

NINE ELMS

Security Novels Series Episode XXIII



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Nine Elms

January 14th, 1963

“Oi!” came the call across the foggy railway yard near Nine Elms in South London.

In the dark, the sound of running footsteps, splashing through puddles could be heard echoing eerily around the yard until out of the fog, two figures emerged dressed in long black coats, their faces obscured by the darkness, and each carrying a large leather holdall.

“Stop! Police!” came another shout across the yard which was when one of the unidentified individuals looked back behind them to see the distinctive outline of a uniformed Police Officer, silhouetted against the beam of a yard light, approaching their position from the east side.

“Come on” the other individual called to his colleague.

“Stop!” came another voice, that of a second Police Officer approaching from the opposite direction.

“Scarper!” the first man urgently called, and they duly ran off across the yard, away from the two approaching officers.

A few moments later, the two Police Officers met up.

“George?” the first officer called.

“Ted” George replied, “Where did they go?” he then asked as they both looked all around.

“Can't see a dam thing in this fog” Ted frustratingly admitted.

“You head that way” George indicated to their right, “I'll head back over towards the sheds.”

“Be careful mate” Ted then advised.

“You too...” George readily agreed before they both set off.

Ted walked briskly across the railway yard, squinting to see in the semi darkness, his handheld battery torch offering only limited illumination in the cold dark foggy conditions.

Suddenly, two gunshots rang out across the railway yards which saw Ted swivel around and look on in horror.

“GEORGE!!!” Ted called out when a third shot ominously echoed through the darkness.

Present Day

“Oh, very snazzy...” National Police & Security Service Transport Division Commander Jack Regent remarked in admiration as he was being shown around the brand new Nine Elms Underground Station on the newly completed Northern Line extension branch from Kensington to Battersea in South London.

“It cost enough” Peter Frome, the Transport for London Director of Operations admitted as they ascended the escalator up to the surface.

“Doesn't everything these days?” Jack remarked.

“Yeah...” Frome readily agreed.

“Well, I'll make sure my lads and lasses keep it all neat and tidy and see off the riff raff” Jack reassured him.

“I don't envy your job, Jack” Frome admitted as they emerged from the main entrance which was when Jack noticed something that was not there when he had first arrived half an hour earlier.

“Tell me Pete, do you ever get your Deputy turning up unexpectedly with a look that inevitably says there may be trouble ahead?” Jack wryly asked as he saw his second in command, Eisley waiting by a patrol car with a knowing smirk.

“Every time something goes wrong on the Waterloo & City Line” Frome admitted.

“All right Mos, I know that look” Jack called, “What's happened?”

“Something rather interesting Sir” Eisley confirmed, “A couple of lads digging a hole found something that apparently comes under our jurisdiction.”

“Okay, I'll bite” Jack responded, “What have we got and where have we got it?” he then asked.

“No idea and New Covent Garden Market respectively” Eisley confirmed as they both got in the patrol car, and he started the engine.

“See Pete, told you” Jack remarked to Frome.

“Have fun Jack” Frome responded.

“Always...” Jack agreed, “All right Mos, light up the roof!”

With the lights and sirens in full cry, Eisley drove off at high speed, heading south.

“Ah, I do like a nice ride through town” Jack remarked as the traffic moved aside easily.

“Err, actually I am not sure where I am going Guv” Eisley then admitted, “where now?” he asked.

“Just take a right just up here” Jack indicated towards a crossroads that they were rapidly approaching.

“Got it, Guv” Eisley confirmed, making a smart turn to the right.

“Oooh, handbrake turn, very nicely done” Jack then complimented.

“Well, I had a good driving instructor Sir” Eisley responded.

“Yes, you did” Jack readily agreed with a knowing smile.

“Ah, here we go...” Eisley nodded up ahead to where some construction equipment was parked up, accompanied by a couple of Metropolitan Division patrol cars and their officers who had taped off the area.

“Looks like a circus is brewing” Jack commented as Eisley brought the car to a stop and silenced the sirens.

“What are we doing here?” Eisley then asked as he and Jack got out of the car, “Nearest railway line is a long way off; this is off our jurisdiction surely?”

“I am sure all will be revealed” Jack responded as they walked towards the scene.

“Good morning, Sir” Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent of the Metropolitan Division called as Jack and Eisley approached.

“Good to see you again Ms Brent” Jack remarked, “So, what have you got for us?” he then asked.

“This way Sir” Brent, responded as she and her colleague led the way through a gap in the high boundary wall onto the area dominated by the vast New Covent Garden Market.

Ahead, there was an area where an excavator could be seen along with some workmen and a few more Metropolitan Division officers who were all looking down a large hole in the ground cut through the rough-hewn concrete surface.

“That is a big hole Guv” Eisley remarked as they reached the scene.

“That is a very big hole, Mos” Jack agreed as he looked around the area which was when Eisley could see that he was having some sort of realisation.

“They were digging through the concrete to put some foundations in earlier this morning” Brent explained, “They hit some sort of void underneath the concrete so sent someone down there to take a look.”

“What did they find?” Jack asked.

“This...” Brent explained as she picked up an object and passed it over.

“Blimey...” Jack remarked as he took the object and turned it in his hand, revealing it to be an old-style Policeman's helmet, “Ah, I see the connection now.”

“Sir?” Eislely asked.

“Look at the badge” Jack showed him the metal badge that dominated the front of the helmet, an ornate design with a crown and star shaped surround, in the centre the symbol of the service it was issued by in the form of a rampart lion holding a railway wheel and the lettering BTC.

“BTC?” Eislely asked.

“British Transport Commission, our predecessors before they became the BTP and then the Transport Division” Jack explained, “Does this helmet have an owner?” he then slightly reluctantly asked.

“There is all sorts of stuff down there” Brent then confirmed, “Looks like it was back filled with discarded rubbish when the site was cleared before they built this place, err late 1960's I think.”

“Let's take a look” Jack declared, ducking under the perimeter tape, and clambering over piles of broken concrete rubble.

“Guv!” Eislely called, tossing his superior officer a hard hat which Jack expertly caught and put straight on.

“Cheers” Jack responded before turning to the hole in the ground and proceeding to carefully climb down.

The hole on the surface was only about ten feet across but the void beneath was significantly larger and filled with rubble, discarded pieces of scrap metal and timber.

“Where did you find the helmet?” Jack then called back up.

“Over on the left there” one of the construction crew indicated.

“Right...” Jack responded as he shifted over and began to scabble about in a heap of rubble which was when he found something else.

“Got something Guv?” Eislely asked as he knelt at the edge of the hole and looked down.

“Looks like an old-style standard Police issue truncheon” Jack commented as he pulled the baton out of the rubble, dusted it off and then passed it up to Eislely.

“Haven't seen one of these in a long time” Eislely remarked.

Jack then stubbed his toe on something solid and metallic which he then bent down to pick up which was then that he noticed something else.

“Ah, hell...” Jack remarked, leaning forward, and moving some debris aside to reveal a boot, part of a trouser leg and a bit of bone just visible, “Mos? I think I have found the owner.”

“Shall I summon the cavalry?” Easley then asked.

“Yeah...” Jack regretfully confirmed as he moved a few more bits of timber to reveal the dusty, torn and battered uniform tunic of a Police Officer with the skeleton still contained within.

“Lima Tango Two to Control” Easley then called over his radio, “We need forensics and a Scene of Crime team at New Covent Garden Market, it looks like we have a body.”

“You know what this is?” National Chief Superintendent Tracy Caverner-Regent remarked as she sat back in her office chair on the top floor of New Scotland Yard and looked out of the window at the view across the River Thames towards the south side of the city.

“Err, no Maam, sorry” Metropolitan Divisional Commander Stephen Matthews admitted as he watched from the other side of the desk.

“The calm before the storm” Tracy then explained, “It's just too quiet, no major crimes, hell not even any really juicy minor ones, even the politicians are behaving themselves.”

“After the way you so spectacularly arrested the Acting Prime Minister that time a few years back, I am not surprised” Matthews remarked, “His face made a very satisfying thud as hit the car bonnet if I recall.”

“Good point” Tracy agreed, “Perhaps I should randomly arrest a couple more just to keep them in check, I am sure we have some dirt around here somewhere we could feel a couple of prominent collars with.”

“Well, in the meantime, I am sure something is brewing somewhere” Matthews admitted “There was a report a few minutes ago that the Transport Division may have unearthed a skeleton down in South London, Divisional Commander Regent is checking it out now.”

“Better alert all ports and airports, red flash the Home Secretary on a secure line and alert MI5, Interpol and the BBC then...” Tracy then admitted, “Jack has inherited his late father's knack of causing chaos and mayhem wherever he goes.”

“Perhaps we should compromise and just put the kettle on for now?” Matthews then suggested.

“Excellent idea Stephen” Tracy readily agreed as she swung her chair around back to her desk and leaned forward on it, “In the meantime, get me the Home Secretary, I want to have a chat about money, lots of it.”

“Okay, that’s good” Commander Neil Adams, the head of the Forensics Service confirmed to his photography team as they finished taking photos of the now almost fully uncovered skeleton in situ where it was found.

“How is it looking down there?” Jack called down.

“I think we have finished” Adams confirmed, “You can move the body any time.”

“Thanks mate” Jack responded before nodding over to Eisley.

“Okay guys, you can come on in now!” Eisley called to the two men from the Coroner’s Office who were respectfully waiting nearby and in response stepped forward with their equipment to prepare the body for moving.

“Once our deceased colleague has been recovered, I want this whole area searched with the proverbial fine-tooth comb” Jack then instructed.

“It’s quite a mess down there” Adams admitted “but I will see what we can do.”

“Thanks” Jack gratefully responded.

Jack and Eisley looked on as the Coroner’s Office men and the Scene Examiners went about their business.

“So, who do you think he was, Guv?” Eisley asked.

“I don’t know” Jack honestly admitted, “All I do know is he is one of ours, so to speak and I think we owe it to him to find out what happened, don’t you?”

“Absolutely Guv” Eisley readily agreed, “But if he was a Transport copper, what was he doing here?” he then gestured around, “The nearest railway line is all the way over there” he indicated the South Western Main Line from London Waterloo in the distance where a mixture of red, grey and blue commuter trains could be seen speeding past, to and from Vauxhall, Clapham Junction and beyond.

“You need to know your history Mos” Jack explained, semi indicating the metal object he had found earlier that was still in his hand, “This area wasn’t always a fruit and vegetable wholesale market you know.”

“If you don’t mind me asking Guv” Eisley’s curiosity had finally got the better of him, “What is that?”

“This?” Jack responded, passing the heavy metal object over to Easley which revealed it to be a slightly rusty piece of cast metal in the form of a plate, oval in shape, quite heavy and measuring approximately twenty centimetres across its widest axis.

“There is nothing on it, just a little triangle” Easley remarked, seeing the small mark on the side he was looking at.

“That’s the Eastleigh Railway Works foundry mark” Jack replied, “Turn it over” he then suggested.

Easley duly turned the plate over to reveal the other side, the front of which had raised markings in the form of two numerals forming the number seventy and a capital letter A immediately below, the faintest traces of faded white paint visible on some parts of the markings and the outer edge.

“Seventy A?” Easley responded, still none the wiser.

“It’s an old pre 1967 British Railways shed code” Jack explained, his knowledge of the history of railways coming to the fore, “Each locomotive shed had its own code, usually a number and a letter which was displayed on that shed’s allocated locomotives in the form of a cast plate, just like that one.”

“So, where is or was seventy A then Guv?” Easley then asked.

“Right here” Jack gestured all around the enclosed space around them, “Where we are standing right now was the turntable for Nine Elms Locomotive Shed, closed in 1967 with the end of steam locomotive operations on the British Railways Southern Region and demolished soon after.”

“Which would mean when our friend wound up down there, this whole area was railway land” Easley concluded, handing back the shed plate.

“Indeed it would” Jack confirmed, “That and the fact our deceased friend in there” he indicated the hole ahead of them where the Coroner’s Office officials were still working “was one of ours means it is most definitely falling under our jurisdiction.”

“And what are you going to do with that?” Easley then asked, indicating the shed plate again.

“This? Stick it in my collection of railway stuff” Jack admitted, “It will look good on my office wall I reckon.”

“Divisional Commander!” Adams was then heard to call out of the hole, “I think you should come and take a look at this.”

“Sounds like this is about to get even more interesting” Jack remarked to Easley before they duly stepped forward towards the hole.

“I have got some good news, some very good news and some bad news” Adams then declared as Jack clambered back into the hole and re-joined him.

“I’ll start with the positive first” Jack then prompted.

