Do the medical staff know of your departure?”

“Do you think they would let me out if they did Lieutenant?” Tracy responded with a wry smile.

“That's what I thought Maam” Hendrickson remarked in response “Where to Maam?” he asked.

“Back to the factory” Tracy confirmed “In the meantime, fill me in on what I have missed.”

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Franklin Rogers calmly adjusted his leather driving gloves as he waited behind the wheel of his 1960's Bentley, parked across the street from the main entrance of Leytonstone Underground Station.

The continuing rain that was falling, pattering upon the windscreen in front of him obscured much of his view, reducing what he could see of the scene outside to pixelated glints of light.

He had been sitting there in his car for the best part of twenty minutes now with only the sound of the rain and the radio tuned into the BBC World Service for company.

The sound of the telephone in the car starting to ring changed things as Rogers turned down the volume on the radio and picked up the handset.

"Hello, you certainly believe in leaving things to the very last minute don't you?" Rogers answered.

"You are just coming in now?" he asked as he wound down his side window and looked across and ahead to see a northbound eight car Central Line train of 1992 type Tube Stock come rattling across the point work and slow as it arrived into the platform of Leytonstone Station.

"Dark grey Bentley opposite the east entrance" Rogers informed the caller "and do get a move on dear boy, it's getting rather late" he calmly confirmed before hanging up and then winding his side window back up to keep out the atrocious weather whilst he waited for his contact to arrive.

As the Central Line train could be heard accelerating away from the station in the background, Rogers momentarily looked up as a figure could be seen amidst the torrential rain emerging from the Station entrance.

Rogers took no real notice of the figure barely visible through the rain water running down the outside of his car windows as whoever it was crossed the road and then went around the rear of the car.

"Good evening..." Rogers declared as the front passenger door opened and the uniformed Security Service officer got in "Well, this is a little unexpected..." he remarked with a somewhat stunned look when he saw not Cartwright as he was expecting but the Commander.

"Change of plan Mr Rogers" the Commander wryly declared "If you are looking for your friend Lieutenant Cartwright, he is currently enjoying the hospitality of a sound proof room with a couple of my more muscular colleagues who are as we speak going to work on him with a pair of pliers and a hacksaw."

"Ouch..." Rogers responded with not all that much sympathy as he looked out through the windscreen at the rain still beating down.

"I thought it was time you and I had a little chat" the Commander admitted "Leaving aside for the moment your thugs attempt to kill my wife..."

"Instructions were for her to be injured not killed" Rogers interrupted with unusual sincerity.

"True or not and my money is on the latter somehow, someone went well overboard Mr Rogers" the Commander confirmed in a very straightforward business like manner "Which brings me to our mutual problem."

“Mutual problem?” Rogers looked across at the Commander for the first time somewhat confused “I do apologise but not being a member of your rather dangerous profession I fail to follow your unusual sense of humour.”

“William Xavier Harcourt” the Commander declared “or to put it another way your power hungry paid lunatic with the penchant for solving problems with his fists and anything else that comes to hand.”

“A legitimate business associate and a very good deputy manager of my business concerns” Rogers responded “Any problems you may be having with him are purely in the imagination of those who seek to unjustly sully my good name.”

The Commander only just managed to avoid coughing at that last remark but instead just about maintained his formal composure.

“In case you had not been aware” the Commander continued “Whilst you were erm away shall we say for the last ten years or so your buddy Harcourt has been using your credentials and business empire to line his own nest.”

“Really?” Rogers responded, feigning false interest.

“Of course its all about physiology” the Commander continued “Well at least I think is that what my old man used to say, anyway of course after spending ten years effectively being the Number One about town, you return rather unexpectedly and all of sudden your boy is back to being number two again.”

“I’ll think you will find its psychology” Rogers corrected the Commander.

“Sorry” the Commander admitted “Anyway the point is that now that you are back in town with your alleged dubious contacts who seem very eager to defend you and your erm reputation at the drop of a hat or more likely a large wadge of cash, your Mr Harcourt is using that cover as an umbrella to get away with all sorts of skull-duggery.”

“Brilliantly deduced” Rogers responded with a hint of admiration at which point the back door of the car opened and Harcourt duly got in, placing a gun to back of the Commander's head “with just one slight oversight in your deductions.”

“So I see” the Commander reluctantly admitted as he held his hands up whilst Rogers removed his weapon and tucked it away out of reach before starting the car.

“This is not the place for two gentlemen to discuss business” Rogers calmly declared as he started the car “I think we ought to find more comfortable surroundings, don't you?”

“I am hardly in a position to disagree” the Commander admitted as they drove off into the rain sodden night.

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“How long has it been like this for?” Tracy asked as she looked out of the passenger side window of the car at the night time street scene of London as it passed outside.

“I don't think it has stopped raining for the best part of three days Maam” Hendrickson admitted as he turned the car into Broadway and slowed to a halt outside the main entrance to New Scotland Yard.

“You can say that again” Jack remarked as he stifled a yawn, little surprise given that it was now passing eleven o'clock at night and he, like many others involved had had a very long day.

“All I can remember from when I was unconscious is the patter of rain and something about how many Home Secretaries does it take to change a light bulb” Tracy admitted, somewhat mystified.

“We are here Maam” Hendrickson confirmed as he got out of the car and went straight around to the passenger side to help Tracy out.

“Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea after all” Tracy admitted wryly as she grimaced in pain the moment she stood up and had to support herself variously on the edge of the car and also Jack.

“Since when has that ever stopped any member of this crazy family?” Jack remarked as they headed inside.

“Good evening” Sir Richard remarked as he greeted them in the main reception area “Don't take this the wrong way my dear” he added with a clearly concerned look “but what the hell are you doing here?”

“You need me” Tracy simply responded “I know more about Rogers, that thug Harcourt and his cronies than anyone else alive.”

“Which is probably why they made a very good attempt to ensure you were dead” Sir Richard added with extreme caution apparent.

“I'm still breathing aren't I?” Tracy responded.

“Just about” Sir Richard agreed “Pardon me for saying it but quite frankly my dear you are a mess.”

“Get me to my office and I will be fine” Tracy confirmed “Where is my husband?”

“That was going to be my next subject of conversation” Sir Richard hesitantly responded as he and Hendrickson helped Tracy into the lift car before they ascended to the top floor “We've hit a bit of a problem.”

“Define a bit” Tracy responded sensing what was coming before it had even been said.

“Well we found out who was Rogers top contact in the Security Service” Sir Richard explained as the lift reached the top floor and they exited out into the darkened corridor “Then your illustrious husband decided to make use of this and lay a trap.”

“Go on...” Tracy urged as they entered her office where she proceeded directly to the back of her desk and relieved, almost collapsed onto the large leather chair.

“We caught the contact red handed with a little bait we put his way” Sir Richard continued.

“And this guy is currently...?” Tracy asked.

“In one of our less glamorous facilities being attended to by a couple of the Security Service's more heavily built employees” Sir Richard confirmed “Anyway the Commander took the place of the contact and went to meet Rogers in Leytonstone, and that was where we lost him I am afraid.”

“What exactly do you mean by 'lost him' exactly?” Tracy asked “and please bear in mind that in my current condition I would appreciate straight talking honesty here otherwise I am liable to start throwing things at people.”

“He got into Rogers old Bentley outside Leytonstone Station” Sir Richard confirmed “Cassini and his boys observed them talking before a guy who seems to match the description of one William or Billy Harcourt then got into the back of the car whereupon it drove off.”

“Go on...” Tracy prompted in between bouts of wincing with pain from her injuries which were far from cured.

“The car was followed as far as a building site near Stratford” Sir Richard continued “Unfortunately due to the open nature of the site no one could get close enough to see what happened without being clocked which means we did not see them transferring to a fresh vehicle.”

“At least tell me you still have my files and dockets on Rogers little empire” Tracy responded, rubbing her tired eyes but in reality hiding tears of pain and fear at what may have happened to her husband based on her knowledge of Rogers and Harcourt's abilities.

“For all the good they will do” Sir Richard confirmed as he produced the extensive files from his briefcase “We are still under strict orders to go nowhere near this guy or any of his associates, it would be politically inconvenient.”

“Says who?” Tracy responded angrily, just stopping short of hammering her fists on the desk when a quick jolt of pain strongly suggested she do otherwise.

“A professional gobshite by the name of Frobisher Maam” Hendrickson confirmed “Seems to have been hanging around like a bad smell ever since Rogers won his appeal.”

“All right” Tracy declared “As of now I am taking command of the Security Service, don't argue Richard as I don't have the time” she quickly interjected before Sir Richard could say anything.

“OK...” Sir Richard meekly retreated with a step back before he really did get something thrown at him.

“I want in this office within the next thirty minutes all the section chiefs, the duty op's Commander, the Prime Minister, Dave Collins, the Home Secretary and this guy Frobisher” Tracy declared “and if that means dragging them out of theirs or anybody else's beds then so be it.”

“They are probably not going to like it Maam” Hendrickson remarked “however I am sure they can be persuaded.”

“Good lad” Tracy responded “Consider yourself promoted to acting Deputy Divisional Commander for the rest of the evening, which should help oil the wheels of persuasion a little.”

“I'd better come with you” Sir Richard informed Hendrickson “There are likely to be a lot of very pissed off senior members of the Government before this is over.”

“Jack, do me a favour” Tracy called across “Go and find Simon and see if he is still awake. I know for a fact he will be in his office only I don't think I can get there in my current condition.”

“I'll go and get him” Jack agreed before with a concerned look, he reluctantly left the office leaving Tracy alone.

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“Out!” Harcourt gruffly ordered as he grabbed the Commander by the arm and dragged him from the back of the car in a back alley somewhere in the east end of London.

“Careful now” Rogers responded with false sympathy “He is our distinguished guest, I do not want him damaged, well at least not yet anyway.”

“Whatever you say boss” Harcourt reluctantly agreed as he unceremoniously shoved the Commander through the back door of an unidentified premises.

“Where did you find him?” the Commander asked Rogers as he was led up a tightly winding set of back stairs to an upper floor “Nutters 'R' Us?”

“I've known him since he was a nipper” Rogers confirmed as he showed the Commander into what turned out to be an old office which along with the numerous cobwebs was also complete with an old 1930's style typewriter and a Bakelite telephone that looked like it had not been used for a call since the war.



“Presumably skipping school assuming that he had not been kicked out first I assume” the Commander remarked as he was shoved down into a chair whereupon Harcourt tied his hands to the arms with little subtlety or consideration.