“We have a badge number for the officer, looks like he was a Sergeant” Adams confirmed, showing Jack an evidence bag containing a tatty and torn uniform shoulder epaulette, “W1815” he declared, showing the tarnished metal numerals and the distinctive three chevron stripes denoting the sergeant rank of its owner.

“Good” Jack responded.

“Second up, we seem to have a wallet here and a warrant card too” Adams then passed over another evidence bag to Jack who took it and looked through the clear plastic, angling it to get the best light on it that was coming down through the opening above him.

“Sergeant George Roberts” Jack managed to only just about read from the faded warrant card, “We should be able to pull his file from the archives, someone will have missed him somewhere.”

“Dare I ask Sir what the bad news is?” Eisley called down from above.

“Ah yes” Jack replied, “Go on Adams, tell me the worst.”

“There is a bullet hole in his skull” Adams confirmed, “Right rear side, just behind where his ear would have been.”

“Oh...” Jack responded with noticeable sadness.

“Obviously there are still plenty of tests, the post-mortem and what not to do” Adams then added, “so I cannot say exactly what happened yet.”

“Best guess?” Jack prompted hopefully.

“Shot from behind, then he either fell into the void in the pit or was moved here and then hidden under a load of junk to hide the crime” Adams summarised.

“And when the old shed complex was demolished, he was buried forever underneath it all” Jack then sadly concluded.

“It’s a theory that fits the facts” Adams agreed.

“All right, let’s get the Sarge out of there shall we?” Jack then suggested before climbing back out of the hole himself, allowing the Coroner’s Office men to proceed with the removal of the body.

Jack and Eisley watched respectfully as the Coroner’s Office men carefully lifted out the stretcher with the mortal remains of Sergeant George Roberts, covered by a sheet

and then carried to their waiting black van parked nearby where he was duly loaded into the rear of the vehicle.

“Dammit...” Jack checked his pocket watch with frustration, “I am supposed to be at The Yard in twenty minutes” he then remembered.

“You head off Boss” Eislely reassured his superior officer, “I’ll stay here and coordinate the scene search.”

“All right, thanks Mos” Jack responded before heading back to the patrol car, “I want to be kept informed of anything that is found” he then requested just before he got in the car.

“Will do Guv” Eislely willingly confirmed.

“I’ll see you back at the office” Jack then confirmed before starting the patrol car and then heading off.

It took Jack fifteen minutes to drive through the late afternoon central London traffic with his sirens and blue lights such was the density of activity that had returned to the city in the two years since the scrapping of the State of Emergency legislation and the final defeat of The Committee and the Ixion Brotherhood, now all but forgotten in the minds of most.

Unusually there was a parking space available on The Embankment which Jack took advantage of, expertly parking the patrol car before locking it up and heading for the main entrance where the famous three-sided revolving sign remained on guard outside as always.

“Afternoon Janice, I know I am late” Jack apologetically called to the Receptionist as he rushed inside, dropping his briefcase as he did so and then scrabbling to pick it up again.

“It’s all right Sir” Janice responded, “Christopher Dent isn’t here yet either, so they haven’t started yet I believe.”

“Oh yes I am!” Dent wryly retorted as he too arrived in the reception area and joined Jack, helping him with his briefcase that was still trying to spill out its contents all over the place.

“Hi Chris” Jack called to the Head of Operations for MI5 as finally, with Dent’s help he managed to get his briefcase under control, “It’s been one of those days” he then admitted.

“A couple of my lads said they had seen you down Vauxhall way, peering down a hole apparently” Dent commented as he and Jack headed for the lifts, leaving Janice to telephone ahead upstairs to let them know that the last two meeting attendees were finally on their way up.

“Yeah...” Jack reluctantly confirmed as they entered the waiting lift car before Dent pressed the button, the doors closed, and they ascended.

“Find anything interesting?” Dent then asked, purely out of curiosity.

“Just ghosts I think” Jack rather vaguely answered, “Oh I don’t know” he then admitted, “With Megan in hospital for her operation since the end of last week, I have sort of been faffing around without direction it feels like.”

“I know the feeling” Dent admitted as the lift reached the top floor and the doors opened, “What you need is a project” he then suggested, “Something to keep your mind occupied whilst Megan is in hospital.”

“Well, I may have something coming up” Jack admitted as they headed down the corridor towards the main meeting room at the far end, “I do love a mystery, particularly an historical one.”

“How many more operations is Megan expected to undergo now?” Dent then asked.

“All being well, this should be the last one” Jack confirmed with a tone of optimism, “It’s been a long and hard road since the Holborn bomb” he then admitted.

“The same could be said for many of us” Dent then admitted, “Admittedly more for your girl than some though.”

“No argument there” Jack agreed as they reached the meeting room door and then proceeded inside.

“Ah, there you two are!” Tracy called from the head of the table, “Glad you could join us finally.”

“Sorry” Jack apologised, “Had a call out to a skeleton in Nine Elms.”

“I heard something about that” Tracy responded, “Find anything interesting?” she then asked.

“Yeah” Jack went on to explain, “Probably been there since the early 1960’s, a British Transport Commission Police Sergeant, still in his uniform.”

“Interesting” Dent remarked.

“Isn’t that basically the predecessor plus one of your outfit Jack?” the Home Secretary asked.

“Yes” Jack confirmed “So I am taking an interest in this one” he then confirmed, “especially as the unfortunate soul seems to have died from a bullet in the back of the head...”

“Oh...” Tracy responded.

“Ah well, I have always enjoyed a good historical mystery” Jack then admitted “It will give me something to browse through when I am sitting with Megan overnight.”

Eisley watched as, with the area search complete, the scene examiners began to pack up their equipment and load it along with several plastic bags containing materials from the site into the back of their van.

“We are all finished here Sir” Adams confirmed as he came over, taking off his white paper overall that was now no longer needed, “We’ve bagged up pretty much everything we could find, mostly rubble and rubbish but there could be something relevant in there when we get it back to the lab.”

“I think the boss wants a speedy result on this one” Eisley remarked.

“Well, it is quite quiet at the moment” Adams admitted, “Unless there is some major incident in the next couple of days, I reckon we can probably press on with this straight away” he confirmed.

“Sounds good to me” Eisley agreed, “So, what do you reckon?”

“Instinct says the unfortunate Sergeant Roberts was dumped in the hole after he was shot but it has been so long now that a lot of the forensic evidence has gone, if it had happened in the last few weeks or months, I could have been far more certain.”

“It will be interesting to see what the post-mortem throws up” Eisley remarked.

“Yeah, I think I will take that one on personally” Adams agreed, “Like your Guvnor, I do enjoy a good historical mystery.”

As the meeting broke up, Jack was one of the first to leave the room.

“Someone is in a hurry” the Home Secretary remarked.

“Well, you know how it is...” Jack retorted, “mysteries to solve, files to read...”

“Do you have a name for your skeleton yet?” Tracy asked as she joined them.

“Yes” Jack confirmed, “It was a Sergeant George Roberts, we found his warrant card” he then produced the evidence bag from his pocket and showed it to her, “We also found his wallet too.”

“He probably had family somewhere” the Home Secretary suggested, “Don’t you have some sort of widows and orphans support organisation?” he then recalled.

“Oh yes” Jack realised.

“Come up to my office” Tracy then urged, “I think I have the number for their boss in there.”

“Sounds like a good idea” Jack agreed before he then bid farewell to the others and then followed Tracy to her office.

“Afternoon Marion” Tracy called as she passed through the outer office.

“Good afternoon, Ma’am” Marion the Personal Assistant responded, “Oh, Divisional Commander” she then called Jack as he followed Tracy through which made him quickly double back, “I have just received a message for you from Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley” she confirmed, handing across a piece of paper.

“Oh, thanks” Jack eagerly responded, taking the message, and then reading it as he continued to follow Tracy through into her office where she was duly consulting her diary looking for the right entry.

“Here you go” she then declared, showing Jack an open page of her diary in the contacts section, “Retired Commander Kathy Collinson, coordinator of the Police & Security Service Widows and Orphans Society, there is the number.”

“Can I use your phone?” Jack then asked, his interest significantly piqued.

“Might as well use my desk and my chair too” Tracy wryly suggested, her dry humour going completely over Jack’s head as he sat down behind the desk, clearly concentrating on the task at hand, “Get used to it, I reckon you will be sitting in that seat full time one day...”

“Huh?” Jack looked up with a slightly confused expression.

“Currently the canteen bookies have you as two to one odds on favourite to become National Chief Superintendent within ten years” Tracy explained.

“Oh heck...” Jack responded with some disdain.

“Don’t worry, a long way to go before that happens” Tracy reassured him, “I’ll just go and organise some coffee” she then suggested before turning and departing the office, leaving Jack alone to make his calls.

The first call was to Eisley who when Jack rang him, was still driving back to the office in Holborn.

“Mos, it’s the boss” Jack called, “I take it you are all finished down there?” he then asked.

“Yes Guv” Eisley confirmed via the hands-free function of his mobile as he negotiated the central London traffic that was beginning to build up with the approach of the evening rush hour, “Adams has bagged up everything he reckons may be

relevant, the photography guys are sending the location photos over in about an hour and hopefully we should have some results by tonight.”

“Ah, efficiency” Jack remarked with a satisfied smile, “I am trying to chase any possible relatives of the deceased” he then explained, “When you get back to the office, can you get onto records and see if we can retrieve Sergeant Roberts file from wherever it has been archived?”

“I’ll get right onto it” Eisley confirmed, “When you have found any relatives, assuming there are any, do you want me to arrange for someone to visit them and break the news.”

“Ah, no it is all right” Jack confirmed, “I want to do it, assuming they are not in somewhere far flung like Australia, Canada or Bromsgrove that is.”

“Understood Sir” Eisley replied.

“All right, thanks Mos” Jack then responded, “If you find any files, can you get them to me, I will be over at the hospital with Megan from about ten tonight.”

“Will do Guv” Eisley confirmed.

“Thanks” Jack then confirmed before hanging up.

For a few moments he paused, looked around the office of the most powerful law enforcement position in the country and then allowed himself a brief smile at the potential thought that one day it could be him sitting in that chair proper before returning to the task at hand.

Checking the number that he had been given by Tracy, Jack then proceeded to pick up the telephone handset once again and make another call.

“Oh, err hello” Jack then responded as soon as his call was answered, “My name is Divisional Commander Jack Regent of the Transport Division” he then explained, “I am trying to contact a retired Commander Kathy Collinson please.”

“You have found her Sir” Collinson confirmed from her office in a study at her home in the Hertfordshire countryside not far from the city of St. Albans, “To what do I owe the pleasure of this call, Divisional Commander?” she then asked.

“I was hoping you could help me” Jack continued, “I am trying to trace any known relatives of a British Transport Police officer who may have been recorded as either missing or dead either in the late 1950’s or early 1960’s, certainly no later than middle of 1963 though.”

“I can probably help Sir” Collinson responded as she turned towards her computer, “Fortunately most of our historical records for the various United Kingdom police constabularies and later, the Security & Police Service were put on computer a few years ago, none of that wading through fifty years of dust in a forgotten storeroom required anymore” she explained.

“Sounds promising” Jack remarked.

“What name do you have, as much detail as possible will help with the search” Collinson called.

“The name on the warrant card we found with the body this afternoon which matches his epaulette shoulder numbers is a Sergeant George Roberts, British Transport Commission Police, shoulder number W for Whisky, One Eight One Five, based at Waterloo” Jack read from his notes, cross referencing with the warrant card in the evidence bag to confirm the details.

“Right, give me a few moments please” Collinson confirmed as she input the details into the computer just as Tracy returned to the office and handed Jack one of the two mugs of coffee that she had brought in.

“Oh, cheers” Jack quietly thanked her, “She is just washing the details through her computer now to see if anything goes ping” he then explained.

“Ah, right...” Tracy responded, taking a seat nearby.

“Here we go Divisional Commander” Collinson the called, “Sergeant George Alfred Roberts, born fourteenth of May 1935 in Morden, South London” Collinson read from her screen, “Did his National Service 1953 to 1955, left and joined the British Transport Commission Police just before his twentieth birthday, initially based at Cannon Street, transferred over to Waterloo in 1959, promoted to Sergeant in 1962, still at Waterloo.”

“Anything after that?” Jack tentatively asked.

“Missing on duty, presumed dead” Collinson read from the screen with a tinge of sadness in her voice at the revelation, “That was on the evening of January the fourteenth, 1963, reported to have been involved in a shooting incident but no body found in the subsequent search, as reported by his colleague, a Constable Edward Sturgeon, also Waterloo based.”

“That ties in so far” Jack agreed.

“The actual crime reports are not here; those will be in your archives Divisional Commander” Collinson then explained “We only carry records relating to the personnel and their relatives rather than operational information they were involved with bar anything directly relevant.”

“I understand” Jack confirmed as he continued to make some notes.

“I can confirm however that Sergeant Roberts was declared legally dead in December of the same year following the conclusion of an inquiry by the Scotland Yard Robbery Squad which was when his widow received his pension and lump sum death in service benefits” Collinson concluded.

“I don’t suppose you have any details of the relatives by any chance?” Jack asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“He had a wife, Alice and at the time of his death she was three months pregnant according to a note on his records which seems to have been added by his commanding officer, an Inspector William Clark” Collinson read from the image on the screen, a scan of the original archive documents, “Last known address for Alice Roberts was twenty-eight Hershams Drive, Bronte Estate, Sun Hill.”

“I know that area” Tracy interjected, “The whole estate was demolished about thirty years ago I think.”

“Ah...” Jack responded.

“Unfortunately, the records were never updated with any changes of address after a while” Collinson then explained, “Sorry.”

“Not to worry” Jack responded, “You have been very helpful, thank you, can you send me copies of the files by any chance?” he then asked.

“Of course” Collinson confirmed, “I can have them sent electronically to your office with the click of a mouse.”

“I would appreciate it, thank you” Jack replied.

“My pleasure Divisional Commander” Collinson confirmed, “If anything else comes up I will let you know.”

“Thanks” Jack responded.

“Where is the Guv?” Commander Bill Tarbett called as Eisley returned to the Transport Division headquarters office in Holborn, “Commander Adams is trying to get hold of him, something about a post-mortem on a skeleton?”

“Ah yes, that” Eisley confirmed, “He is on his way back from The Yard now, should be here any minute.”

“Speak of the devil and he shall appear...” Jack remarked as he entered the office at just the right moment.

“See, told you” Eisley confirmed to Tarbett with a knowing smile.

“Mos is always right” Jack responded, “Transport Division Rule Number Seven.”

“But of course...” Eisley admitted, taking a bow.

“There should be some files coming over from the Service Widows & Orphans Support Section” Jack then called.

“Err, I think that may be what is flowing onto the computer in your office right now” Eislely confirmed, looking back towards Jack’s office nearby.

“Great” Jack responded, “I need a hard copy of all that material to take with me” he then instructed.

“Give me five minutes Guv” Eislely confirmed before heading off.

“Boss” Tarbett then called, “Neil Adams wants a word, Line Four?”

“Right...” Jack responded, picking up the nearest telephone handset and pressing a button to connect the call, “Neil, its Jack” he then called, “What have you got for me?”

“A nice little surprise” Adams confirmed as he looked at a small object in an evidence bag in his hand, “I know it is probably a silly question, but are you busy at the moment?” he then asked, “There is something I think you should see.”

“I have got to leave soon to see Megan in hospital” Jack confirmed, checking his old pocket watch “but you are on the way so I can pop in, say twenty minutes?” he then suggested.

“I’ll have the kettle on” Adams confirmed, “See you soon.”

“Sir, hot off the press” Eislely called as Jack hung up the telephone, whereupon he handed his superior officer a file of papers, the smell of the fresh ink from where they had only just been printed, readily apparent.

“Ah, great, thanks for this” Jack confirmed, “I am going to head off soon” he then declared, “If anyone wants me, I will be on my mobile and if anyone is looking for the warrant card and wallet evidence bags, I have got them.”

“Understood Guv” Eislely confirmed.

“Just one last favour before I go” Jack then asked, “Do you think you could track down the head of the Robbery Squad and get them to contact me tomorrow?”

“The Sweeney?” Eislely responded to which Jack nodded in confirmation, “I’ll see what I can do Guv” he then confirmed.

“Cheers Mos” Jack replied, “Right, I am off” he then declared.

“Give Megan our best wishes” Eislely then called as Jack prepared to leave.

“Will do Mos” Jack confirmed, “Thanks...” he then called before departing.

As the evening was starting to draw in, a quiet sense of calm had come over the Forensics Service office and by the time Adams had returned to his desk, he was the last one still there.

The illumination of the lamp on his desk was almost the only light in the room as he sat down and studied some of the reports that he had in front of him when from somewhere in the building, his attention was caught by a door creaking and then footsteps approaching.

“Hello?” Adams called out, his voice echoing throughout the building as the sound of the footsteps grew ominously closer.

“Boo!” Jack suddenly called when he appeared at the door.

“Ruddy heck!” Adams responded in his best Yorkshire accent, “You nearly gave me a heart attack!”

“Sorry...” Jack quietly apologised with a knowing grin, “Your message said something about the kettle being on” he then suggested.

“Follow me” Adams gestured with his finger, “This you will want to see...”

“Okay, I’ll bite” Jack responded as he followed Adams down the dark corridor, “You have found something haven’t you?”

“Only initial assessments have been made thus far on the skeleton and the material we recovered from the scene” Adams informed him as they reached a set of double doors at the end of the corridor, and he then dramatically pushed them open before leading Jack inside “but two things most definitely of interest to you have already come to light.”

“Is that him?” Jack then asked, seeing something lying on an examination table in the centre of the clinically clean examination room, covered by a sheet and with a large lamp immediately above shining down.

“Come and meet him” Adams then suggested which was when he proceeded to pull back the sheet to reveal the skeleton, the bones neatly arranged and presented in the correct placement for the whole body.

“He was quite a tall guy, wasn’t he?” Jack remarked as he looked at the length of the skeleton, the feet protruding slightly off the end of the table.

“About six foot three” Adams concluded, “Slim build, evidence of where he once broke his right leg, probably when he was in his teens and also evidence of a broken rib, possibly after death when his body was thrown in the hole and covered up” he then showed Jack the damaged rib bone.

“Oh yes...” Jack confirmed.

“Of course, the highlight of the tour is the back of the skull here” Adams then put on some latex gloves and proceeded to carefully handle the skull, moving it over a little, “There you go” he then showed Jack the bullet hole, now clearly visible.

“Is that what killed him?” Jack asked, “This was not post death?”

“A very intelligent question” Adams complimented him, “Admittedly with only the bones to examine, it makes determination of precise facts a little trickier but yes, I would wager this is what killed him.”

“Poor sod” Jack then remarked.

“Oh, to be precise...” Adams then reached into his pocket and produced a small plastic evidence bag, “...this is what killed him” he then handed the bag across.

“Wow...” Jack exclaimed as he recognised what was clearly a bullet in the evidence bag, “Where did you fish this out of?”

“It was rattling around inside the skull” Adams confirmed “and in the rubbish we also found these” he then lifted two more evidence bags up onto the table adjacent to the body.”

“Shell casings...” Jack remarked as he examined the first of the bags, “Can we get a ballistics report on these even after all these years?” he then asked.

“Oh yes” Adams confirmed, “The Ballistics Unit are coming by to pick these up first thing in the morning but right now I can already tell you that this bullet came from a 9mm Luger, probably a wartime P08 model.”

“Isn’t that the semi-automatic the Germans used during World War II?” Jack asked.

“That’s the one” Adams confirmed, “I am something of an amateur military history guy in my spare time on the rare occasion I actually have any spare time that is, loads came into the country after the war, mostly trophies captured by allied soldiers and brought home.”

“That fits the facts” Jack agreed.

“Many a sock drawer had an ex German Army Luger in it in South London into the 1960’s” Adams continued, “Which brings me onto what my archaeologically trained wife calls ‘dating evidence’ here” he then indicated the second bag.

“Looks like the remains of a newspaper” Jack remarked as he looked through the clear plastic of the evidence bag.

“London Evening Standard, West End Final edition from probably the early 1960’s” Adams explained.

“Try January 1963” Jack then suggested.

“How did you know that?” Adams then asked.

“There is a note on the Sergeant’s record, saying he disappeared whilst on duty on the evening of January 14th, 1963” Jack explained, “What we don’t have yet is any indication of exactly what happened though.”

“Until now...” Adams then added, respectfully replacing the sheet over the body.

“What about personal effects?” Jack then asked.

“His uniform is over here” Adams led Jack over to the far side of the room where the distinctive very dark blue Police uniform could be seen, hanging up inside another clear evidence bag, “You have to hand it to the tailors in the 1950’s and 1960’s, those uniforms were made to last, even when buried underground for decades.”

“I have already got his wallet and warrant card” Jack confirmed, “Anything else?” he then asked.

“Usual pocket litter, old train ticket, some coins, a receipt from a dry cleaners and what I think was once a bag of sweets although I couldn’t be certain, and an engraved lighter” Adams listed the items found and then passed the bag containing them to Jack.

“What does that say?” Jack then asked, craning his neck to make out the engraving on the lighter.

“Looks like ‘To Ted on our anniversary’ I think” Adams confirmed.

“He must have found it or borrowed it off someone” Jack commented before a thought then occurred to him and he opened his briefcase to extract some notes, “Wait a minute, Sergeant Roberts colleague on the night he disappeared was a Constable Edward Sturgeon” he then confirmed.

“Edward, Ted, could be him I suppose” Adams agreed, “It might be worth chasing up to see if he is still around, the Police Museum records may be able to help.”

“A job for the morning I think” Jack agreed as he checked his pocket watch again, “Thanks for all this, much appreciated.”

“No problem, Sir” Adams agreed, “I’ll let you know what the ballistics guys find as soon as they send the results over.”

“Thanks” Jack confirmed.

“...and then the suspect asks, can I have the bit I sawed off the shotgun back when we are finished as I need it to fix my granny’s sink!”

Raucous laughter echoed throughout the saloon bar of the Red Lion pub a short distance from Westminster as Commander Timothy Forrester related another tale from his days on the Flying Squad, better known as The Sweeney to some of the newest recruits to his team.

“Another round anyone?” he then asked generally, indicating his empty glass.

“Ah, same again Guv” one of the other officers confirmed, “Seeing as it’s your round.”

“Everyone?” Forrester then called around to agreement from all the others too.

“Okay, not a cheap round then...” he then remarked as he got up and headed back over to the bar.

The Barman looked up with a welcoming smile, whenever The Sweeney was in; it was always guaranteed to be good business.

“Another round is it Sir?” the Barman asked, hopefully.

“Yeah, thanks Alfred” Forrester confirmed, handing over his empty glass, “Two pints of your best, two G&T’s, a scotch on the rocks and another tonic water for the only teetotal Scotsman I have ever met, over there.”

“Coming up” the Barman confirmed as he duly set about preparing the drinks.

“I thought I would find you guys here...” came a familiar voice to Forrester as someone came and joined him at the bar which caused him to look to his left.

“Chief Superintendent” Forrester responded, “What are you having?” he then nodded towards the bar.

“Oh, seeing as you are in the chair” Tracy responded gratefully, “I’ll have half a Guinness please.”

“On the way” the Barman confirmed.

“So, to what do we owe the honour of your presence, Chief Superintendent?” Forrester then asked as he received her drink and passed it to her.

“Cheers” Tracy responded, taking the drink and having an initial sip before carefully setting the glass down on the bar, “I wanted to pick your brain” she then confirmed.

“Well, it’s Friday and I can safely say that my brain cells are now suitably lubricated” Forrester confirmed as he indicated to one of his team to collect the rest of the drinks so that he and Tracy could continue their conversation.

“Jack, err I mean Divisional Commander Regent has found a skeleton with a bullet hole in it” Tracy began to explain, “Probably been there since early in 1963.”

“Is that what the excitement over Nine Elms way was earlier this afternoon?” Forrester asked.

“That’s the one” Tracy confirmed, “The thing is, if someone was running around with a gun in January 1963, is there a chance that at some point it could have been used in an armed robbery?”

“That part of London in that era?” Forrester recalled, “Very likely I would say.”

“How far back do your records go?” Tracy then asked.

“The ones I can physically lay my hands on in the office, probably no earlier than about 1975 I reckon” Forrester confirmed, “Anything earlier than that and we will have to go excavating the archives, but it could be done if we knew what we were looking for.”

“So, if Jack manages to find a bullet or even a gun” Tracy then asked, “Would it still be possible to match it to any recorded crimes that far back?”

“With the modern ballistics analysis technology that we have today, very possible” Forrester happily confirmed, “He is determined to get a result on this one, isn’t he?”

“Technically the victim was one of his officers, well would have been by virtue of being a Transport copper” Tracy then explained, “What sort of armed crimes would be looking at back then?” she then asked.

“Wages snatches were top of the list” Forrester confirmed, “You have to remember back then almost everyone was paid in cash, often weekly and every Thursday, hundreds of Wages Clerks across Greater London would proceed to their employer’s bank, draw out the entire weekly wage bill in cash, all carefully broken down into the correct denominations and amounts, place it in a briefcase and then walk back to the office.”