“I have always had an eye for talent” Rogers explained as he calmly leaned against a table in front of the Commander and proceeded to clip and light one of his trademark huge cigars “As soon as I saw this young lad breaking into his first car at the tender age of twelve I knew I was going to be backing a winner and so he has proved, managing my empire in my enforced absence and developing a huge range of useful contacts and talents which I have had the pleasure of putting to good use to return my empire back to its former glory.”

“That presumably includes hiring thugs, professional assassins and anyone susceptible to a bribe I take it?” the Commander asked “Not to mention distorting the criminal justice system, eliminating or at least nearly eliminating the two people in a position of power to bring you down still and of course destruction of evidence.”

“My, my lad” Rogers remarked with a hearty chuckle as he looked across to Harcourt “You have been a busy boy haven't you?”

“I like to keep busy” Harcourt wryly admitted with a casual shrug of his shoulders.

“Which reminds me” Rogers responded “I am sure the Commander here does not wish to be alone, bring our other guest in here please.”

“You know you really are some piece of work” the Commander remarked as Harcourt left the room.

“Flattery will get you nowhere but I appreciate the compliment” Rogers replied.

“I mean you have managed to completely fool the entire justice system” the Commander summarised “produced convincing false evidence to secure your release, bribed pretty much everyone in a position of power so they bend over backwards to cover your backside and all but eliminated anyone who can either threaten to bring you down or take over your little empire.”

“All true, except for the bit about my empire being little Commander” Rogers confirmed “I have a business empire that is expanding. Gone is the small thinking of dominating the east end of London, things these days are done globally, you have to consider the bigger picture.”

At that point they were interrupted by Harcourt returning with the slightly bedraggled figure of Divisional Commander Evans who was placed into a chair alongside the Commander.

“I was wondering where you had got to” the Commander remarked.

“Someone tried to rearrange my head with a bit of four by two” Evans explained as he looked up at Harcourt with a scowl “Next thing I knew I woke up in this charming little establishment.”

“I get the distinct impression it must be the cleaning lady's day off” the Commander admitted as he looked around “Here Rogers, how the hell are you going to explain away the kidnapping of not one but two senior members of the Security Service?”

“I have influence that stretches far, far deeper into the establishment than you could possibly imagine” Rogers proudly announced “Plus others aces up my sleeve, your wife for example?”

“Don't even think about it pal” the Commander warned.

“I think you will find he already has” Evans confirmed.

“It would appear that thanks to your wife's impressive strength and determination” Rogers confirmed “our earlier efforts at removing her from this rather complicated equation didn't quite work as comprehensively as we had anticipated.”

“I do hope you cut the pay of the three snipers you hired in retrospect” the Commander remarked.

“Oh they are still around” Harcourt responded “They are sunning themselves somewhere on a little retainer and making themselves available at a moments notice to excise their not inconsiderable talents on, well whoever we choose actually.”

“Indeed” Rogers confirmed “You can't protect her forever.”

“One of these days you and your buddy here are going to have a very nasty fall from grace” the Commander calmly warned “and I am going to be there to pull away the crash mat from under you just before you reach the ground.”

“Oh really?” Rogers remarked with a hearty chuckle before he and Harcourt left the room whereupon their joint laughter could be heard echoing menacingly as they headed away down the corridor.

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"They are all here Maam" Hendrickson confirmed as he popped his head around the door of Tracy's office.

"Ah, oh this isn't going to work" Tracy declared as she tried to get up off her seat behind her desk but the terrible bouts of pain it brought on forced her to sit straight back down again "Bring them up here but for God's sake don't let on what state I am in."

"Err yes Maam" Hendrickson confirmed still a little uncertain about all this.

Tracy was left alone for a few moments wondering what was going to happen both if she did and also did not take decisive action that night.

She knew full well, probably better than anyone else in the Service exactly what Rogers and in particular Harcourt and his ungainly thugs were capable of, even more so now they seemed to be running out of control thanks to the mysterious blanket of official protection they were enjoying and making full use of.

Tracy looked up from her desk when she heard some form of commotion begin in the corridor outside as a large group of people emerged from the lifts but it was one voice in particular that seemed to be more than dominant.

"I must protest in the strongest possible terms!" Frobisher called loudly and angrily as he suddenly burst in through the door with Hendrickson and Sir Richard only just behind him but unable to stop him.

"And you are?" Tracy calmly asked, looking distinctly unimpressed.

"Chief Parliamentary Officer Frobisher" he informed her "and I have to remind you once again that in direct contravention of official instructions from my office, you are continuing to harass Mr Franklin Rogers and his associates."

"Sorry" Tracy responded sarcastically "I must have missed the memo, you will have to excuse me as I have been rather busy at deaths door for the last couple of days."

"And now to add not one but two, I stress two insults to the integrity of my office..." Frobisher continued his ranting protest.

"Integrity, very funny..." Sir Richard murmured but Frobisher was so caught up in his performance that he failed to notice.

"...you have now requested an audience with the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary without consulting or going through me" Frobisher continued.

"Since when has this office needed to go through you to speak to the senior levels of the Government?" Tracy responded, not impressed in the slightest by Frobisher, his attitude or his protestations.

"Oh no not you again" the Home Secretary wryly remarked as he and the Prime Minister entered the room along with a number of others.

"Say nothing at this time unless I say so Sir" Frobisher insisted "This is an outrageous denial of correct procedure that puts at risk the integrity of your offices and this Government."

"Oh do shut up" Sir Richard responded, much like the others now thoroughly fed up with Frobisher's attitude including Tracy who had only known him for about a minute and was already firm of the opinion he was nothing more than a loud mouthed idiot.

"You can't talk to me like that, I am a member of her Majesty's Government!" Frobisher protested, clearly outraged.

“In which case let us talk about your financial arrangements” Sir Richard declared as he produced a document file and opened it “According to this your local parliamentary constituency secretary received substantial donations from the estate of a deceased member of the House of Lords over the last three years.”

“Completely irrelevant” Frobisher tried to dismiss Sir Richard's findings but it was clear that he was starting to become nervous about something.

“Two problems” Sir Richard continued undeterred “The registered secretary and treasurer of your local constituency is recorded as being your wife, which you don't have and the estate from which these more than substantial donations have been received appears to be owned by a front company that is connected to one Mr Franklin Rogers.”

“In other words you have had your fingers in the till of Mr Rogers for some time Mr Frobisher” Tracy added, only just managing to keep a calm attitude as the pain of her injuries was almost more than she could bear.

“A legitimate businessman with influence in many areas of the country’s industrial and private trading sectors” Frobisher confirmed clearly running out of options to defend himself here “I am saying nothing more without my solicitor present, he will have this service slapped with half a dozen cease and desist orders before the sun is up.”

“And your solicitor is?” Tracy asked as she picked up the telephone even though she already knew the answer that was coming.

“McWilliam” Frobisher confirmed defiantly.

“Do you want to tell him or shall I?” Sir Richard asked Hendrickson aside.

“Tell me what?” Frobisher asked sensing that for once he was not in full possession of the facts in this case.

“Mr Frobisher caught a train just over three hours ago” Sir Richard confirmed trying not to appear too happy about this news or Frobisher’s likely reaction to it “What is left of him is currently been picked up with a trowel all along the line between London Bridge and Bognor Regis if you wanted to go and see him.”

“A tragic accident I am sure” Frobisher responded as he realised his options were starting to fast run out.

“Oh no accident” Sir Richard confirmed “At the time he was being chased across the lines south of London Bridge by a couple of armed loonies who I do believe are employees of your old friend Rogers and his little nutty sidekick Harcourt.”

“Since then” Tracy returned to the conversation “We have had two senior members of the Service go missing, one of them Divisional Commander Evans and the other being my husband so I would appreciate it enormously if you would please crawl back under your rock and let us get on with our jobs and send Rogers, Harcourt and the rest of his cretinous colleagues back to jail where they belong.”

“I cannot authorise anything of that sort” Frobisher responded defiantly “We have strict agreements under the terms of the appeal findings that state categorically that Rogers and any associates are not to be harassed in any way by the authorities.”

“Oh I am not going to harass him” Tracy confirmed with her trademark implied menace “Just break his legs” she grinned knowingly.

“Prime Minister” Sir Richard called across to the two senior men of the Government who had spent the last few minutes enjoying the show as Frobisher made an idiot of himself “Would I be right in thinking that any serving Member of Parliament against whom evidence is submitted of potential financial corruption in the matter of parliamentary finances can be suspended?”

“That is the usual procedure yes” the Prime Minister agreed as he helped himself to a second glass of scotch from the decanter.

“Happy reading” Sir Richard declared as he passed the file on Frobisher’s finances to him.

“Frobisher” the Prime Minister declared “You are fired.”

“You can’t do this any of you!” Frobisher protested loudly, gesticulating like a mad man.

“Lieutenant Hendrickson” Tracy called to the officer to her right “Take Mr Frobisher here down to the custody suite, have him processed and arrange for the dumbest defence solicitor you can find to represent him.”

“With pleasure Maam” Hendrickson confirmed as he moved to grab Frobisher who responded by pulling back and pushing Hendrickson away with disdain.

“That is assaulting a member of Her Majesty’s Government!” Frobisher protested wildly “I can have you both fired over this outrage!”

“That’s not assaulting a member of Her Majesty’s Government” Tracy responded as Sir Richard got fed up with Frobisher and calmly punched him in the face, sending him to the floor unconscious “but that might be though” she added as she looked over the edge of the desk.

“Damm he has got a hard nut” Sir Richard declared as he shook his hand in pain.

“Lieutenant” Tracy commanded “get that piece of crap off of my carpet.”

“Certainly Maam” Hendrickson confirmed as he proceeded to unceremoniously drag the semi-conscious Frobisher out of the door.

“Right” Tracy declared “Now that we have dispensed with Mr Political Inconvenience there, you two can tell me what other obstacles are in my way?”

“Given your determination” the Home Secretary remarked “not a lot I would say.”

“Good” Tracy confirmed “In which case let’s get to work. Sir Richard, ask the duty section chiefs to come in please.”

A few moments later the various duty section chief’s filed into the office, many of them somewhat surprised to say the least to find Tracy in there waiting for them along with the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Jennifer Caverner asked incredulously when she saw her twin sister sitting at the desk still trying to hide the tremendous pain she was in but to Jennifer it was still very obvious.

“Getting even” Tracy confirmed “Look I know what you are going to say Sis” she protested “but just let me have this one crack at Rogers and Co and then I will go back to the hospital all right?”

“All right” Jennifer reluctantly agreed knowing full well that when Tracy was in one of these moods the chances of being able to change her mind were at best negligible “but the first sign of problems and you are in the back of the fastest ambulance back to Charing Cross all right?”

“Agreed” Tracy confirmed reluctantly as she shifted uncomfortably in her chair.

“Am I going mad or was that Frobisher I just saw being dragged down the corridor?” Bob from the ARU division asked.