“Ripe for the picking...” Tracy summarised.

“Quite so” Forrester agreed, “You had hundreds of people walking the streets, no security bar a set of handcuffs on the briefcase. Just pick a target, waltz up to him, wave a gun in his face, a set of bolt croppers took care of the briefcase handcuffs and away in a fast car before you could shout ‘Police!’”

“And of course, with the swag being in cash, totally untraceable once it was back in circulation” Tracy concluded.

“Easy money for the right men with the bottle to carry it out” Forrester confirmed, “It was only later that some firms tried guards with the clerks or later still, the introduction of armoured security vans which only saw the gangs up their game like it was some sort of greater challenge to be risen up to.”

“Interesting...” Tracy concluded as she finished her drink with much satisfaction.

“That didn’t touch the sides” Forrester remarked, seeing the empty glass.

“I learnt to appreciate this stuff courtesy of a good old Irish friend of mine many years ago” Tracy explained, “Anyway, I had better go.”

“Always a pleasure Ma’am” Forrester responded, “If anything does come up that we can possibly help with, tell Jack to give me a call and I will see what I can do.”

“And if you are not in the office, try the pub?” Tracy wryly suggested.

“Absolutely” Forrester confirmed, raising his glass, “Cheers!”

“Hello” Jack called as he approached the hospital reception desk; “My fiancée is here, Megan Thorpe?” he then inquired.

“Just one moment Sir” the Receptionist responded as she checked her computer, “Yes, here she is” she then declared, “Room 415, fourth floor, you know where that is?”

“Sure do, been here a lot” Jack confirmed, “Thanks.”

A few minutes later, he arrived at the door of Single Bed Treatment Ward number 415, knocked politely and then entered.

“Hello love!” Jack called with clear delight on seeing Megan again even though she was lying on a hospital bed, hooked up to various monitoring devices and was being prepared for surgery on her damaged legs.

“Ah, there you are darling” Megan responded, Jack’s arrival cheering her up no end. In the four years since her legs were crushed in the Holborn bombing, she had gone through nineteen separate operations to try and repair them, a long and frustrating journey.

“Sorry I am late” Jack apologised profusely, “I got held up at work.”

“I would much rather see you busy doing something than sitting around, moping all the time” Megan reassured him, “Anyway, you bringing work home with you?” she indicated the files tucked under Jack’s arm.

“This?” Jack took the files in his hand and placed them down on the bedside table, “Just some background material on the Nine Elms Skeleton case I am working on.”

“Skeleton?” Megan responded, “Go on, spill, what have I missed?” she then asked.

“The skeletal remains of a British Transport Commission Police officer were found in a void that once formed part of the Nine Elms Loco Shed turntable pit earlier this afternoon” Jack summarised, “He has been there since January of 1963.”

“Oh crikey” Megan responded, “Foul play?”

“Bullet hole in the back of the skull” Jack confirmed, “Even got the bullet too.”

“A lovely historical mystery” Megan remarked, “Railways and a skeleton? You are going to be in your element on this one I can tell.”

“I thought I would give the files I have amassed so far a thorough read through whilst you are in theatre tonight” Jack explained, “Maybe there is something I have missed in there.”

“A fiver says you will fall asleep in that nice comfy hospital chair inside of ten minutes after I have gone” Megan then responded.

“You are probably right...” Jack admitted with a wry smile.

The Head Surgeon came in at that point and smiled.

“All ready to go?” the Surgeon asked.

“As ready as I will ever be Doc” Megan confirmed before she and Jack shared a final embrace.

“In which case, without further ado, shall we?” the Surgeon then suggested whereupon two hospital porters and two nurses came in the room and proceeded to wheel Megan away.

“I love you...” Jack called after her.

“Love you too!” Megan responded with a wave of her hand in the air before she disappeared from sight, the door closed, and Jack found himself all alone once again.

Jack could have gone home right there and then as he knew full well that Megan would be in surgery until well into the morning, however he decided he may as well stay, with the full blessing of the medical support staff that were more than happy to allow him to remain in the room.

It had been a very long day and tiredness was beginning to win the battle of wills that Jack was having with it, where he wanted to stay awake, trying to keep his mind active by reading through the files and associated material he had brought with him.

The details in the personnel file that Easley had managed to find and forward to him matched those which Collinson had sent over from her archives earlier so there was little further information there.

Instead, Jack turned his attention to the evidence bag he took out of his pocket which contained the recovered wallet and warrant card.

Taking them carefully out of the bag and placing them on the bedside table, Jack turned his attention to the warrant card first, not much different to the present day

issue, it consisted of a small three inch by one and a half inch leather holder which despite having been buried underground for decades, was still in remarkably good condition, having been largely protected by being inside the uniform tunic all that time.

Opening it up revealed on the left inside, a beautifully decorated cast metal badge of the British Transport Commission Police, a little tarnished with age but still looking impressive none the less.

On the right-hand side was the details of the owner, carefully filled in with very neat italic ink writing that had faded somewhat now but was still just about legible whilst the accompanying small photograph was in poor condition, reflecting the substantially lower quality and longevity of photography materials of the time compared with today.

“Hello Sarge” Jack remarked to the photograph in the warrant card, “So, what happened to you my friend?” he then asked. Of course, there was no answer, so Jack carefully put the warrant card back down and turned his attention to the wallet.

Picking it up carefully and looking at it in his hands, Jack could see there was nothing all that remarkable about it, the same style of man’s leather wallet that had been in production more or less to the same design for decades, probably still available to buy even today.

It was showing signs of age however, the leather was dry, cracked and there were areas where it had become significantly worn through years of use before being incarcerated for decades.

Thinking for a moment, Jack looked around the room for something to use to examine the wallet and its contents properly, his eyes alighting on a wheeled meal tray table that is used to give bed ridden patients their food but also with other uses as a general table.

“That’ll work” Jack remarked to himself as he stood up and went over to the other side of the small room, took the empty meal tray and associated crockery off the top of the table and then wheeled it around to his chair and sat back down again.

“Whoops...” he then remarked as, attempting to release the pop clasp that held the wallet shut, years of deterioration saw it snap off and fall onto the floor.

However, this did achieve the desired effect of accessing the contents which Jack proceeded to carefully remove and place on the tray table, laying each item out individually with care and respect.

It took a couple of minutes of careful and diligent work to get everything out, much of it was stuck inside but the result was a significant haul of contents which Jack then turned his attention to.

The first group of items were old banknotes, far more ornate than modern designs but still bearing the image of Queen Elizabeth the Second but back in the early years of her lengthy reign.

There were three notes in total, a reddish brown printed ten-shilling note and a couple of green printed one-pound ones, all creased and showing signs of having been in circulation prior to being put into the wallet many years ago.

The second couple of items were a pair of small green card train tickets, dated December 15th, 1962, and consisting of two returns from Clapham Junction to Tinsley Green. Both tickets had also been clipped twice to show they were inspected on both the outward and return journeys.

A few miscellaneous receipts formed the third group of items from the wallet, all handwritten with faded, almost complete illegible writing now and containing scant few details unlike the modern day highly detailed computer-generated versions.

An old shopping list and a bus ticket completed this group whilst tucked in among them was a couple of old early 1950's ration book coupons, long since obsolete by 1963 but probably there as either they had been forgotten about or were simply kept as a souvenir.

Finally, there were two photographs, both slightly curved in profile where they had spent many years in the wallet and both a little faded, possibly from being often taken out and looked at.

“Ah, would this be the wife?” Jack asked as he looked at the first of the photographs which was clearly taken on the day of a wedding, there was even a date marked in faded pencil on the back, 20th September 1959.

The photograph showed a very tall man in full dress Police uniform with the ceremonial white gloves that used to be issued back then, obviously this was George Roberts. Standing alongside him was the bride, dressed in a stunning contemporary white wedding dress which even years of fading of the photograph failed to dull the impression of.

They were both standing together, arm in arm and smiling broadly with a church in the background and in front of a car, possibly an old Jaguar of some kind judging from the part of the oval radiator grille that was just about visible along with the traditional white ribbons draped over the bonnet and most of the registration number visible too.

The other photograph was more formal in nature, seemingly some sort of official image showing two police officers, one being George Roberts again plus another slightly shorter man, both in full British Transport Commission Police uniform and standing in front of a dark coloured saloon car, probably a standard Police issue Riley Pathfinder of the period, a blue flashing light mounted in the centre of the roof and extra chrome plated spot lamps atop the bumper plus the distinctive white on black POLICE sign mounted across the face of the chrome radiator.

“Nice motor” Jack remarked in admiration, “Now, who might you be?” he then asked the second man in the photograph. They were clearly colleagues and probably allocated to the same station, so it made sense that the officer in the photograph with Roberts was possibly the Constable, Edward Sturgeon mentioned in the reports that Jack had seen earlier.

Sadly, despite the many items and files before him, Jack was no closer to solving the mystery of Sergeant Roberts’s death or the circumstances surrounding it.

Stifling another yawn as his battle against tiredness was beginning to slip away; Jack carefully replaced the contents back in the wallet before replacing it and the warrant card back in the evidence bag.

He momentarily considered returning to the files again, even got as far as putting them on his lap when sleep won out and Jack dozed off in the chair, the files slipping to the floor.

Suddenly, Jack awoke with a start and looked around.

It was dark and he was standing on the corner of a cobbled street somewhere with fog percolating the air, making what street lighting there was become dim and diffused.

In the background, a ghostly echo of a steam locomotive whistle floated eerily through the air with the distinct rattle of a fast train passing some distance away.

“Good evening, Sir” a voice called which caused Jack to swing around and see a tall, uniformed Police officer standing there in the dim illumination of an old-style streetlight, his standard helmet adding to his already considerable height.

“Oh, evening George” Jack responded, “Forgive me but where am I?” he then asked, looking around and noticing an old-style South London pub on the opposite corner to where he and Sergeant Roberts were standing.

“You should know Sir” Roberts responded with a hearty laugh, “You have been here once today already.”

“Have I?” Jack responded, clearly disorientated as he did not recognise anything he was looking at as the fog cleared a little, revealing a number of 1950’s pre-fabricated bungalows on the right hand side of the road, whilst on the other side there was a row of Victorian terraced houses and a couple more pre-fabricated bungalows leading up past the pub to some sort of gateway in the distance from where the sounds of railway activity seemed to be coming.

“Let me show you the way Sir” Roberts then guided Jack to a car parked a few feet away, a black 1956 model Riley Pathfinder saloon Police patrol car whereupon he got in the driver’s seat whilst Jack got in the front passenger seat, pausing momentarily to do a double take at his own reflection as he realised for the first time that he was wearing the uniform and cap of a British Transport Commission Police senior officer which for some reason did not seem odd to him.

It took a couple of attempts to start the car, before Roberts looked over his shoulder and carefully reversed it around the corner until they were facing down the cobbled street towards the gateway with the pub on the left-hand corner ahead, now clearly identifiable thanks to the pavement mounted tall sign which named it as the Brooklands Arms.

Slowly, Roberts drove ahead, past the pub and on the short distance to a gateway in a tall boundary wall where on the brick pillars either side were a number of official signs including 'CAUTION - DRIVE SLOWLY' and a warning that trespassers, particularly train spotters were not permitted to enter the yard.

There was also another sign, a council type street name type below it but Jack was unable to make out what it read before Roberts drove into the yard beyond and stopped.

In the ethereal darkness, much hissing and clanking could be heard as if ghostly steam locomotives were moving about unseen in the gloom and the sound of their whistles floated through the air.

Roberts duly got out of the car and Jack followed him as they proceeded up a small flight of steps and then past the end of some concrete prefabricated buildings before carefully going across a couple of greasy railway lines set into a solidly built-up mass of old ash, soot and part burnt lumps of coal.

The ground underfoot was messy and difficult to walk on, but they kept walking alongside a pair of sidings where Jack realised that the various railway staff lurking in the shadowy background were all ghostly in appearance, no faces visible as they moved about.

Out of the dark loomed a mighty steam locomotive, rotating slowly on the turntable, its boiler and pistons hissing gently whilst the mechanical clunking of the table turning lent a further element to the background sound.

"Here you are Sir" Roberts nodded down into the turntable well as the locomotive on the table continued to go slowly around seemingly by itself with no one apparently operating it.

"What happened?" Jack asked, looking up only to find Roberts had vanished from sight and he was alone, a cold chilly breeze now whistling around him, "George?" he then called out, his voice echoing around the seemingly now deserted yard.

"I am sure you will find out Jack, I am counting on you..." Roberts's voice echoed from somewhere around him, causing him to spin around and try and see where he was but there was no sign.

He turned back to look at the continuously rotating locomotive when he suddenly heard a metallic click from somewhere in the dark to his right.

"Hello?" Jack called out but then suddenly there was a gunshot...

“Jack!” Megan shouted at him, with Tracy shaking him quite vigorously which made him suddenly wake up.

“Whoa! What the...?” Jack responded, clearly disorientated, and squinting at the bright lights in the room, “Err, where am I?” he then asked.

“Err, in hospital?” Megan replied from her hospital bed where she had just been brought back in a few moments earlier whilst Tracy had dropped in on her way to New Scotland Yard to see how they were doing for herself.

“It looks like you fell asleep and was having some sort of dream” Tracy explained as she helped pick up the files from where they had fallen.

“Err, yes” Jack was starting to get back to reality now, “Definitely a dream, well unless there is a mystery man with a gun driving a Riley Pathfinder somewhere in the area.”

“I haven’t seen any” Tracy confirmed.

“So, Megan love” Jack then came around to the most important matter, “How did it go?”

“I think it went all right” Megan confirmed with some degree of optimism, “When I came around, Doctor Killick told me it had gone well, I am just not allowed to move my legs for at least twenty-four hours though.”

“So, you won’t be coming home yet?” Jack then asked,

“I am afraid not love” Megan confirmed, “It’ll give you more time to work on your little project you seem to be so much into” she then nodded towards the files and evidence bag on the bedside table.

“It’s going to take some untangling I reckon” Tracy remarked, “anyway, what was this dream about?”

“I was there, at Nine Elms” Jack explained, “Well, at least I think it was, I shall have to check that out and George Roberts was there too, and it was all very ghostly.”

“Where does the gun and the Riley Pathfinder come in?” Megan asked, “For that matter, what is a Riley Pathfinder?” she then asked.

“It’s a 1950’s saloon car, they were used by the Police at the time as patrol cars” Jack explained, “I think there is one in the Police Museum collection actually, or at least a similar model.”

“The gun?” Tracy then asked with a sense of concern.

“I never actually saw it” Jack explained, “Roberts and I walked through the shed yard to the turntable, which was all still there, in use, had a locomotive on it going round

and everything, then Roberts disappears and the next thing there is a gunshot in the dark and I suddenly woke up.”

“They say everything you see in a dream is made up of things you have seen in real life” Megan commented, “I read it in one of those cheesy women’s magazines that always seem to be lying around hospital waiting rooms, and I have been in more than plenty of those I can tell you.”

“Well, let’s see” Jack tried to recall the things he had seen prior to falling asleep, “I looked through the wallet, there was a photograph of him on his wedding day and another of him and a fellow officer in front of a patrol car which is where the image of the Riley Pathfinder must have come from.”

“All good so far” Tracy prompted as she took a look at the photographs that Jack passed across to her at that point.

“I know the gun involved in Sergeant Roberts death was most likely a Luger P08 nine millimetre from the initial report that Neil Adams gave me last night” Jack then continued “and the turntable well and the depot environment I know from my knowledge of railway history, even the locomotive was right, a Bulleid rebuilt Merchant Navy Class 4-6-2 Pacific, number 35012 I think.”

“Vivid dreams are always far more interesting” Tracy remarked.

“The only thing I can’t place is the street” Jack then continued, “It’s all been redeveloped around that area now, some of the streets don’t even exist anymore but yet I can vividly picture Victorian terrace housing, those post war prefab things they built where bombs had flattened what was there during the war and a pub on the street corner, the Brooklands Arms I think.”

“If I were you, I would come over to The Yard and let Simon Fuller work his magic on this material” Tracy suggested, “There is a date on the back of this wedding photograph and with names to go with it, you could pick up a breadcrumb trail.”

“I need something to go on” Jack honestly admitted, “because at the moment all I have to go on is a skeleton, a bullet, a couple of photographs and a vivid dream.”

“You get off love” Megan responded, “I am going nowhere for the next couple of days.”

“Are you sure love?” Jack asked her with deep sincerity.

“I’ll be fine” Megan reassured her, “Tracy, talk some sense into my future husband, will you?”

“Come on Divisional Commander” Tracy promptly encouraged him, “When the lady in your life tells you it is time to go, you don’t hang around asking when. I’ll give you a lift to The Yard.”

“Any sign of the Guvnor?” Eislely asked as he put his head around the door frame of the Holborn Main Control Room.

“Nothing since last night Sir” the Duty Supervisor confirmed, “There are a couple of messages for him though” he then passed a couple of pieces of paper across to Eislely.

“Right, thanks” Eislely responded, “I’ll see these are followed up, let me know if you hear anything though.”

“Will do Sir” the Supervisor confirmed before with a thankful nod, Eislely left the room and headed down the corridor.

As Eislely approached his office, he could hear the telephone inside ringing which made him walk faster and quickly rush to pick up the call.

“Deputy Commander Eislely” he then responded, slightly out of breath.

“Mos, it’s me” Jack called over his mobile as he rode in the front passenger seat of Tracy’s official car on its way back to New Scotland Yard somewhat slowly as the morning rush hour was well and truly underway.

“Ah Guv!” Eislely responded, pleased to hear his voice “How is Megan?” he then asked.

“She’s good, thanks” Jack confirmed with a noticeable sense of relief, “Doctors orders say she has to lay up and not move her legs for a day or two, so she has given me my marching orders.”

“On that front Sir” Eislely then referred to the messages he had received in the Control Room a few moments earlier, “Neil Adams has called, ballistics confirms the bullet and shell casing recovered as being nine-millimetre calibre of German wartime manufacture and ninety five percent certain it came from a Luger P08 semi-automatic.”

“Nice to have it confirmed” Jack agreed, “Anything else?” he then asked.

“We have had no luck trying to trace any records from that period” Eislely then confirmed, “I had Duty Station Commander Corbin and half of his night shift officers combing the dustiest corners of Waterloo nick searching for anything from that period but the furthest back they could find was about 1973 unfortunately.”

“Ah well, it was worth a try” Jack responded, “I am on my way to The Yard to borrow Simon Fuller’s magic box of tricks, it just possible with a wedding date and the names of the betrothed we could get lucky.”

“Sounds like a plan Sir” Eislely agreed, “If anything else comes up...?”

“...I’ll be on my mobile” Jack confirmed, “Cheers mate” he then called before hanging up.

“I had a word with Tim Forrester and his boys over at the Robbery Squad last night” Tracy the commented.

“In the pub by any chance?” Jack asked.

“After five o’clock, half three on a Friday it is pretty much the only place you are guaranteed to find the boys and girls of The Sweeney” Tracy admitted, “It’s probably nothing but their records on things that involve guns are pretty comprehensive” she then went on to explain, “If you can find any connection between the ballistics of your bullet and any historical crime on record then they would be interested in helping.”

“Thanks, I will bear it in mind” Jack confirmed as they finally managed to break out of the traffic and onto the North Embankment, quickly accelerating away from the Houses of Parliament, now looking far better thanks to the ongoing extensive restoration project, which was now into its third year, before they duly arrived outside New Scotland Yard.

“Here we are” Tracy declared as she stopped the engine, and they got out before heading inside.

As they proceeded through Reception, acknowledging Janice the Receptionist who was as always on duty behind the desk, they met Metropolitan Divisional Commander Stephen Matthews going the other way.

“Stephen!” Tracy called whereupon he stopped, and the three senior officers met in the middle of the corridor.

“Ma’am, Divisional Commander” Matthews responded with respect.

“I wanted to pick your brains” Tracy then explained, “Who is our best person on Police Service history?” she then asked.

“Hmm...” Matthews took a few moments to think, “For personnel, there is retired Commander Kathy Collinson who I believe you have already spoken too” he then recalled, “Otherwise your best bet is another retired Commander, Keith Franks, he runs the Police & Security Service Archive Collection up at Hendon.”

“Of course” Jack clicked his fingers in response, “I’ll put in a call to him later, thanks.”

“My pleasure Jack” Matthews confirmed before with a friendly nod, he then carried on his way.

“This historical stuff really gets you enthused, doesn’t it?” Tracy remarked as they resumed their walking through the building.

“Well, it beats the usual hum drum banality of nutters, dips and flashers on the Tube” Jack readily admitted.

A couple of minutes later, they reached the officer of Specialist Operations Commander Simon Fuller where Jack knocked politely on the door before they duly entered.

“Morning Simon!” Tracy called enthusiastically, “Do you fancy doing some digging around in dusty corners for Jack here?” she then asked.

“Step into my office...” Fuller gratefully declared.

“I’ll leave you two to it” Tracy then remarked, “Have fun, I have to go and annoy the Home Secretary for a couple of hours.”

“Give him my regards, or condolences, whichever is the most appropriate” Jack responded.

“Will do, see you later” Tracy confirmed before leaving, quietly closing the door behind her.

“So Jack, I take it this is to do with your skeleton?” Fuller asked to a rather astounded look from Jack, “Not much gets past me you know” he then explained.

“Fair enough” Jack agreed, “I need to track down any potentially living relatives of the victim.”

“Definitely suspicious death then?” Fuller asked.

“Bullet hole in the rear right hand quarter of the skull and the slug from a Luger nine millimetre semi-automatic” Jack confirmed, “That didn’t happen by accident.”

“Indeed not” Fuller readily agreed.

“I have no idea if this will work but if I gave you two names and a date of their wedding, do you think it may throw up something?” Jack then asked, “Only the address I did find got demolished thirty years ago and the trail goes cold from there.”

“Okay” Fuller confirmed as she duly fired up his custom-made searching software application on the sophisticated looking computer workstation in front of him, “What have you got?” he then asked.

“Sergeant George Roberts of the British Transport Commission Police, badge number W for Whisky One Eight One Five” Jack began, reading from his ever-increasing collection of detailed handwritten notes, “His wife was called Alice, but I don’t have any information on her maiden name or date of birth unfortunately.”

“Is that them?” Fuller looked at the photograph protected by a plastic wallet to which Jack nodded in confirmation, “Ah, there is the date” he then remarked on turning the photograph over, “let’s see where this leads us.”

Jack watched as Fuller's hands were almost a blur with the speed he was working on the keyboard as he input the data and tried several different parallel searches at the same time.

"There you go" Fuller then declared with a certain sense of triumph as a scanned document appeared on the screen, "That good old dependable source, the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages has come up trumps."

"Brilliant" Jack responded as he leaned forward to take a closer look at the screen, "Alice Elizabeth Roberts, nee Havenwood, date of birth 23rd of August 1938."

"Right, let's do a search of electoral registers and see where she pops up" Fuller then continued the search.

"You can do that?" Jack asked.

"Oh yes, it's amazing what you can trace with a decent computer, a really fresh cup of tea and some crucial little bits of key information" Fuller explained as he continued to work, "Ah, here we go" he then declared.

"Interesting" Jack remarked as a list of addresses appeared on the screen, "That first one is in Nine Elms."

"Thirty-two Brooklands Road, Nine Elms, London, SW8" Fuller confirmed before moving to an adjacent computer and calling up the address on a map but then looking slightly confused at the result, "Almost every street in that area seems to have been wiped off the map by redevelopment it seems."

"That's it!" Jack then exclaimed as he realised something.

"What's it?" Fuller asked.

"The dream I had..." Jack began to explain to a complete look of bewilderment from Fuller, "I saw the street leading up to the main gate into Nine Elms Depot which was on the site where we found the skeleton yesterday."

"Right..." Fuller replied, still none the wiser.

"Can you call up a map of the area circa 1963 by any chance?" Jack then asked.

"Of course" Fuller confirmed, "We have A to Z map data archived stretching back to just after the Second World War in here, give me a moment."

Jack looked on as Fuller worked his magic again when a few moments later, an old map page appeared on the screen which he then proceeded to zoom in on a specific area and then laid whatever historic data that was on file over it.

"There we go" Jack pointed out, "Brooklands Road leading up to the main gate of Nine Elms Shed, the Brooklands Arms pub on the corner there, the prefabs and the still standing Victorian Terrace houses, all there."

“How do you know about it?” Fuller then asked, “This lot was wiped out by the bulldozers decades before you were even born” he pointed out.

“I have enough railway history books to fill a public library” Jack reminded him, “I have seen pictures of the main gate of Nine Elms Shed and the surrounding area, the pub was basically the Shed’s official boozier.”

“And now, all that is left is a bit of the old brick gate post and Brooklands Passage around the back of where the pub used to be” Fuller remarked, “Wow, practically everything pre 1975 has been erased off the map.”