“Yes it was” Tracy confirmed dryly.

“What was he doing?” Jennifer asked.

“I think they call it reconsidering his career options” the Prime Minister wryly remarked “Can’t say I am unhappy to see him out of the picture.”

“For now at any rate” Sir Richard warned “If he is as slippery and as well supported as I am led to believe, he will be back at his desk in Downing Street very soon I fear.”

“Lets enjoy the moment then” the Home Secretary suggested.

“Right ladies and gentlemen” Tracy declared “Gather around, I want in the next twenty minutes to put together a plan that will see every single location on this map raided and everyone inside them arrested simultaneously.”

“Only about three quarters of the east end of London I see” Bob remarked as he and the others gathered around the desk in the centre of which was a large scale map of Greater London with at least a hundred locations marked on it with green and red sticky label dots.

“What is the significance of the red ones?” the head of the Bomb Squad asked as he joined in the surveying of the map.

“I ran out of green ones” Tracy admitted.

“Oh” the head of the Bomb Squad responded “Any explosives likely to be about?”

“That is a question we need to ask Thorpe” Sir Richard confirmed “Trouble is someone sprang him from the car we had bringing him here and now he is God only knows where.”

“Don’t remind me...” Jennifer remarked.

“What sort of hardware and talent does this Thorpe character have access to?” Tracy asked.

“He seems to have set himself up as one of the best fixers in the country ever since he took over the family business from his old man about five years ago” Sir Richard confirmed “Anything you need for any illegitimate venture from a robbery to a full blown assassination, he’s your man to help you get tooled up.”

“We fancy him for the setting up and provision of the talent and hardware for the Trafalgar Square job” Collins confirmed “Whispers on the street suggest it was Rogers who set it up and his currently bankrolling Thorpe’s operation on the basis that with the current financial climate he has run into a few cash flow problems.”

“My heart bleeds” Tracy remarked unsympathetically “Actually now I come to think of it thanks to these guys it almost did literally.”

“I know I am going to regret this” the Prime Minister responded as he rubbed his forehead with a thoughtful look “but unless anyone has any objections, I am going to authorise all necessary extreme measures irrespective of the political maelstrom it may bring down on us. Anyone regardless of rank or political position who has or has had dealings with Rogers is as of now the subject of an arrest warrant.”

“Thank you” Tracy responded “Home Secretary, I will need a J52 order.”

“A what?” the Home Secretary replied with a perplexed look.

“Just sign here and don’t ask questions” Tracy confirmed as she placed an official looking form on the front of the desk immediately in front of him.

“Allow me” Sir Richard declared proffering him a pen with which the Home Secretary proceeded to sign the document whereupon Tracy snatched it out of his line of sight before he could have a chance to read it.

“I think in the interests of plausible deniability I strongly suggest you two head for home and act all surprised when you read the first edition of the Standard over your morning coffee” Tracy strongly suggested to both the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister.

“I think that is my cue” the Prime Minister confirmed.

“...and I think that is my pen thank you very much” Sir Richard added, taking his pen back off of the Home Secretary before genially escorting the two men to the office door and showing them out.

“I’ll have the usual expensive taxi waiting outside the door for you” Jennifer confirmed as they left.

“All right then” Tracy asked “Can I safely assume that Harcourt is still hiring the same brand of knuckle dragging but effective muscle with no compunctions about using brute force?”

“Absolutely” Collins confirmed “They sent a van load of thugs around to the watering hole of a rival firm, the Griffiths mob and beat seven shades of the proverbial out of them for apparently wandering onto Rogers turf” he passed across a report with some photographs showing the aftermath of the extensive damage that was done during the incident.

“Then there are the two dead gang bosses that were found” Sir Richard confirmed “One guy cut to pieces along with his driver by sawn off shotguns in Regents Street followed by another guys body which was dragged out of the Thames near Blackfriars Bridge by the River Division boys.”

“This stops now” Tracy declared defiantly which only just managed to mask the fact that the pain she was in was almost unbearable “I am not having a turf war in my city and I am certainly not allowing Rogers, that murderous nut Harcourt or any of his cretins to enjoy any further freedom to wreak havoc, they go to jail, tonight.”

“Over a hundred different locations, scant intelligence on many of them added to which it is now almost midnight and most of the Services are sound asleep” Bob summarised “This isn't exactly going to be easy.”

“Things that are worth doing rarely are in my experience” Collins remarked “and I agree with Ms Caverner, the sooner this scum are dragged off the streets wholesale the better for all concerned.”

“And any political support Rogers has?” Sir Richard asked slightly apprehensively.

“Get kneecapped by me” Tracy confirmed with determination as she drew and checked her gun “Personally...”

“With all due respect” Sir Richard cautioned “You can barely stand up no matter how much you try to hide it.”



“They started this little war and unless anyone wants to obstruct me, an officer of the Security Service in the course of her duty” Tracy declared “Then I’m damn well going to finish it.”

“At this short notice and this time of night I can rustle up at best three, maybe four special forces teams” Collins confirmed “but if I push the panic button I can have a further four teams down to London by lunchtime.”

“Too late” Tracy responded “My husband could be dead by then if he is not already, we have to go at sunrise.”

“Six hours” Bob remarked checking his watch “Could we not prioritise?” he asked “send in armed uniform into the less important places such as these warehouses and lock-ups and leave us professional door kickers the more ripe targets?”

“All right” Tracy agreed slightly reluctantly “but I am leading the team into this place here” she indicated on the map “It is a block of offices near Leytonstone Station, there is a snooker club on the ground floor and an extensive casino in the basement plus a number of storage facilities in various states of disrepair around the back.”

“Why do I get the distinct impression you have been to that place before?” Sir Richard asked, understandably cautious at what Tracy was suggesting.

“Because I have” Tracy confirmed “Not that you will find any official record of that anywhere though.”

“Ah, that's what I thought” Sir Richard remarked “Look if it is any help, I have some favours owed to me by our friends over on the south bank of the Thames if you need it.”

“All right” Tracy declared “Assuming no one here is going to be silly enough to argue with me, let’s work this out.”

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“Where are we?” Evans asked as the Commander looked through a small crack in the boarded up window of the room that they had been kept locked up in for over an hour now.

“Somewhere in the east end” the Commander confirmed “Leytonstone would be my vague guess, very few tall or modern buildings visible plus about a twenty minute drive time from where I got picked up.”

“And do you think anyone knows we are here?” Evans inquired as he joined the Commander at the boarded up window, the only illumination in the window apart from the distant glow of a street light outside being the old oil lamp on the dusty desk in the centre of the room.

“Probably not” the Commander admitted reluctantly “That little switch they did from Rogers Bentley to a fresh vehicle would probably have even thrown Cassini off of the scent.”

“This isn't looking to good is it?” Evans remarked.

“Nope” the Commander agreed “I am afraid it isn't. It's Tracy I am most worried about, she will be laying in hospital wondering where the hell I have got to and in her condition I fear it will just make things worse.”

“She has managed to survive three assassins bullets” Evans reminded him “You yourself have been through much the same in the past and both of you have been strong enough to survive and return to kick ass with the best of them, she will be all right.”

“I hope you are right, I really do” the Commander agreed “Because if I lost Tracy I really do not know what I would do.”

Two floors below in the sumptuous old office, Rogers relaxed back in his huge leather easy chair with a fresh glass of scotch and another huge cigar.

“I am told these things will kill me” Rogers admitted with a deep hearty chuckle.

“Since when have you ever let anyone tell you how to do things boss?” Harcourt remarked.

“Not since I was about eight years old I think” Rogers recalled “Always been my own boss ever since” he confirmed with a sense of obvious pride.

The telephone on the desk began to ring at that point at the exact moment the antique clock on the mantelpiece rang for two in the morning at which point Rogers silently motioned towards Harcourt to answer it.

“Yes?” Harcourt responded upon picking up the telephone “Oh really?”

“What's happened?” Rogers asked sensing some unexpected new development.

“I am sure our political friends will be able to sort him out with the usual Get Out of Jail Free card” Harcourt confirmed “Good night” he declared before hanging up.

“Let me guess” Rogers remarked as he stroked his chin thoughtfully “Our friend Mr Frobisher has got himself into a spot of bother?”

“That's not the only thing that seems to have happened boss” Harcourt confirmed “Apparently a certain Divisional Commander Caverner has checked herself out of hospital and one of the first things she did was give Frobisher a very large piece of her mind.”

“You have to admit that lady sure has some style” Rogers remarked with a chuckle.

“What about our two guests upstairs?” Harcourt asked.

“They can wait there until the morning” Rogers confirmed “by this time tomorrow our friend Mr Frobisher will be back in his office signing all the public interest immunity certificates I need and then its back to business for your and me my boy.”

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Tracy rubbed her tired eyes as she took a break from reading through numerous reports, files and documents that were stacked up on her desk. As the chimes of Big Ben outside chimed for four in the morning she looked across at the couch where Jack was fast asleep, his low snoring being the only real noise of any kind in the otherwise completely quiet office.

Looking at her watch to confirm the time, Tracy reached for the telephone on the desk and fighting back the pain she was still in, dialled a number.

“Simon” she called to Fuller as soon as her call was answered “How is it coming down there?”

“The gang's all here Maam” Fuller confirmed as he looked around the basement car park of New Scotland Yard where numerous vans and cars both of the Security Services and associated agencies were gathered and around which were a large number of armed officers and other personnel.

“All right, I am on my way down now” Tracy confirmed “Have Lieutenant Hendrickson ready with a car outside the front entrance in ten minutes and then we shall get this party started.”

“Yes Maam” Fuller confirmed before hanging up.

Gingerly and with a lot of discomfort, Tracy rose from the seat behind her desk and shuffled across the office towards the door.

“Come back alive” Jack suddenly called quietly from the couch causing Tracy to look around with a weak smile.

“No promises but I will see what I can do” Tracy agreed “You get back to sleep lad, I'll be back before you know it.”

Jack watched with a worried look until Tracy had left the office, quietly closing the door behind her before he put his head back down to sleep.

It took her a few minutes to limp along the corridor to the lift before heading down to the ground floor which included a worrying few moments for Tracy as she fought back the pain she was in.

“Oh no...” Tracy responded as the lift doors opened at the reception area on the ground floor to reveal that waiting for her with an unimpressed look was Doctor Frank Horton, the Service Chief Medical officer and someone who it was more common for the Commander to avoid than Tracy.

“Boo...” Horton remarked.

“I had this feeling you would be lurking around somewhere” Tracy admitted as she stepped out of the lift, trying her best not to show the agony she was in “Don't you ever sleep?”