“Apparently, it’s called ‘progress’ so I am told” Jack sarcastically replied.

“Yeah...” Fuller agreed.

“So, where did she go from there?” Jack then asked.

“Next address is listed as number twenty-eight Hersham Drive, Bronte Estate, Sun Hill” Fuller read from the screen.

“That was the last address I could find on file for her but that has been demolished too” Jack confirmed.

“Well, in which case I suggest you head here” Fuller then displayed another address on the screen, “Alice Elizabeth Roberts, date of birth 23rd of August 1938 is the regular recipient of an over sixties free Transport for London Bus Pass and now resides in the leafy suburbs of Carshalton.”

“Simon, I owe you a drink” Jack responded.

“I’ll hold you to that” Fuller replied, “Mine is a large one...”

The one thing you will struggle to find in Greater London these days is an old-style red telephone box still in working order. Once there were hundreds of thousands of them, virtually on every street but now they only number a few hundred.

One of them that still remained in use was on the corner of a street in Battersea, not far from the old power station which in recent years had been extensively rebuilt into new apartments and surrounded by hundreds of millions of pounds worth of new development and regeneration.

Despite the extensive investment in the area, this old red telephone box had the appearance of having been forgotten about or just overlooked, its paint was peeling, one of the small panes of glass was missing and a few others were cracked whilst the interior smelt stale and musty.

The elderly gentleman who approached it early that morning struggled to get the heavy door open at first until he placed his carved wooden walking stick up against the side to free up his right hand.

Unusually this telephone box still took cash which as it happened was the elderly gentleman's preferred method of payment, being old fashioned in his ways. He carefully took out several coins which, after picking up the handset and checking for a working dial tone, he proceeded to feed into the slot.

The number he needed to dial he could easily remember, and despite his advancing years, he quickly pressed the keypad buttons before a ringing tone echoed through the earpiece.

"Come on, come on..." the elderly man called, tapping his fingers nervously, clearly anxious to contact someone very urgently.

A few moments later the call was answered.

"It's me" the elderly man called in a rather husky voice, a sign of decades of smoking which had taken its toll on his health, "Have you heard, they have found him."

To anyone who had been standing nearby, the words of the person on the other end of the line would have been inaudible, however the man could hear the response clearly enough.

"What do you mean, who?" the elderly man responded with obvious frustration before coughing and then returning to the call, "You know damn well who! They found his skeleton yesterday afternoon, the plod is crawling all over this and it is only a matter of time before they stumble into our business."

There was a pause from the person on the other end of the call whilst they considered the implications of what was being relayed to them before they responded.

"I don't care" the elderly man then called, "We need to meet, now!" he then demanded.

Reluctantly the person he was speaking too agreed.

"All right, the new Battersea Tube Station, one hour and make sure you are alone" the elderly man then instructed, "Leave the flunkeys at home this time."

With that the elderly man hung up, which was the cue for the coins covering the cost of the call to rattle down into the cash box whilst a few in change appeared in the coin out slot which he took and quickly stuffed in his pocket.

It was with a nervous look around that the elderly man then stepped out of the telephone box, opening the door from the inside being easier than from the outside before he duly picked up his walking stick, adjusted his overcoat and walked slowly away.

The leafy suburb of Carshalton in the south-western corner of Greater London is one of those half and half places where the surrounding counties, in this case Surrey, merge into the outer edges of suburban London itself, equal distance from the countryside and from Croydon.

Jack, who was driving his fully marked Transport Division patrol car, took the Carshalton Road from Croydon and followed the satellite navigation to locate his final destination, a small side street in amongst a sprawl of 1930's classical two up two down houses with their neatly manicured front gardens and tree lined avenues named after poets or long dead and forgotten local politicians.

"...and here we are" Jack then declared as he brought the car to a halt outside a typical semi-detached house with fake beam effects and white render, so typical of the area.

In his time as a senior officer, Jack had, in person delivered a few of what were referred to in the Service as Death-O-Grams but this one was very different. Whereas in the past it was informing the shocked loved ones of the passing of their husband, wife, son or daughter who had perished just an hour or two before, the gap here was decades, practically half a century.

He had no idea how he was going to approach this other than be professional so without further hesitation, Jack got out of the car, put on his uniform cap, brushed down his uniform and then proceeded through the small metal gate and up the garden path to the front door where he then pressed the button and a doorbell chime was heard echoing inside.

"It's all right, I'll get it!" came the call of a woman's voice somewhere within the house and a few moments later, the shadow of a figure could be seen approaching the door through the frosted glass in its centre.

Jack took a deep breath as he heard the door being unlocked before it duly was opened and a woman in her mid to late fifties appeared.

"Hello?" the woman responded, obviously somewhat surprised to see a uniformed Police & Security Service officer standing on her front doorstep.

"Erm, good morning" Jack responded, taking off his cap and placing it under his arm, he knew this was not the lady he was looking for, she was too young, but he felt he needed to ask anyway, "My name is Divisional Commander Jack Regent" he then showed her his formal identification, "I am looking for a Mrs Alice Roberts?"

"Oh!" the woman at the door responded in realisation, "That's my mother, she is out in the back garden" she then confirmed, "I am Janet, her daughter" she then explained, "Do come in, please."

“Thank you” Jack responded in kind as he duly stepped inside, finding himself in an immaculately kept hallway with most of the house’s original period decorative features intact.

“Come through” Janet then led Jack through to the back of the house and via a conservatory into the beautiful back garden where, resting in an easy chair beneath an awning was an elderly woman in her eighties who despite the years that had passed, he instantly recognised as the bride in the photograph from the wallet, he had found Alice.

“Mum!” Janet called over, “There is a Police Officer here to see you” she then informed her, “Go and take a seat, I’ll fetch some tea” she then informed Jack.

“Thank you” Jack responded whereupon Janet returned inside the house to the kitchen.

Alice immediately became alert when her daughter mentioned the nature of the gentleman who had come to see her, prompting her to look around at Jack and then smile as if she had been expecting this visit for so many years.

“No, please no need to get up” Jack remarked as Alice got to her feet, all be it with a little difficulty and turned to face him, looking directly at him with an inquisitive expression.

“You’ve found him, haven’t you?” Alice then asked, her eyes lighting up at the thought that the long wait for her husband to be finally located had finally come to an end.

“Yes, I have” Jack confirmed as he then handed over to her the evidence bags containing her late husband’s wallet, the two photographs and the warrant card.

“Thank you, young man” Alice then responded, choosing wisely to resume her seat, and indicating Jack to join her, “Most kind of you, really most kind.”

“Your husband was a Transport Police Officer like myself, and even though the organisation has changed its name a couple of times and so many years have passed, I felt it only right that you should hear the news from a senior officer as befits tradition” Jack explained.

“May I ask where you found him?” Alice then asked as Janet returned with a tray containing tea and biscuits.

“Nine Elms, the site of the old loco works” Jack confirmed as Janet poured the tea in fine bone China cups, “His remains were discovered yesterday afternoon.”

“So, he nearly made it home” Alice remarked as she sat back with her tea and allowed herself a little chuckle, “We lived in one of those prefabricated places in Brooklands Road after we got married.”

“I had some difficulty tracking you down” Jack admitted, “The records were not kept up to date, it was only the fact I knew the date of your wedding from the photograph there that I managed to trace you via your free bus pass.”

“I knew that thing would come in useful one day” Alice chuckled in response, “George would have found that highly amusing too.”

“Do you have any idea what happened to my father?” Janet then asked.

“Not really, no” Jack replied, “A lot of the records from back then have yet to be traced but it appears he died whilst on duty.”

“He never came home that night you know?” Alice recalled with sadness, “I waited up for two days without sleep, they had every Police officer in South London combing the area looking for him, but they found nothing.”

“What happens now?” Janet inquired as she offered some more tea from the pot that both Jack and Alice gratefully accepted.

“At the moment, your father’s body is with our forensic investigation people” Jack explained, “I would hope that he can be released for burial within a week to ten days all being well.”

“I should get myself sorted out” Alice then remarked, “You will need me to identify the body I presume? That is the procedure if I recall correctly.”

“It is fine, that won’t be necessary” Jack reassured her whereupon Alice relaxed again.

“You know, every time he came home from work, he always placed his helmet on the mantelpiece” Alice fondly recalled, “That meant if he was coming off a late turn and I was asleep, he didn’t need to wake me, all I had to do was see that his helmet was back there in its proper place when I woke up in the morning, that space on the mantelpiece is still empty...”

“If you like, I can ensure your late husband’s helmet and other effects are returned to you” Jack confirmed.

“Thank you” Alice gratefully responded before taking another sip of tea and then proceeding to lean forward and look Jack in the eyes, “How did he die?” she then directly asked, “and please don’t wrap it up in cotton wool, I want the truth young man.”

“He was shot” Jack honestly confirmed, “There was a bullet hole in the skull just back behind the right ear” he explained, “If it makes it any better, he probably never felt a thing.”

“Thank you for your honesty young man” Alice responded, relaxing again with a satisfied look.

“I will find out what happened to your husband” Jack then promised, “We as a service; owe it to him, and to you.”

“You strike me as the sort of officer who always gets his man” Alice commented, “You have an honest and caring face, has anyone ever told you that?”

“Megan...” Jack replied, “Err, that’s my fiancé” he then explained.

“She is a very lucky lady” Alice then complimented.

“If I am to find out what happened though, I am going to need some help” Jack then continued and picked up the second photograph, “By any chance do you know who the other Police Officer in this photograph is with your husband?”

“That’s Ted” Alice confirmed, “Edward Sturgeon, my husband and he graduated in the same class at Tadworth and were the best of friends, he was George’s best man at our wedding.”

“I don’t suppose he is still around, is he?” Jack then tentatively asked.

“Old Ted?” Janet remarked with a laugh, “Yeah, he is still around, grouchy, old but still an absolute hoot around a Christmas dinner table.”

“What about anyone else your husband may have worked with?” Jack asked.

“I don’t think so” Alice tried to recall, “Most of George’s workmates and superiors are either dead or long since lost in the mists of time.”

“So where can I find Edward Sturgeon?” Jack inquired.

“Probably on the end of a fishing rod somewhere, not too far from a pub” Janet jokingly answered.

“...and driving around in that old car of his” Alice added, “This one in fact” she then indicated the car in the wedding photograph, “he loaned it to us for the wedding, you know, something borrowed...”

“In which case it will be on the computer” Jack concluded with a sense of hope. “I am going to leave you my card” he then handed across his contact details to Alice, “If you think of anything or just want to have a chat, do not hesitate to give me a call.”

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent QPM” Alice read from the card, seemingly impressed before something occurred to her, “If you want a little surprise, check the archives for the official publicity photographs George appeared in once, you may see someone you recognise.”

“Who?” Jack responded with a look of mystification as he stood up which was when Alice insisted on standing up again too all be it this time with Janet’s help.

“You’ll find out” Alice confirmed with a knowing wink as they shook hands.

The elderly man walked slowly through the streets of Battersea, occasionally glancing up at the multitude of new builds and extensive redevelopment of old existing buildings that now dominated what was once quite a run-down area.

He had grown up around here, lived in the area all his life and now the surroundings were all but unrecognisable, just a few small features here and there to connect his memories of the past to the present save for the four tall chimneys of the mighty Battersea Power Station that dominated the skyline above, and even those were modern replicas of the originals.

One thing the elderly gentleman never thought he would see in his old neighbourhood was an Underground Station but yet, a couple of days earlier, a new one had opened at the end of a short branch of the Northern Line from Kennington with just another new station at Nine Elms in between.

Actually directly named after the most famous local landmark, Battersea Power Station Station as it wound up being named was a bit of a tongue twister, a product of a meeting somewhere deep in the bowels of Transport for London headquarters some years earlier but fortunately sense had prevailed a little bit and the signs on the front of the impressive looking brand new entrance had omitted the second 'station' off it, however to the locals it had already been simply shortened to Battersea Tube.

The elderly gentleman did not need to pay his way to enter the station, being a resident of Greater London and over the age of sixty, he got a complimentary Freedom Pass which he used on the ticket barriers which beeped, opened and allowed him to go ahead.

There were few people around that morning, it was past the morning peak, a lot of the redevelopment in the area was still not completed yet and barring a few railway enthusiasts and inquisitive locals, the station had not seen a huge number of people passing through in its first couple of days of full operation.

As a result, there was nobody to take any notice of the elderly gentleman as he rode the down escalator into the bowels of the station, reaching the platform level a few moments later where the sound of a Northern Line train of the usual 1996 type Tube Stock departing echoed through the passageways.

The service frequency on the new extension was still not at full capacity yet so there would be a ten minute wait before the next train arrived and another seven minute wait on top of that before it was due to depart again, back the way it had come.

The elderly gentleman paced down one of the platforms as quickly as his aging limbs and walking stick would allow him before reaching the far end and stopping, staring into the dark portal at the south end beyond which no trains passed even though the tunnels continued on another half mile from there which was deliberately included in the design with a view to a possible future extension one day on towards Clapham.

To the elderly man however, the dark portal to nowhere represented a perfectly fitting metaphor for the way he was feeling right now. Old, aged, betrayed and possibly for the first time in his long and eventful life, scared.

“Hello old friend...” came a voice from behind the elderly gentleman which caused him to turn around and see another man standing there, of similar age and build but obviously in far better health and smartly turned out in a suit and tie with a matching long overcoat that were all clearly tailored to fit but a very long time ago as the style was much more of the 1960’s than the present day.

“There you are” the elderly gentleman remarked, “Look, I am sorry about this” he then struggled to say.

“Don’t worry about it” the second man reassured him, “It will be taken care of, just a matter of dealing with the loose ends.”

“Loose ends?” the elderly gentleman asked, unsure where this conversation was heading.

“Yes, like this one” the other man calmly replied as he produced a semi-automatic pistol from under his overcoat and pointed ahead, “Look familiar?” he then asked with a rather evil looking smile.

“Now, hang on...” the elderly gentleman responded, now in a panic, “We can work this out!”

A few moments later there were screams and shouting when a series of gunshots sounded loudly throughout the station complex.

“Lima Tango One to Control” Jack called into his radio as he went to get back in his patrol car.

“Control receiving, Lima Tango One” the response came from the Control Room at Holborn.

“Could you do a National Computer check for me on a vehicle if it still exists, registration number Delta November X-Ray Three Three Five” he called, double checking the plate visible in the wedding photograph,

“One moment please Sir, stand by” the Control Room responded.

Jack proceeded to get back in the car, close the door, fasten his seatbelt and start the engine whilst he waited for a response.

“Lima Tango One from Control” the Control Room then called.

“Go ahead” Jack responded as he prepared to note down any details that may be forthcoming.

“Vehicle registration number Delta November X-Ray Three Three Five is still in existence” the Control Room confirmed, “Comes up as a 1953 silver Daimler Conquest, two owners from new, first one was a David Sturgeon of Poplar, the second one from 1959 is an Edward Sturgeon, related I presume.”

“Bingo!” Jack responded, “Do you have a current address by any chance?” he then asked.

“225 Haltwhistle Road, Hackbridge” the Control Room confirmed.

“Marvellous, cheers for that” Jack then responded as he prepared to drive off, “Lima Tango One out.”

“Code One Alert, Chief Superintendent to the Control Room” came the urgent call over Tracy’s radio as she was sat in the canteen at New Scotland Yard.

“You couldn’t make it up...” Tracy responded as she leapt to her feet, grabbed her coffee and cake and headed out of the room.

Walking briskly down the corridor, she soon reached the lifts and as she waited for the first available car going up, she reached for her radio.

“Alpha One to Control” Tracy then called, having had to finish the mouthful of cake she was chewing before she could properly speak “I am on my way up now, what is all the excitement about?” she then asked.

“Reports of shots fired at Battersea Power Station Underground Station, two minutes ago” came the confirmation from the Control Room Duty Supervisor.

“Scramble Armed Support, red flash the Transport Divisional Commander and put us on alert level one” Tracy instantly responded, “scramble everything we have into that area right now” she ordered as the lift arrived, the doors opened, and she proceeded inside, pressing the button for the top floor.

“Already in hand Ma’am” came the confirmation.

“Then why did you need me?” Tracy wryly remarked to herself as she chose that moment to finish off her cake.

A few moments later Tracy arrived in the Main Control Room to a scene of much frenetic activity.

“All right, what have we got?” she then asked.

“US Embassy Security are going absolutely ape shit right now” the Control Room Duty Supervisor confirmed, “This has all kicked off just a stones throw away from their new digs.”

“Ah yes, the new branch of Paranoia Central” Tracy remarked.

“Divisional Commander Bob Thornton is on way with his Specialist Armed Response Team, the Transport Division have several local officers already on site sorting out the evacuation and sealing off the area or arriving any moment and Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley is on his way with reinforcements now” the Control Room Supervisor added.

“I want regular reports please” Tracy then formally requested, “I am going down there, if there is going to be any diplomatic involvement then I should be on site to diffuse any issues.”

“I’ll have a car waiting for you downstairs imminently” the Control Room Supervisor.

“No, it’s all right” Tracy responded as she prepared to depart, “I’ll take my motorbike.”

It was then something occurred to her, and she double backed.

“You said Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley was on the way, correct?” Tracy then asked.

“Yes Ma’am” the Control Room Supervisor confirmed, “They have not been able to get hold of their Chief, he seems to have gone off the grid somewhere.”

“Tell Holborn to keep trying to get hold of him” Tracy then instructed, “I am out of here” she then declared before departing.

Jack was in Hackbridge, a few miles closer towards the centre of Greater London from Carshalton and he had his mobile on silent, whilst the area he was driving through was a bit of a radio black spot, so he was unaware of events unfolding on his jurisdiction back in Battersea.

His destination was a humble looking 1950’s design semi-detached house on an estate on the north side of Hackbridge which he soon found and was pulling up outside of.

The house showed signs of having been occupied by the same resident for many years, although it was largely cared for, the paintwork was looking tired, and the garden was tidy but not fastidiously so.

Jack got out of the car, looked around the genteel area he now found himself in and then proceeded through the small wooden gate and up the garden path to the front door whereupon he rang the bell.

After a minute with no response, he rang the bell again but to no avail so he decided to look through the adjacent bay front window but could see that no one was home.

Curiosity then got the better of him and he stepped to his left to look through the old, probably original garage door with its grid of small windows set into the upper third of its tired wooden two leaf structure.

“Definitely the right place” Jack remarked to himself as he noticed the shape of a classic silver or grey saloon car inside and part of the rear registration number where he could see a D and a N at the start.

“Can I help you Officer?” came a voice from behind him which caused Jack to turn around and see a man leaning over the fence from next door.

“Hello” Jack then responded, “I am looking for an Edward Sturgeon” he explained, “I believe he lives here?”

“He does” the neighbour confirmed, “but he is not in, he has gone fishing I expect, or he will be in his caravan near his allotment.”

“Which one do you think would be my best bet?” Jack then asked.

“What’s today?” the neighbour tried to recall, “Thursday, that’s it, he’ll be fishing then, try the old canal towpath about a mile and half from here, near the old gasometer” he then indicated to the huge round cast iron structure visible in the distance and because of its sheer size, a local landmark that was viewable for miles around.

“Thanks” Jack replied, “Much appreciated.”

“No problem” the neighbour confirmed before Jack duly left.

Jack decided to walk over towards the canal, using the gasometer in the distance as his guide before he finally found the towpath down a slope and in the shadow of the main railway line above and at one point crossing overhead.

“Now where?” Jack then asked himself, looking up and down the canal for a few moments as a five-car train of Southern operated Class 377 Electrostar type passenger stock rattled over the bridge on its way to Epsom Downs from London Victoria.

It was as the sound of the train faded away into the distance that Jack noticed a fisherman’s rod suspended over the water from the embankment on the north side approximately fifty yards from where he was standing and so he duly headed off in that direction.

As he approached the fisherman, the man looked up, squinted, and then exhibited a look of some surprise.

“An officer of the law no less” he declared, “Sorry constable, my fishing licence is quite in order” he joked.

“You must be Edward Sturgeon” Jack then remarked, for despite the years that had passed, he could recognise the face from the old photograph.

“At your service Sir” Sturgeon confirmed, standing up and shaking Jack’s hand, “Sorry, not a constable” he then noticed the rank insignia, “Divisional Commander?”

“For my sins...” Jack admitted, “Divisional Commander Jack Regent, Transport Division” he then confirmed.

It was then that Sturgeon put two and two together and realised the significance of this meeting, especially as it was the head of the Transport Division he was talking to.

“You have found old George, haven’t you?” Sturgeon then asked with a look of relief and amazement.

“Yes, yes I have” Jack nodded.

“At last!” Sturgeon raised his hands high, “Where did you find him?” he then asked.

“Underneath the old turntable well on the site of the old Nine Elms Shed” Jack confirmed.

“I knew it” Sturgeon responded, clearly annoyed at this revelation, “The one place they wouldn’t let us search.”

“Really?” Jack was intrigued.

“When he was officially declared missing, a massive search was done all across the area” Sturgeon went on to explain, “We looked everywhere except for the turntable pit because the Acting Shed Foreman said it was impossible for anyone to be in there and it was, in his opinion too dangerous to go into it to look.”

“There is a potential line of inquiry right there” Jack remarked.

“You are investigating it?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Oh yes Sir” Jack confirmed, “I want to know exactly what happened, and I need your help.”

“For George?” Sturgeon responded, “All right, I’ll help in any way I can. I retired as a Detective Inspector some years ago now so I may be a bit rusty though.”

“I am sure we will manage” Jack reassured him.

“Very well, Divisional Commander, I am in” Sturgeon confirmed, “Oh and my friends call me Ted.”

“Ted it is” Jack agreed as they shook hands warmly.

“Here, help me with my gear, will you?” Sturgeon then asked as he started to collect up his fishing equipment, “We need to get back to my place and dig out all my old files.”

“Did you catch anything?” Jack then asked out of interest.

“Not yet my young friend” Sturgeon responded positively “but I fully intend to.”

“Ah, a classic circus” Tracy remarked as she arrived outside Battersea Power Station Underground Station and got off her motorbike in amid a scene of controlled chaos as the area around the impressive new station building was being sealed off and evacuated whilst interested onlookers and members of the press jostled for a position, desperate to see what was going on.

“Good morning, Chief Superintendent” Eisley called as he came over and met her a short distance from the main entrance.

“Morning” Tracy responded, “What have we got?”

“One body at the very far end of one of the platforms, shot at least three times by an unknown assailant” Eisley explained, “The whole area has been confirmed evacuated and London Underground are spinning around all Northern Line services back at Kennington until further notice.”

“Where the hell is Jack?” Tracy then asked, looking around with a slightly concerned frown.

“We still have not been able to contact him Ma’am” Eisley confirmed, “He seems to be off the air at the moment.”

“Lima Tango One from Alpha One” Tracy called into her radio, “Urgent message.”

Her call coincided with Jack returning with Sturgeon back to his home which was in an area where the radio reception was actually reasonable.

“You go on ahead” Jack motioned Sturgeon towards the front door, “I had better take this.”

“Lima Tango One receiving, over” Jack then replied to a look of relief from Tracy.

“Where the hell have you been?” Tracy then called with obvious frustration.

“Sorry Ma’am” Jack profusely apologised “I have been out on enquiries and the reception down this way is a tad naff” he then admitted.

“I thought you had better know, there has been a firearms incident on your manor” Tracy then informed him, “to be precise, the platform level at Battersea Power Station err, Station” she slightly awkwardly concluded, alluding to the confusion on the correct name for the place.

“When did Battersea get an Underground Station?” Sturgeon asked, somewhat taken by surprise.

“About two days ago” Jack confirmed before returning to the radio call, “All received” he then confirmed, “I will be there right away.”

“Duty calls huh?” Sturgeon remarked with a knowing smile, “I remember those days.”

“I would like to hear about them” Jack replied, “Can you meet me this afternoon?” he then asked.

“It’ll take me an hour or two to find my old stuff so, yes I can make it” Sturgeon confirmed, “Where and when?” he then asked.

“Holborn, the Transport Division Head Office at say four o’clock?” Jack then suggested, “I have to look in on my fiancé at some point as she is in hospital at the moment.”

“I am sorry to hear that” Sturgeon sympathetically responded.

“Thanks” Jack replied as he proceeded to his patrol car and opened the driver’s side door, “Holborn at four o’clock.”

“I’ll be there” Sturgeon agreed, “See you later.”

The veteran retired Police Officer smiled and reminisced a little as he watched Jack drive off at full speed in his patrol car with the lights and sirens in full cry.

“We just had a bell on the front bumper in my day...” he then remarked to himself with a chuckle before opening his front door and heading inside.

Eisley escorted Tracy through the Station complex, down the escalators and then along the platform to where a section had been taped off and the Forensic Scene Examination Team led by Neil Adams was already at work examining the body where it had fallen, photographing and recording every minute detail.

“Here we are Ma’am” Eisley confirmed as they came to a stop at the tape barrier, not willing to continue further in case they contaminated the scene evidence.