“I might say the same of you Maam” Horton admitted “You do realise of course that you are in no way even approaching imaginable fit for duty I suppose?”

“The thought had crossed my mind Doctor” Tracy reluctantly agreed as she made her way across the Reception area towards the door.

“Yes...” Horton responded “That is what I thought, so working on the theory that I will not be able to talk you out of this, take two of these” he handed her a small bottle of painkillers “Then the moment this is over I want you back in hospital and then when the medical staff say so and not before, home or on holiday recuperating and you are not to set foot back in this building until you are fully recovered.”

“Yes Doctor...” Tracy agreed none to happy but at least relieved that the Doctor had at least still allowed her to go through with this critical operation unhindered.

“You are as bad and as stubborn as your husband you know” Horton remarked with a wry chuckle “If you see him tell him his annual medical is overdue, by about three years.”

“I'll mention it” Tracy agreed “Somehow I don't think it will make any difference mind” she commented.

The Doctor duly departed, his job now done and it was now down to Tracy to get to work as she popped a couple of the painkillers before heading out of the main entrance to where a Security Service patrol car was waiting for her with Lieutenant Hendrickson behind the wheel.

“All right, let's get this party started” Tracy declared as she eased herself very slowly and carefully into the front passenger seat and shut the door before reaching for her radio “Lima Mike One to all units, let's roll everyone” she confirmed.

At that moment, Hendrickson set off and as the car departed New Scotland Yard, a large number of Service vehicles of various descriptions emerged from the basement car park level and duly followed.

Pulling out into Victoria Street revealed a further large number of vehicles both from the Security Service and associated agencies all ready to follow in line.

The few people around at that early hour of the morning around Westminster looked on in surprise and wonder as the huge convoy of Security Service vehicles, sirens and lights in full cry came around Parliament Square and then proceeded at speed along Whitehall.

“Oh dear, looks like someone is about to get a very unpleasant surprise” the Prime Minister casually remarked to himself as he watched from his office window at the cavalcade as it passed by before returning to his desk.

As the convoy made its way east through the heart of London, it began to break up as groups of vehicles, each one including at least one Armed Response Unit van began to disperse to make their way towards their various targets spread across the east end of London and in some cases further beyond.

Tracy's car and three accompanying vehicles made its way direct to the darkened streets of Leytonstone, the reflections of the street lamps off of the rain sodden ground and surroundings making for an eerie and spooky atmosphere as they arrived in a non-descript side street and came to a stop.

“Is this the place?” Hendrickson asked as he looked around at the dingy rear alley which seemed to have become a depository over the years for rusty overflowing commercial dustbins, rubbish and abandoned vandalised cars.

“It is indeed” Tracy confirmed as she double checked her A to Z of London which she had marked with a number of locations in the locality “Charming little backwater isn't it? A suitable location though, a back alley sewer for the biggest rat in town.”

“Forgive me if I seem a little above my rank here Maam” Hendrickson observed “but I get the distinct impression you really don't like this guy, I mean personally as well as professionally.”

“Is it that obvious?” Tracy asked looking across at the Lieutenant with a wry smile.

“Just a tad Maam” Hendrickson confirmed.

“Morning ladies and gents” Bob declared as he joined them in the back of the car “Nice weather for it.”

“Isn't it just” Tracy confirmed as she looked out of the windscreen at the drizzly weather before looking down at her watch “Four forty six” she declared “We go in fourteen minutes.”

“With all due respect Maam” Bob responded with grave sincerity “you are not going anywhere.”

“I have to” Tracy protested “This is my collar, on my manor for that matter and I should be the one who leads the search and arrest operation.”

“You can barely stand up” Bob pointed out “In your current condition you could not lead a horse to a nose bag and that makes you a risk to the lives of your fellow officers, even more so if this Harcourt and his boys are as hard as they say they are, it is going to get messy and we don't need a walking wounded or should I say limping wounded slowing us down.”

“You know I always had you down as the strong silent type” Tracy remarked as she looked back over her shoulder whereupon she saw the serious look that Bob was displaying which convinced her “All right, I'll stay out here but I want you all to keep a channel open and give me regular reports, I will run the show from out the front.”

“Thank you Maam” Bob responded.

“Right, let's go then” Tracy declared whereupon they got out of the car and were quickly joined by Bob's specialist armed response team plus a dozen uniformed patrol officers in protective gear.

“Who's got the key?” Bob asked around.

“Got it boss” one of his men confirmed as he produced the hand held battering ram “opens ninety percent of the world's locks.”

“OK ladies and gentlemen” Tracy confirmed as she laid a building plan on the bonnet of the patrol car and commenced her briefing “Eyes down for a full house.”

“What have we got?” Bob asked, eager to get on with the job in hand.

“Six storey premises” Tracy confirmed as she showed them the plans plus some rough sketches she had done “There is a casino in the basement, some storage facilities out the back. Ground floor is a retail premises and then there are offices on the upper five floors some of which I think have been disused for some time so watch out for iffy floorboards and any other surprises.”

“Where is the muscle likely to be?” Bob asked.

“I would put money on there being a couple of goons on roving patrol on the ground floor” Tracy confirmed “Rogers is not much of a believer in conventional burglar alarm systems, whilst I would expect the main concentration of heavies to be in the basement, Rogers however if he is at home will be here on the first or second floor probably along with a few select others.”

“Old Victorian building, numerous rooms, narrow corridors, multiple entrances and exits” Bob commented as he looked closely at the plans “Nice place for an ambush, this could go very Butch and Sundance if we are not careful.”

“I want you lads and lasses to go in mob handed simultaneously both in the front and the back” Tracy explained “Neutralise any opposition you may find in whatever way you see fit *but* I want Rogers and Harcourt alive, damaged if necessary but still breathing.”

“With any luck if we take them by surprise” Bob confirmed “they won't have a chance to get dug in and make a stand.”

“That is the theory” Tracy agreed “I'll be out the front so if anyone tries to make an escape out into the main street when you kick the doors in, I'll say hello.”

“This is going to wake the neighbours” Hendrickson remarked “There will be complaints you know Maam.”

“Then we'll just kick the doors in real quiet like” Bob confirmed wryly “Trust me, I can do subtle.”

“Really?” Tracy looked up with surprise.

“Of course” Bob responded with a definite hint of amused sarcasm “After all I learned from you and your husband.”

“Oh hell, we are in trouble now...” Hendrickson murmured under his breath.

“Right, lets get tooled up” Bob declared “Including you Maam” he indicated Tracy's 9mm semi-automatic pistol “If I may be so bold maybe something a little more suited to the occasion may be in order.”

“What have you got?” Tracy asked as she and Bob went over to his ARU support van whereupon he opened the rear door.

“Everything for a Security Service officer on his or her holiday” he declared proudly as he showed the contents of the van, a gun cage containing numerous different types of weaponry for seemingly any conceivable occasion.

“You know you could probably sell Commander Baker a week's holiday in the back of your van” Hendrickson remarked.

“Where is Commander Baker by the way?” Bob asked as he selected a weapon for Tracy from the van “I thought she would be the first in the queue for a gig like this.”

“She is apparently on a special excursion by request of Sir Richard” Tracy confirmed “At about that point he started getting all musey and mysterious so I decided not to inquire further.”

“Bob's big bang gun tours” Bob mused “Could be worth a few quid I suppose, anyway try this for size Maam” he confirmed as he proceeded to hand Tracy an MP5 semi-automatic weapon.

“I think that will do nicely” Tracy agreed with a smile which hid the amount of pain she was still in despite the painkillers she had taken.

“OK, Terry and Garry can take team one around the back and take care of the rear entrances and the out buildings” Bob called to his officers “Everyone else goes in the front on the Divisional Commander’s word, be careful though, these guys have a habit of hitting first and asking questions later.”

“Sounds like a plan” Tracy agreed “OK everyone lets make this count shall we?”

With that order, the officers dispersed to their pre-planned positions with a limping Tracy leading the way down the street and around to the front of the building where she took up a position in the shadow of an old cast iron street light.

As she looked up at the tall building and the few windows that behind curtains showed some light from within, Tracy lifted her radio to her mouth and simply announced three little words.

“Go, go, go” she called with a sense of satisfaction.

“What the hell was that?” Harcourt suddenly asked as there was a loud banging downstairs as the doors at both the front and back of the premises were forced in and the sound of shouting and commotion duly began.

“Seems we have guests” Rogers confirmed as he got up from his seat and went to the window where he pulled the curtain aside and looked down into the street where in the light of the old cast iron lamp he saw a familiar face from his past “Well, well, well, look what the cat dragged in” he remarked.

“Peek a boo!” Tracy called quietly with a cheeky finger wave up to her old nemesis who she could see looking down at her.

“Fetch our two distinguished guests” Rogers called to Harcourt “and get your lads down there to break some limbs.”

“Yes boss” Harcourt agreed as he picked up a gun and a baseball bat and proceeded out of the office in a determined manner.

With Harcourt out of the room, Rogers calmly put on his coat, removed an old wartime revolver from his desk drawer and then went over to a wall mounted bookcase that when he pressed a hidden lever, hinged forward revealing a secret passageway behind into which he made his discrete escape.

“Armed Security Service officers!” Bob called down the main corridor of the ground floor “Drop your weapons and come out with your hands up!”

“Bollocks to you mate!” came a terse response down the corridor which was swiftly followed by a large burst of automatic weapons fire that prompted Bob and his officers to duck for cover behind whatever came to hand.

“That would be a no then” Bob remarked from behind a side door “Trojan One to Team Two” he called into his radio “How are you guys doing back there.”



“Goons coming out of the walls left, right and centre” the officer leading the team at the rear of the premises was heard to confirm, his voice barely audible over the background noise “It's gone hand to hand using anything available now” he confirmed as one of his officers was stuck over the head with a wooden chair and rendered unconscious in front of him.

Tracy listened to the radio conversations that were going on between the various teams moving through not only the building in front of her but the other targets throughout the east end of the city until something caught her attention out of the corner of her eye.

It was a momentary crack of light as a door opened and then closed again some distance down the street she was in which was then followed by the barely discernable sound of hurried footsteps of a number of people rushing away, their feet being heard splashing along the rain sodden street.

Tracy's suspicions were immediately aroused and with caution she began to walk in the same direction, remaining on the opposite side of the street in the shadows as she followed the group of figures who to her were only visible merely as indistinct shadows in the near distance.

As the group she was following stopped by a vehicle, Tracy hid in the shadow of an old telephone box so that she could continue to observe without being seen.

As she watched, two of the group were seen being shoved fairly roughly into the back of a large black saloon car before the other two, one of whom Tracy was fairly certain from his silhouette was Rogers, got in the front.

Realising she was about to lose them, Tracy looked around for some help but there was no one in the street, however it was then she noticed a battered old van parked nearby which she was sure she had seen before.

Sure enough upon quickly going over to it, she realised it was one of Commander Cassini's undercover surveillance vehicles and even better upon trying the drivers door, it was unlocked.

Getting in the drivers seat and quietly closing the door, Tracy looked around for the keys which she found above the sun visor.

“Cassini, we have got to talk about old clichés” she remarked wryly as she started the van just as the car with the group she had been tracking pulled out ahead and began to head down the street.

As Tracy in the van disappeared from sight down the street, Bob's officers were dragging out their first arrests as they had begun to win their battle to arrest the building's occupants.

“Shut up, you're nicked mate” Bob unobtrusively informed one of the heavies he and one of his officers were escorting out of the building who despite being battered, bruised and handcuffed was still resisting and struggling.

“Feisty little fellow isn't he?” Hendrickson remarked as he brought a prisoner van to the front of the premises and got out whereupon he helped Bob bundle the prisoner in the back before firmly closing the door.

“Indeed” Bob agreed “The good news is I think we have got them demoralised” he confirmed as further prisoners were brought out and put in the back of more prisoner vans that were arriving to take them away.

“What's the bad news?” Hendrickson asked.

“No sign of Rogers, Harcourt, Evans or the Commander” Bob confirmed grimly “Still searching though.”

“Morning guys” Commander Cassini called as he joined them “I appreciate you guys are a bit busy at the moment but I don't suppose any of you have seen any car thieves around here only some bugger has gone off with my van!”

“Not guilty” Hendrickson confirmed with all honesty as he looked around when something occurred to him “Where's the Divisional Commander?” he asked not seeing her visible anywhere.

“I told her to stay right there” Bob confirmed pointing over to the old cast iron street light where he had left her before he had entered the building about ten minutes earlier.

“Sir!” came a call from an upper floor window above them which caused them all to look up and see an officer beckoning at them “Something up here you should see.”

It took a couple of minutes for Bob, Hendrickson and Cassini to find their way up through the complicated internal structure of the old building to the fourth floor where the officer who had called them up showed them into a dusty old office which showed signs of not only having been very recently occupied but also had indications that whoever had been in there had left very recently and in a hurry.

“Found this” the officer confirmed as he passed a Security Service uniform tunic to Bob who took it and looked at the rank insignia on the epaulettes.

“A1” Bob confirmed “Well the Commander at least was here by the looks of it.”

“Well where the hell is he now?” Hendrickson asked.

“All units from Trojan One” Bob called into his radio with a strongly implied sense of urgency “As soon as building is confirmed clear I want this place torn apart, look for back doors we did not know about, hidden nooks and crannies, the whole nine yards and be careful, remember there may be friendlies in here.”

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Tracy was feeling a bit better now that the painkillers she had taken earlier were starting to take effect, indeed she felt pretty comfortable driving the battered old van through the dimly lit streets of Leytonstone and the surrounding area, following discreetly the car she had seen earlier leave the scene of the raid.

“Where the hell are you going matey?” Tracy asked herself as the car pulled off into a side street ahead which from past knowledge she was fairly certain was a dead end so she continued on past the end of the side street before stopping out of sight of the car's occupants.

The building that she had parked up in front of was an old cinema that long since closed and been converted to a nightclub and Tracy knew although she had not revealed it earlier that this was another property that was owned by a front company of Rogers's empire.

Getting out of the van, Tracy made her way as quickly as she could given her condition to the corner of the building and cautiously looked around, down into the side street where she observed the door of a side entrance into the building was just swinging closed and the car was now empty.

Treading carefully amidst the rubbish and discarded debris in the side alley, Tracy made her way down as far as the car where she looked it over to check that it really was empty before turning her attention to the door into the premises that upon examination revealed itself to be unlocked and accessible.

“Tracy, this smells like a trap” she remarked to herself in an imitation of her husband's voice “Ah well” she thought as she drew her gun from its holster and checked it “here goes nothing...”

This having originally been built as a theatre before becoming a cinema later in life, Tracy was entering the building by what was once the stage door and found herself making her way through narrow passageways and steps before reaching the back of the former stage area where from the wings she observed Rogers and Harcourt discussing something quietly before they nodded in agreement and then turned to their captives.

“Commander” Rogers called with a salutary gesture as he went over to the two officers who were handcuffed to a hand rail “I have a little deal I would like to put to you, call it a business proposal.”

“Considering your record” the Commander mused “You would understand if I said I would prefer any offer you may wish to make was not in cash, I understand there is a DNA specialist you hired in the United States who has a safe full of funny money and is having a very hard time explaining to my colleagues from the FBI as to where it all came from.”

“By now I am willing to assume that you and your associates have successfully concluded that not only is our mutual friend Mr Frobisher a bit bent” Rogers explained as he paced up and down upon the stage in a theatrical manner that more than suited his persona, “but also that for the next few hours at least he is currently out of the way.”

“He is not exactly top of my Christmas card list I will give you that” the Commander agreed.

“My reliable sources have confirmed two very interesting things this morning despite the very early hour” Rogers continued “Firstly that Frobisher is indeed in the custody of your colleagues where I imagine that he is probably not enjoying himself one bit, the other concerns your wife.”

“I was wondering when we would get around to her” the Commander admitted.

“Careful” Evans warned “I smell a huge elephant trap approaching.”

“She's disappeared” Rogers announced with a quizzical look “One minute she was safe and secure in your special secure unit at Charing Cross Hospital, the next she has vanished into the night and I would not be in the least bit surprised if she was the architect of this mornings rather hectic activities.”

“So what is this 'deal' of which you speak?” the Commander asked “Only in my current position” he indicated the handcuffs “I am not exactly in a position to grant much.”

“Call off your dogs” Rogers declared “Abide by the requirements of the numerous Public Interest Immunity Certificates that my solicitors and representatives of Her Majesty's Government will be issuing upon the Security Service as soon as they are in their offices later this morning and I will give you the full dirt on our friend Frobisher.”

“I would have thought someone like him in the position he holds would be more than useful to you” Evans remarked.

“The trouble is he got too greedy” Rogers explained “got his hands too far into the till and then made himself too publicly visible, I much prefer people to be more discreet and subtle, something Frobisher forgot which means his usefulness has become somewhat diluted.”

“I get a worthless bureaucrat and your get Leytonstone” the Commander summarised, far from impressed “Hardly a comparable deal is it?”

“Thanks to my people in various places” Rogers responded “I don't actually have to offer you anything at all as the Public Immunity Certificates will take care of my requirements and really, you need to think far, far bigger.”

“Leytonstone and Stratford then?” the Commander joked.

“I’m going global Mr Regent” Rogers announced holding his arms aloft as if he was declaring some form of self imposed God hood “International trade, transactions concluded at the click of the switch, the way of the future.”

“Funny” Tracy remarked as she stepped out from the shadows, her gun pointing directly at Rogers with a determined stance “I always had you down as a strictly cash, cheque or money order kind of man.”

“And so the final player in this little drama enters the stage” Rogers declared clearly not in the least bit surprised by Tracy’s arrival “I’m unarmed Ms Caverner” he confirmed.

“You’ll forgive me if I don’t believe you” Tracy responded “Don’t think about it” she then quickly called across to Harcourt who was about to make a move with a weapon “Irrespective of how good you *think* you are, be assured gentlemen I can and will without any hesitation take out both of you before you could even squint.”

“Hi love” the Commander called across “Shouldn’t you be in hospital or something?”

“Oh you know me” Tracy admitted “I was getting bored and thought I would pop out and sample the night air, trouble is in here there seems to be a very unpleasant and foul stench.”

“That would be our genial hosts” Evans remarked, nodding towards Rogers and Harcourt “You know Rogers you really ought to call in some exterminators as I am sure I saw a rat scuttle through here just now.”

“That would be the guy in the brown coat” the Commander remarked aside to Evans with a wry smirk.

“Well isn’t this a wonderful reunion” Rogers remarked still unnervingly calm “one question most certainly needs to be answered though.”

“Go on” Tracy agreed sternly, still firmly maintaining her aim at Rogers despite the return of her painful spasms that she was doing her utmost to hide fairly successfully at least for the moment.

“At this very moment you have your finest officers kicking in the doors of every one of my premises including a few that even I had forgotten about” Rogers admitted “yet here we are in this place which I have owned for what twenty years now and in which you and I know full well what happened here ten years ago and yet...” he held his hand to his ear “all is quiet.”

“You know he does have a point there” Evans remarked to the Commander who nodded in agreement “This place should be crawling with the good guys.”

“Let us just say I accidentally omitted something from the files I allowed to cross certain peoples desks” Tracy explained “But ever since that day ten years ago when you ordered” she looked directly at Rogers “and you executed the killing” she then looked fiercely at Harcourt “of two of my officers, there has only ever been one person who was going to bring you down.”

“I would say I am flattered” Rogers responded with some barely hidden concern “However given your past achievements and reputation I do believe it is time to be a little concerned.”

“Damm straight” Tracy agreed “So let's lose any hardware you two are carrying shall we? Nice and slowly.”

“I am unarmed” Rogers confirmed once more, opening his long overcoat to attempt to prove his point.

“Of course” Tracy confirmed “You usually let laughing boy here do the thuggery when required.”

“I am going to really enjoy bashing your skull in girl” Harcourt threatened gruffly.

“Oh he speaks as well” Tracy responded with fake surprise and sarcasm “Can he do any other tricks?”

“How about play dead?” the Commander suggested “Only without the playing bit?”

“Oh dear...” Rogers interrupted with fake apologies “I do seem to have forgotten I had this” he quickly drew an old wartime service revolver from where it had been hidden out of sight and pointed it directly at the Commander over to his left “You shoot either myself or my colleague here and your husband will be dead before he hits the floor. I would have threatened to shoot you my dear but from what I can see if you don't hurry along you won't be around for much longer anyway.”

“Thanks largely to your efforts” Tracy confirmed, realising that Rogers and Harcourt knew full well the delicate and painful condition she was in and that despite her best efforts it was beginning to deteriorate seriously once again.

“Seems we have a bit of a Mexican stand off here” the Commander remarked.

“Oh I beg to differ my friend” Rogers responded as he sidestepped over to the Commander and whilst Harcourt and Tracy maintained their aim at each other, proceeded to unlock the handcuffs securing him in place.

“So here is how the game will be played” Rogers declared defiantly “I leave here with the Commander here” he emphasised his point by placing the gun to the Commander's head and pushing just a little “My associate here will take the delightful if somewhat damaged Divisional Commander along as well and then we will take things from there.”

“Here, what about me?” Evans called across feeling rather left out.

“Sorry friend” Rogers falsely apologised “You have no usefulness to me, I have about as much interest in Wales as I have in thermo-dynamics.”

“What makes you think for one moment I am going anywhere with you two hooligans except to take you two down to the nearest jail?” Tracy responded defiantly.

“Because any failure to co-operate on your part” Rogers explained as he roughly pulled the Commander up to his feet “and your husband gets his brains blown out all over this stage.”

“My mother always said I would have a bright future on the stage” the Commander mused.

“So without any further discussion, drop the gun Ms Caverner and let’s get moving shall we?” Rogers suggested.

“All right” Tracy reluctantly surrendered as she lowered her gun to the floor whereupon Harcourt moved in quick to grab her.

“Careful lad” Rogers warned “We don't want our esteemed guests damaged, well not yet at least.”

“A word to wise matey” the Commander called across to Harcourt “Harm her and I will personally kill you very slowly and very painfully.”

“Up yours” Harcourt gruffly responded.

“Not exactly one for long speeches is he?” Evans remarked.

“His talents lie elsewhere” Rogers agreed before waving his gun in the direction of a side exit “Shall we everyone, err ladies first.”

“Tell me” Tracy asked as she was pushed along by Harcourt with the Commander and Rogers following close behind off the stage by way of the steps and down into the former auditorium and then towards the fire exit “Was I expected by any chance?”

“Since about two o'clock this morning” Rogers confirmed “I knew even then that the list of targets you had drawn up omitted this place so all I had to do was wait for your boys in blue to show up, make a discrete exit and then wait here for you to fall into my trap.”

“And here we are” the Commander remarked as they were shown out of the door where they then needed to negotiate the lower levels of an external fire exit staircase down to ground level at the rear of the premises which was shrouded in darkness.

No sooner had they reached ground level however than a large number of spotlights illuminated the group and all of sudden they found themselves surrounded by a around a dozen armed officers who had been hiding in the darkness.

“Armed officers, do not move!” barked the familiar voice of Bob through a loud hailer which echoed all around the tall walls of the surrounding buildings.

“Of course traps can work both ways you know” Tracy remarked with a satisfied smirk.

“Make a move and they are both dead” Harcourt responded defiantly, placing a firm grip with his arm around Tracy's neck and putting his gun to her head.

“Allow us to pass unhindered and we will say no more about this terrible miscarriage of justice” Rogers declared “Alternatively...” he looked across at the Commander and emphasised the gun pointed straight at his own head.

“OK lads” Bob called to his officers, “Let them through and no one get itchy trigger fingers” he insisted.

“A very wise decision on your part young man” Rogers agreed as he motioned to the others to move forward as the officers surrounding them, still maintaining their aim at them parted the way to allow them through the cordon.

“You can't run and hide forever” the Commander informed Rogers as they were brought out into the main street before turning left and heading towards the Underground Station nearby.

“I only need to maintain the current situation until I have my immunity certificates” Rogers confirmed “and then your usefulness and this unpleasant little scenario can end. Into the station if you would please.”

With the ARU team following at a discrete and safe distance behind, they watched as Rogers led Harcourt and their two valuable hostages into the main east entrance of Leytonstone Underground Station which is accessed by means of a pedestrian subway that spans beneath the main running tracks of the Central line.

“Oh the irony” Tracy remarked looking around as they proceeded down the sloping cream tile lined passageway “This is where I arrested you last time around.”

“This time the pleasure is all mine my dear” Rogers responded.

“I think not...” Tracy confirmed defiantly as she and the Commander exchanged a nod of their heads whereupon both attacked the respective man holding them hostage with a sudden and firm elbow in the midriff, taking both Harcourt and Rogers somewhat by surprise.

Rogers being rather older than he had been all those years ago when he would have relished a fight rebounded against the subway wall claspings his stomach in agony and dropping his gun which the Commander swiftly kicked away out of reach into the station ticket hall.



Harcourt reacted by hitting back straight away knocking Tracy out and sending her collapsing to the ground nearby which meant he could turn his attention to the Commander.

“Give it up man” the Commander called to Harcourt “There is nowhere left you can run to.”

“Who said anything about running?” Harcourt responded as he lunged at the Commander, pushing him backwards into the ticket hall and carrying on until they crashed into the ticket barriers.

With the Commander on the floor, Harcourt returned to his typically thuggish ways, laying into his victim with his fists and his feet until suddenly a shot rang out.

The Commander looked up with confusion as it was if Harcourt had frozen in mid punch, his face suddenly going pale with a look of shock before a trickle of blood appeared out of his mouth and he fell to the floor revealing not only a gunshot wound to his back but also Tracy behind him, kneeling on the floor, the smoking gun in her hand.

“I don't feel to good love” Tracy admitted as her arms went slack and she dropped the gun to the floor before slouching back against the wall obviously in a lot of pain internally at least.

“Don't move” the Commander called to her as he managed to get back to his feet just about and went over to her where he checked her condition.

“Where's Rogers?” Tracy asked, her voice starting to weaken alarming in direct relation to her rapidly deteriorating condition.

“Making a run for it by the looks off it” the Commander confirmed as he looked up and saw the long shadow of a figure heading at speed back up the slope of the subway.

“Get him” Tracy insisted “If he gets away there is no telling how much more damage he will do.”

“I'll be right back I promise” the Commander told her before reluctantly letting go of her hand, standing up and making off in pursuit of Rogers.

“Stop right there” the Commander ordered loudly and directly as Rogers reached the exit.

“Really Commander” Rogers confidently remarked as he turned around slowly to face his opponent “Like I explained to your good lady eleven years ago in this very same place, you cannot arrest me, I have more power than you could possible imagine.”

“Tracy told me about that night she arrested you here” the Commander informed him “She said that she had long wished that at that moment she had taken decisive action but couldn't bring herself to do it.”

“Fascinating” Rogers responded with clear disinterest “If you'll excuse me Commander I am rather busy and have much to do.”

“So do I” the Commander agreed “My wife is dying back here and I am wasting my time dealing with an utterly pathetic despicable piece of crap like you.”

“Well deal away then” Rogers responded “Then we can both be on our way.”

“Suits me” the Commander agreed before calmly and without even flinching, he shot Rogers twice, felling him in an instant.

For a few moments as the echoes of the gunshots died away the Commander looked on at Rogers with a an angry stare before stepping forward and firing a further shot into his body to make fully sure that Roger's reign of crime, terror, exploitation and conspiracy was finally brought to an end after more than forty years.

“Bob!” the Commander called over to the ARU officer and his team as they approached having been drawn to that location by the gunshots “Get this pile of crap cleared off of the station premises along with his vile associate down in the ticket hall before the Station Manager starts complaining about the smell.”

“Yes Sir” Bob confirmed before the Commander headed back down the subway to the ticket hall entrance where Tracy had now slumped onto the floor.

“Come on love” the Commander called to Tracy as he held her head in his arms “Give me a sign here.”

But there was no response, she just lay there motionless and near death leaving the Commander to fear the worst had now finally happened.

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“Breaking news this morning” the BBC News presenter announced on the television screen in Sir Richard's office which prompted him to look up from his desk “A massive Security Service raid at a significant number of locations predominantly across the east end of London as part of a major move against organised crime has resulted this morning in a reported one hundred and twenty arrests.”

“I bet that spoiled someone's morning” Sir Richard remarked as the news report continued.

“There has been no official word yet on the target or the reason for the dawn raids” the reporter carried on “However it is believed at least one Security Service officer was seriously injured as a result which meant the helicopter ambulance being called in close to Leytonstone Underground Station.”

Sir Richard used the remote to turn down the television's volume before reaching for his mobile telephone and dialling a number.

“Hello?” Sir Richard called as soon as he was answered by the New Scotland Yard central control room “It's Sir Richard Crowthorne. I just heard apparently someone was injured, do we know what happened?”

“Yes Sir” the duty despatch supervisor confirmed “Apparently Divisional Commander Caverner collapsed as a result of her injuries and she has been flown back to Charing Cross hospital.”

“What's her condition?” Sir Richard asked with obvious concern.

“Serious but stable” came the confirmation “She should pull through though.”

“Thank goodness for that” Sir Richard responded “I take it the Commander is with her?”

“Yes Sir” the duty dispatcher confirmed.

“Let him know I am on my way down there” Sir Richard requested “Thank you” he declared before hanging up.

Before grabbing his overcoat and preparing to leave, Sir Richard quickly dialled another number which was quickly answered.

“Access code Echo Alpha One Five Epsilon” he called after which followed a brief pause as his code was verified “I need to speak with the Prime Minister immediately” he informed whoever it was taking the call “Charing Cross Hospital Secure Section in one hour.”

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“You can consider yourself extremely lucky Ms Caverner” the doctor confirmed as he finished his examination of Tracy and stepped back from the bed.

“I think that every day anyway” Tracy admitted, her voice still a bit weak but now in a far better state than she had been only a couple of hours earlier.

“Running off like that on some fool hardy crusade was definitely not a good idea” the Doctor informed her “Next time someone gives you good medical advice, listen to it please?”

“All right” Tracy agreed whereupon the doctor departed leaving her and the Commander alone.

“That's twice this week I thought I had nearly lost you” the Commander told her, looking directly into her eyes.

“You don't get rid of me that easily” Tracy joked “Speaking of losing things, what happened to Rogers and Harcourt?”

“Rogers won't be troubling us any more” the Commander confirmed, choosing wisely to leave out the exact details of the late villain's demise “Harcourt is under sedation and being taken to one of the specialist padded rooms with no windows we keep handy down in some remote building in the middle of Devon, we won't be seeing him again for a very long time either.”

“And the minions?” Tracy asked.

“Local offices are processing them” the Commander informed her “We have enough on most of them to lock them up for quite some time.”

“Sorry to intrude” Sir Richard interrupted politely as he looked around the door “Wanted to see how you were and just dot the 'I's and cross the 'T's on a couple of loose ends.”

“Anyone I know?” the Commander asked.

“The three professional snipers and our fixer friend Thorpe” Sir Richard confirmed “The Prime Minister has agreed that as soon as the former are found they will be removed from the equation.”

“Do we have any idea where they are?” Tracy asked.

“Commander Barrett has been using her contacts in the world of specialist weaponry to track them down” Sir Richard confirmed “Beyond that I think it is best we keep you two out of the loop.”

“I think I understand” the Commander confirmed whilst Tracy merely nodded in agreement “What of Garry Thorpe?”

“Gone to ground unfortunately” Sir Richard admitted “Apparently as soon as he was sprung from the car last night he disappeared which probably means he was on a private jet or a helicopter on an unregistered flight within hours.”

“Annoying...” the Commander responded.

“I did some checking up” Sir Richard produced the file he had tucked under his arm and passed it to them “Turns out not only is Thorpe very well financed but also has links across Europe and the Middle East in addition to which my colleagues over at Thames House have so far identified seventeen different identities and passports allocated to him and that number is rising.”

“He'll turn up one day” the Commander agreed “Thorpe is a guy who loves the feel of money and that will one day be his downfall.”

“Oh I almost forgot” Sir Richard recalled just as he was about to take his leave of them “Someone seems to have put a word in for Frobisher and he will be back at his desk in Whitehall before the morning is out as if nothing ever happened.”

“What is that guy made of” the Commander asked in astonishment “Teflon?”

“There is one option still open to us” Sir Richard motioned “It would mean both you and I being in total agreement plus a little co-operation from the Home Secretary and a couple of friends of mine from certain other agencies.”

“I don't want to know the details do I?” the Commander asked.

“Probably not” Sir Richard admitted “and I would venture that he will not need to know either” he indicated outside through the window to the corridor outside where the Prime Minister could be seen having just arrived.

“I do love this cloak and dagger type stuff” Tracy admitted with a wry smirk.

“Leave it all to me” Sir Richard confirmed “You concentrate on getting better and then we will talk again, apparently something has come up that will need my attention when this is over.”

“No rest for the wicked eh?” the Commander remarked.

“Indeed” Sir Richard agreed “Just a pity I never seem to find the time to be wicked in these days” he joked before leaving, quietly closing the door behind him.

“You know he is a very odd fellow that Sir Richard” Tracy remarked.

“Comes with the job I guess” the Commander admitted “Or just old age.”

Outside the private ward the Prime Minister was waiting for Sir Richard as he emerged.

“Thank you for coming” Sir Richard declared as he and the Prime Minister shook hands “I believe we have an opportunity to deal with a problem but it is a measure that requires your authorisation to proceed.”

“What sort of measure?” the Prime Minister asked.

“The sort that requires cast iron full deniability” Sir Richard confirmed.

“Oh...” the Prime Minister responded with a concerned look “That kind.”

“Perhaps you would care to look in on those two” Sir Richard nodded towards the ward “insist they go on holiday together until Tracy is match fit once more and then we can go to my office and discuss this further in private.”

“Sounds like a good idea” the Prime Minister agreed before he headed into the ward leaving Sir Richard alone in the corridor to answer his mobile telephone with a call he had been expecting and was directly connected to the matter about to be discussed.

“Thank you” Sir Richard confirmed to the caller “Stay in position and await instructions within the hour on this number” he ordered before hanging up.

“Sorry to intrude” the Prime Minister apologised as he entered the room and approached the bedside where the Commander was sat alongside holding on tightly to Tracy's hand “Just wanted to see how you two were doing.”

“I'll mend” Tracy confirmed “We are a tough bunch us Caverner's” she remarked.

“Something that had not gone unnoticed” the Prime Minister agreed “I was thinking that you two should take some time off for a while just until you are better, Divisional Commander Evans has already agreed to hold the fort until you return.”

“This suggestion has the distinct air of an official order hanging around it” the Commander remarked.

“It does” the Prime Minister confirmed “You two have done your bit for Queen and country, more than enough in fact. Let the rest of us take care of the place for a few weeks whilst you two take care of each other.”

“He does have a point love” Tracy remarked.

“I suppose he does” the Commander agreed “All right” he confirmed “Until the good lady wife here is back on our feet I'll look after her.”

“Good” the Prime Minister declared “I just wish I could order myself a holiday” he admitted “The way the economy is going of late I could use the break, however you will have to excuse me, I have urgent business to attend to so I'll be seeing you” he confirmed before bidding them farewell and leaving the room.

For a couple of minutes Sir Richard paced ever so slightly nervously up and down the deserted hospital corridor, alone in his many thoughts until the door opened and the Prime Minister returned and rejoined him.

“Found them” Sir Richard simply confirmed to the Prime Minister.

“In which case” the Prime Minister declared as he and Sir Richard proceeded with a purposeful stride off down the corridor “Let's get to work.”

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“Eagle, this is Jackal” came a call over a secure radio link in Sir Richard's office “Three targets in sight, do I have a green light?”

Sir Richard looked up as the Prime Minister standing next to him reached across the desk and pressed the button that allowed him to speak to the caller.

“Green light, take them out” the Prime Minister confirmed with all sincerity and not a little apprehension in his voice.

Two hundred miles away in Paris, France three men with distinctive cases which contained powerful sniper rifles by their sides were relaxing by the side of a large pool in the roof top apartment suite of one of the city's most exclusive hotels.

“This is what I love about this job” one of the men declared in a rich French accent “Every six months or so, three weeks of prep work in some foreign land, six seconds of bang, bang and then relax for a few months somewhere really nice and count the money.”

“Aye, it is a very nice life” one of the other men agreed, his accent being very strongly Scottish.

“Cheers” the third man confirmed “It has been a pleasure working with you two” he remarked in his Italian accent as he raised a fresh glass of champagne to his lips but just as he was about to drink the glass in his hand shattered and he fell back against his sun lounger, a bullet wound right in the middle of his forehead.

Before the other two could react, the second man was struck down, the force of the bullet impact causing him to fall backwards over the balcony and plunge twenty storeys to the street below where if the single shot had not killed him instantly, the high speed impact with the street below would most certainly have.

A split second later the third man was taken down, dead before he even fell face down in the swimming pool from where a cloud of blood began to pollute the water.

A mile and a half away, the scene was being observed through the sight scope of a rifle which as it was lowered revealed the sniper to be Commander Baker who having confirmed the kills of the three men who had been responsible for the Trafalgar Square attack a week earlier, lifted her mobile telephone to her ear.

“Eagle, this is Jackal” she called “Job done.”

“Thank you” Sir Richard confirmed “Come on home, I may have a job for you if you are interested” he declared before hanging up and turning to the Prime Minister.

“It's done” he confirmed.

“The things we have to do for national security quite frankly scare me Sir Richard” the Prime Minister admitted as he picked up his coat and put it on “I have your assurance that this 'incident' is untraceable?”

“Only Commander Baker, you and I know about it” Sir Richard confirmed “Not even MI5 or MI6 have been briefed so until doomsday it remains our dirty little secret.”

“And Baker, can she be trusted?” the Prime Minister asked seeking reassurance mostly for his own piece of mind.

“Absolutely” Sir Richard reassured him “In fact I was thinking of offering her job here in Section Fourteen, with her skills she could be very useful given the challenges we seem to have ahead.”

“Anyone else in mind to join your team?” the Prime Minister asked out of curiosity.

“Oh a few names on my list” Sir Richard confirmed “A couple of promising young Security Service officers who I have encountered over the last year, one or two I know from the Secret Services and a few others.”

“Sounds like it is going to be quite a formidable little force” the Prime Minister agreed “Pity no one will know anything about it.”

“That's life” Sir Richard admitted as the Prime Minister turned to leave but as he reached the office door he remembered something.

“Oh I nearly forgot” the Prime Minister turned around and declared “Make sure you pick up a West End Final edition of the Evening Standard tonight, you may find something in there of interest.”

“Intriguing” Sir Richard responded.

“Good day” the Prime Minister declared before departing leaving Sir Richard alone in his office to think about what had just been said.

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That afternoon Frobisher was relaxing in his office, confident that he had beaten his opposition and once again remained defiant and undefeated.

“Come in” he called as there was a polite knock at the door whereupon Sir Richard Crowthorne entered along with two tall broad shouldered men who clearly were there for a specific purpose.

“You called for me?” Sir Richard asked as he calmly took a seat facing Frobisher across the inordinately large oak desk.

“To be precise Mr Crowthorne I sent for you and the Administrator General” Frobisher responded “Not the goon squad here.”

“Think of them as an operational necessity” Sir Richard confirmed “Now, what can I do for you as I am rather busy.”

“You and those other pathetic excuses for law enforcement officers in this City have some serious explaining to do” Frobisher declared “For a starter it would appear that you two have disobeyed my strict instructions to leave Mr Rogers and his associates alone.”

“I don't think he is in any state to complain any more” Sir Richard confirmed “He was shot dead whilst resisting arrest just over four hours ago.”



“And this?” Frobisher asked as he produced a remote control and pointed at a flat screen mounted on the office side wall whereupon a sequence of CCTV footage began to play.

"This was taken two hours ago by a CCTV camera in Charing Cross Hospital" Frobisher explained as he played the video "Would anyone care to explain why you and the Commander were making a clandestine inspection of what appears to be a broom cupboard along with the Prime Minister no less?"

"Looking for mice?" Sir Richard sarcastically responded.

"Trouble more like" Frobisher responded sharply "You and everyone else were given STRICT instructions that Mr Rogers and his business associates were not to be harassed in any way" Frobisher reiterated loudly and angrily "and yet here we are."

"Sorry" Sir Richard responded "Who is this 'we' of which you speak?" he asked.

"A very good question" the Commander declared as the office door opened and in he walked with a determined stance before deliberately taking a seat directly facing Frobisher.

"I thought you were looking after Tracy" Sir Richard asked him.

"She told me to get this little bit of unfinished business sorted out first, she sends her regards by the way" the Commander responded "Oh but don't let me interrupt, it sounded fascinating, so erm what did I miss?"

"Well I was wondering how Mr Frobisher here" Sir Richard explained "was getting his hands on all this surveillance and intelligence material without the knowledge of either myself, my colleagues at MI5 or your Service either. Some sort of hobby perhaps?"

"I protect this nation and the Prime Minister's interests" Frobisher defended himself none too convincingly as his confident stance had become a little shaky and undermined since the arrival of the Commander in the room who was staring him down from the other side of the desk "as such I have every right to acquire necessary information in order to carry out my role."

"Or could it be you are just another two faced lying politician who is trying to save his back not to mention his expenses account?" the Commander remarked.

"I find that mark discriminatory and offensive Commander" Frobisher protested.

"Don't worry, I am not being discriminatory against you" the Commander reassured him "I think that about all politicians and 99% of the time I am right."

"You were warned off any kind of official or unofficial contact, harassment, communication or investigation of Mr Rogers or any of his associates" Frobisher reiterated once again.

"I'm sorry I must have missed a staff meeting" the Commander replied sarcastically "Only you see I have been kind of busy on account of some bastard gunning down my own wife in cold blood and indeed it is only because she is still alive and stable at this very moment that I have not yet leapt across this desk, dragged you by the scruff of the neck into a sound proof room and gone to work on you with a cricket bat and a gas axe" he explained with calmly implied menace.

"No need to be obtuse" Frobisher responded trying to remain calm despite the Commander's obvious dislike towards him.

"We have a problem Mr Frobisher" Sir Richard calmly explained "and that problem is you" he confirmed pointing directly at Frobisher "All the time your foul stench is polluting the corridors of power and all the time you stick your unwanted and unauthorised nose into our business, nothing is safe."

"I don't have to listen to this crap" Frobisher replied still defiant "That mad cow of yours already tried to arrest me last night and look how far it got her? Here I am back where I belong."

"I think I have heard enough Sir Richard" the Commander confirmed, resisting the temptation to grab Frobisher and give him a major piece of his mind.

"Horace and Boris" Sir Richard called to the two tall broad shouldered men in matching black suits and sunglasses standing behind him "Grab this idiot, he is being relieved of his official duties and is to be taken to a secure facility for psychiatric assessment."

"You can't do this!" Frobisher protested as the two men went around to the back of the desk but before he could protest any more, one of the men administered a knock out drug in a syringe that resulted in Frobisher flopping back into his seat unconscious.

"Nighty night" the Commander wryly remarked as the two men carried Frobisher out of the room with Sir Richard following close behind.

With Frobisher now safely out of the way, the Commander went around and sat down behind the desk before relaxing and looking around at the rather dubious choice of artwork that adorned the office walls.

"Frobisher, I just wanted to err, oh?" the Prime Minister suddenly stopped as he came into the office to find instead of his Cabinet Secretary behind the desk, the Commander sitting there calmly reading the Evening Standard newspaper.

"I'm terribly sorry but regretfully your Mr Frobisher is not available" the Commander calmly declared with a knowing smile "In return for certain co-operation he will be giving us, he is currently on his way to an airport from where he will proceed to enjoy an all expenses paid holiday at a special resort in the Caribbean with full board and lodging so he won't be back any time soon, if at all."

"The Caribbean" the Prime Minister remarked "Very nice. I hope it has good security, Frobisher is a very senior officer of the state after all."

"Nothing but the highest" the Commander confirmed with a knowing smirk.

"Well anyway" the Prime Minister continued "Something I can be doing for you Commander?" he asked.

"Not really Prime Minister" the Commander responded as he got up from behind the desk and handed the Prime Minister the newspaper "I was just passing and thought I would pop in and let you know about Mr Frobisher and also confirm to you that the whole business with Franklin Rogers is now concluded."

"Really?" the Prime Minister asked "I take it this is 'dealt with' using you usual inimitable style naturally?"

"But of course" the Commander confirmed.

"And Tracy, is she going to be all right?" the Prime Minister inquired.

"I am collecting her from the hospital in half an hour" the Commander checked his antique pocket watch "All the additional excitement seems to have aggravated her injuries a bit so we are going to take your advice and go off for a few weeks leave to rest and recuperate and I am going to ensure she gets it."

"That's good to hear" the Prime Minister confirmed sincerely "Someone once told me that if she had died as a result of her injuries you would have gone and torn the city apart, no door would have been safe from your boot I believe."

"Well I have a reputation to maintain" the Commander agreed as he and the Prime Minister exchanged a knowing smile.

"You will have to tell me about it sometime" the Prime Minister responded "Maybe not today though, I suspect for now it would be best if I kept that what was it you called again Commander?"

"It is what a friend of mine in the CIA calls 'plausible deniability', it's not what you know, it's what you can convince the public beyond all reasonable doubt you had no knowledge of in the first place" the Commander confirmed "Anyway I must be going Sir."

"Give my regards to Tracy when you see her" the Prime Minister declared as the shook hands "You are a lucky guy to have her."

"I tell myself that every day" the Commander agreed "I will be sure to pass on your regards. Good bye Sir" he declared before departing, leaving the Prime Minister to return to his office with nothing but his thoughts.

"All expenses paid holiday in the Caribbean" the Prime Minister remarked to himself as he returned to his own office and thought about what the Commander had told him about Frobisher's current whereabouts "Very nice..." he added until something then occurred to him as he looked across at the world map on the wall alongside him.

-----

"How was the Prime Minister?" Sir Richard asked as the Commander stepped out of the front door of Number Ten Downing Street and got in the front passenger seat of the waiting car.

"Oh he's fine" the Commander confirmed "I told him Frobisher was on an all expenses paid trip to the Caribbean with full board and lodging including the level of security a man of his position requires."

"Mmmm..." Sir Richard responded as he started the car and prepared to move off down Downing Street towards the gates that guard the entrance out into Whitehall..

"What?" the Commander asked seeing Sir Richard's reaction "I'm not lying am I?"

"Well no I suppose not" Sir Richard agreed "Although Guantanamo Bay isn't exactly Butlins is it?"

"Have you been to Bognor Regis lately?" the Commander responded with a smirk.

"So what now?" Sir Richard asked.

"A holiday" the Commander confirmed "Tracy needs the rest and even I have to admit I am feeling a bit drained at the moment."

"Any ideas where?" Sir Richard inquired "Not being nousey, just in case I should need to contact you if something crops up that's all."

"Not sure" the Commander admitted as he looked at the Evening Standard "although I think I shall avoid Paris as it would appear some hotel there just found a dead guy in their rooftop swimming pool apparently and another one down in the car park."

"Probably had the fish" Sir Richard agreed innocently.

"Hmmm" the Commander responded.

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In the secure unit of Dartmoor Prison, Harcourt was led, confined in a straight jacket to a room at the far end of a formidable narrow dark and gloomy corridor in the depths of the old Victorian complex.

"Prisoner delivery!" the warder escorting Harcourt called whereupon the large steel door in front of them opened slowly with an ominous creaking before he was shown inside where he was sat at a table in the middle of the otherwise large empty room.

Harcourt looked up at the wardens who had brought him there with a look of utter contempt as he was released from his shackles before being left alone, the door being firmly slammed shut behind him.

No sooner had that door closed then the door on the opposite side of the room opened and in walked a smartly dressed man, a well tailored pin stripe suit and expensive highly polished shoes signalling him out as someone of importance and with influence.

“Good evening Mr Harcourt” the gentleman formally introduced himself as he sat down at the table directly opposite Harcourt who looked on “My name is Gerald Corbin, I represent certain clients who are interested in acquiring the assets and goodwill of your late employer and in exchange for your co-operation are willing to put a proposal to you.”

“Suppose I tell you I am not for sale?” Harcourt gruffly asked “In case your hadn't noticed I am kind of tied up at the moment.”

“Indeed” Corbin agreed “Which is why we need each other, all we ask of you is to tell us about certain elements of the late Mr Rogers business empire, in particular some his international connections and in exchange we will see that you are out of here, funded and equipped courtesy of our mutual friend Thorpe to do whatever you see fit.”

“There are a few people who have got it coming I can tell you” Harcourt gruffly announced, practically seething with built up anger.

“And you shall have your pound of flesh” Corbin confirmed “Just keep your nose clean for six months then you can do what you like especially if that includes the future of certain senior members of the Security Service and other related agencies as my clients would be very interested in seeing them removed from the equation.”

“If the money is there, I'll take care of them for you” Harcourt confirmed “In fact for a couple of them I'd even do the job for free.”

“Then Mr Harcourt” Corbin announced as he stood up and offered his hand “I think you and I can do business.”

“It's a deal” Harcourt agreed as they shook hands.

“Remember, keep your nose clean, no funny business” Corbin reminded him “then the fun can begin and we can get to work.”

“One thing” Harcourt called after Corbin just as he had turned to leave “Who are these clients of yours who are interested in bankrolling my future?”

“Oh come on, you don't want me to spoil the surprise do you?” Corbin responded wryly “I'll be in touch, good evening.”

With that Corbin departed, leaving Harcourt alone to begin the long road of plotting his eventual revenge, something he did with a particularly satisfactory evil grin upon his face.

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“I’m pulling rank on you love” the Commander declared to Tracy “You are going in the chair.”

“All right dear” Tracy finally agreed as she got up off of the hospital bed and lowered herself into the wheelchair “but just for the record I can still walk you know” she reminded her husband.

“Just not very well” Jack added as he looked on before picking up Tracy's rather battered and blood stained uniform tunic and looking at it “I think this has seen better days” he remarked seeing the state of it.

“So has its owner” Tracy wryly admitted as the Commander began to push the chair forwards out of the hospital room and out into the corridor.

“At last a few weeks of quiet normality” Jack remarked as they headed down the corridor towards the exit.

“Normality is just an illusion” the Commander joked “Besides I am pretty sure that even as we make our way out of here, someone somewhere is planning something that will throw the proverbial spanner in the works.”

“Speaking of which” Tracy remarked as they came out of the door of the hospital “We seem to have a reception committee.”

“Hello” Sir Richard declared as he along with Jennifer Caverner, Fuller, Hendrickson, Evans and a number of others greeted Tracy, Jack and the Commander as they emerged into the daylight “We wanted to be here to see you three off.”

“Thanks for all your support, hard work and sacrifice over the last few days” Tracy responded to them all “I know I have not been in much of a condition to see everything that has happened but I have heard much of what has been going on.”

“You just concentrate on getting better Sis” Jennifer confirmed “We've got it covered here for the next few weeks.”

“Well you may have” Sir Richard looked with concern at his watch “Regrettably for me business calls and I must be leaving you, so do get well soon, this city just won't be the same without you two around for a while.”

“Why do I get the distinct impression he is up to one of his little mysteries again?” Tracy asked as they watched Sir Richard depart, getting into his car parked nearby before with a friendly wave he drove off.

“Come on” the Commander responded as he helped Tracy from the wheelchair where she then sat carefully in the rear passenger seat of Jennifer’s ministerial escort car she had brought to take them home “Let’s get out of here before Sir Richard sidles up to me with one of his little chats.”

“Oh you mean the sort that usually results in us chasing bad guys around obscure locations whilst being continuously shot at?” Tracy responded.

“That would be the type” the Commander confirmed before closing the door and going around to the other side to get in the back of the car himself whilst Jack got in the front passenger seat.

“Don’t worry guys” Jennifer confirmed as she got in the drivers seat and started the car “If all else fails I can always pretend to be you.”

“Just don’t go trying to pick any locks” Tracy remarked wryly “It took me two hours to get you out of the ladies at New Scotland Yard last time you tried.”

“All right” Jennifer agreed with a chuckle “So where to guys?”

“Home please and don’t spare the horses” the Commander declared.

“By the way, I don’t know where I heard it” Tracy remarked as she tried to recall something that had been bugging her for a day or two “but have you heard the joke about how many Home Secretary’s it takes to change a light bulb?”

“Oddly enough I think I have love” the Commander confirmed before they kissed.

As the others looked on, the car taking Jack, Tracy and the Commander headed off into the distance and as the sun began to set over London, the city’s two most famous and powerful law enforcement officers were finally and officially on holiday.

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To be continued....

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