“Thanks Mos” Tracy responded, “You head back up and make sure everything is under control top side and when that wandering stepson of mine, your Guvnor shows himself, send him down.”

“Yes Ma’am” Eisley confirmed with a salute before hurrying away.

“Afternoon, morning, whatever it is” Tracy then called over, “What have we got Neil?” she then asked.

“IC1 male, approximately eighty years of age” Adams confirmed, “According to his Freedom Bus Pass, he is, or rather was one Alfred Gaskill” he then showed Tracy the identification he had found on the body, now encapsulated in a clear plastic evidence exhibit bag.

“Gaskill...” Tracy mused, “I am sure I have heard that name somewhere.”

“Shot three times in the chest, he was probably dead from the first shot” Adams then continued, “the rest were just insurance, someone wanted this guy dead in a hurry.”

“Mugging gone wrong?” Tracy then asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“Wallet, cash, cards, all personal effects are still present” Adams confirmed, showing her another evidence bag.

“Cold bloodied murder then” Tracy then concluded.

Up on street level, Jack arrived on the scene with his wheels screeching to a halt as he came to an abrupt stop in his patrol car before quickly getting out whereupon Eisley came over to meet him.

“Afternoon Guv” Eisley called.

“Mos” Jack responded in kind, “So what have we got?” he then asked as they both headed for the station entrance, ducking under the perimeter cordon tape.

“Some old guy got shot, down on the platform” Eisley confirmed, “Adams and his forensics guys are down there now looking at the body and the Chief Superintendent is on the scene too.”

“Quite the family reunion” Jack remarked as they headed down the escalators together, “Ah well, I guess Sergeant Roberts will have to wait a little longer.”

“Did you get anywhere with that Sir?” Eisley then asked as they reached the bottom of the escalator and then turned towards the platform.

“I have found Roberts’ widow, daughter and his former colleague and best friend” Jack confirmed, “All in all a very productive morning.”

“I think that guy might be inclined to disagree with you Sir” Eisley remarked, indicating up ahead where the body was now being covered with a cloth, the blood still staining the shiny new platform surface.

“Yeah...” Jack agreed.

“Busy morning?” Tracy asked as Jack and Eisley joined them.

“You could say that” Jack confirmed, “So, who is the stiff?” he then asked.

“An old boy by the name of Alfred Gaskill” Tracy confirmed, “Thing is, I am sure the name rings a bell somewhere.”

“Yeah...” Jack thoughtfully responded, “Me too.”

“Well, someone definitely wanted him dead” Tracy then continued, “Shot three times.”

“Ouch...” Jack responded, “Any sign of a weapon?” he then asked hopefully.

“Haven’t found anything around here” Adams called over, “Whoever did this was very slick and very professional, they were away before the echo of the shots had even begun to filter through the station.”

“Mos” Jack then instructed his deputy, “Pull all the CCTV you can, not just in the station but all the surrounding buildings as well, I want to establish this guy’s life story from the moment he woke up this morning to the moment he hit the deck and trace everyone he may have met along the way including his killer.”

“I’ll get right on it Sir” Easley agreed, “I have already started our guys on interviewing the station staff, any passengers who were about, pretty much anyone who was within a one mile radius of the place.”

“Good job” Jack complimented him, “We’ll need an incident room at Holborn, have Commander Baxter organise it and get plenty of food and coffee in, I think we are going to need it.”

“Understood Sir” Easley confirmed before leaving again.

“He’s good, isn’t he?” Tracy remarked as they both watched Easley striding purposefully away until he was out of sight.

“That he is” Jack admitted, “I have a good mind to promote him to my job and I will go back to being an ordinary plod.”

“You don’t really mean that, do you?” Tracy responded.

“Well, no not really” Jack agreed “But I do enjoy being out there, investigating, kicking doors in, solving mysteries, digging around in old dusty forgotten corners of history.”

“So, this case with your skeleton is definitely right up your street?” Tracy then suggested.

“Oh yes, relishing it” Jack confirmed, “Ah well, it will have to go on hold for a bit until we find out what happened to this poor sod” he then indicated the body on the floor behind them.

“Well, I’ll be dammed...” Adams was heard to exclaim which caused them both to turn around and look at him with great expectation.

“Go on” Tracy then prompted, “Don’t leave us in suspense...”

“Come here my little beauty...” Adams then called as he could be seen putting something small into a little evidence bag before sealing it and then holding it up to the light.

“Oh, come on...” Jack called.

“I just found one of the bullet casings” Adams confirmed as he brought it up to the tape barrier and showed them, “Look familiar Divisional Commander?” he then asked.

Jack took the little bag and looked at it, “It can’t be, can it?” he then exclaimed.

“I think it is” Adams confirmed.

“Would someone mind letting me in on this please?” Tracy then interrupted.

“It’s the same” Jack then concluded, “Isn’t it?”

“I reckon so” Adams agreed.

“Oh, come on guys...” Tracy was practically pleading by this point.

“German wartime manufacturer 9mm ammunition” Jack finally explained, “identical to that found at the site of my skeleton yesterday.”

“It could just be coincidence?” Tracy ventured but she knew she was on a losing streak with that argument.

“Two victims, both shot dead by the same type of ammunition, probably from the same type of gun in the same area, all be it decades apart?” Jack pointed out.

“Ballistics will be able to confirm or deny for sure” Adams then added, “I’ll get this rushed to them for priority analysis right away.”

“Thanks” Jack responded, “I would appreciate it.”

“I guess your Nine Elms investigation is no longer on the back burner then?” Tracy then asked.

“No, no it isn’t” Jack confirmed, clearly relishing the prospect of the challenge ahead.

“No, it must be a bit further back” Lieutenant Commander Ryan Russell pointed out as, in the hastily set up Main Investigation Room at Holborn, he was supervising the

mammoth task of scrolling through potentially hundreds of hours of CCTV footage from over a hundred different cameras across the area.

“Hang on, hang on” Commander Sol Baxter suddenly declared as he noticed something potentially relevant appear on the screen that caused him to rewind the footage a little bit and replay it before pausing it, “Could that be our stiff?” he then pointed to a figure just visible in the distance on a view from one camera that was inside the Station.

“It was pretty quiet at the time” Russell agreed, “Not many people about and he does look elderly enough from the description.”

“And he is heading in the right direction” Baxter added.

“Let’s see if he turns up anywhere else” Russell then suggested.

There followed much frenzied activity as both officers attempted to locate any further footage but found nothing.

“Why do I get the feeling that this brand-new station has a set of cameras in the most crucial place for this investigation either not installed or not hooked up yet?” Baxter commented.

“Well, if it were easy, it would take half the fun out of it” Russell remarked to a look of agreement from his colleague.

“You can just make out someone else approaching the same area” Baxter then pointed out a figure just on the edge of the viewing angle frame, “That could be the gunman.”

“Whoa! There he goes...” Russell exclaimed as they were able to see on the footage the victim suddenly fall backwards and crash, lifeless onto the hard platform surface.

“Come on, the gunman has got to show his face somewhere” Baxter then remarked as they both looked intently at the CCTV feeds playing in front of them on multiple screens

“The trouble is, as soon as those shots were fired, it echoed throughout the station which served like an enormous sound amplifier which prompted everyone to panic and run” Russell remarked.

“This guy knew what he was doing I reckon” Baxter then concluded, “Keep searching though, we must find him.”

“Really?” Jack called over his mobile as Eisley drove him back to Holborn, “How many?” he then exclaimed.

Eisley momentarily looked across at his superior officer in response to Jack's outburst, a reaction to the extraordinary news he had just received from the Ballistics Analysis Team before returning to the task of concentrating on the road ahead.

"Well, that is just extraordinary" Jack then responded, "Can you send a copy of all that over to us at Holborn as soon as possible please?" he quickly requested, "Cheers, and how long before we can get a result on the Battersea bullets?" he then asked.

Eisley carefully crossed the traffic at the north end of High Holborn in order to turn sharply left and then head down the old Kingsway Tram Subway ramp that led to the underground parking and below street level access to the Transport Division offices.

"Right, yes" Jack then called, "As soon as you can, I would appreciate it, cheers."

"That sounded interesting Guv" Eisley remarked as he parked the car and stopped the engine.

"It was the initial ballistics report from the shell casings and slugs found at the Nine Elms scene" Jack explained as they got out of the car, "According to their new super duper computerised rapid analysis system, they reckon that the gun used to fire those bullets, was also used at several armed robberies, murders and other firearms incidents from 1951 through to 1974, they are sending over the list shortly."

"And can we now add today's incident at Battersea to the list Guv?" Eisley then asked as they passed through the doors of the basement entrance and into a waiting lift car.

"Not yet" Jack confirmed as the lift ascended to the top floor, "but the ammunition is the same type, age and manufacture plus all seem to involve the same type of gun, a German Luger 9mm P08 type" he explained.

"All very interesting Guv" Eisley agreed.

"Yes, my friend, it most definitely is..." Jack responded.

"Good God, that is a long list!" Lieutenant Helen Chambers, one of the Transport Division's newest recruits remarked as she walked into the Major Investigation Room and saw Commander Baxter struggling with a long length of paper that had only just finished printing.

"Fresh off the printer from our friends over at the Ballistics Lab" Baxter explained as he tried and failed to rein in the mass of paper, some of it trying to escape which led to Chambers stepping in to help.

"What is all this?" Chambers then asked as she took some of the pile of paper herself to help spread the load and then followed Baxter out of the room, into the corridor.

“This is a list of all the confirmed incidents involving firearms that the gun used at the Nine Elms shooting in 1963 matches ballistically” Baxter explained as they headed towards the Major Investigation Room, located at the far end of the corridor.

“Someone was busy then” Chambers remarked as she then used her shoulder to push the door open and they went inside.

“Just because it was the same gun, doesn't mean it was always the same shooter pulling the trigger” Baxter reminded her as they managed to put the mass of paper down on the table.

“Is that my list?” Jack asked as he put his head around the door and saw the paper on the large meeting table that dominated the centre of the room.

“Ink's still wet Sir” Baxter confirmed.

“Right, let's get everyone else in here and get to work” Jack then declared.

A few minutes later, the other officers now attached to the case had arrived in the room and with the last one arriving; Jack proceeded to call the meeting to order.

“All right, take your seats everyone, let's get started” Jack instructed which was the cue for the background conversations to stop and everyone to proceed to sit down around the large meeting table, “I think most of you know why we are here but for those not up to speed on developments, Commander Eisley will do the honours.”

“Afternoon everyone” Eisley called as he stepped forwards whilst Jack took a seat, “Approximately ninety minutes ago, an IC1 male in his early eighties was shot dead here” he indicated on a map and an adjacent plan on the wall behind him, “The far end of the northbound platform at Battersea Power Station err Station.”

“They really need to get that name sorted out” Commander Baxter remarked.

“Let's just say Battersea Tube for now” Jack then suggested.

“Good idea Guv” Eisley readily agreed, “The victim was shot three times in rapid succession, once in the head and twice in the torso” he then indicated some of the crime scene photographs on an adjacent board, “The first shot did the job, the other two were just for the hell of it.”

“Robbery?” Chambers suggested.

“As far as we can tell, the victim had all his effects still on him, wallet, cash, etcetera so it wasn't a mugging or anything like that” Eisley confirmed “Which means we have a cold bloodied murder here.”

“The victim, do we know who he was?” Russell asked.

“His name was Alfred Gaskill, eighty-one years old, lived in Primrose Hill” Easley responded, “Metropolitan Division are kindly doing the spin of his drum for us right now.”

“Any sign of the murder weapon?” Baxter then asked.

“Just the shell casings and slugs” Jack interjected, “Ninety five percent certain however that the firearm we are looking for is a German wartime made Luger 9mm semi-automatic, probably a P08 or similar model.”

“Hang on Sir” Chambers remarked, “Aren't you looking for something very similar in your Nine Elms skeleton case?” she asked.

“Small world, isn't it?” Jack confirmed with a smile, “It has not been confirmed yet as ballistics are still analysing the Battersea shell casings and slugs but the coincidence of a very similar weapon and ammunition being used in two very different cases, barely two miles apart but separated by decades can't be ignored.”

“Especially as today's shooting comes less than twenty-four hours after the Nine Elms discovery” Easley agreed, “It is possible that discovery has awoken some other proverbial skeletons.”

“The Nine Elms skeleton” Russell then asked, “Is it true it was a Transport Copper?”

“Sergeant George Roberts” Jack confirmed, “The details I have amassed so far are in the briefing notes, admittedly it isn't a huge amount to go on, but I am hoping to add to it very soon” which was when his attention was diverted by a telephone call.

As Jack took the call, Easley continued with the briefing.

“CCTV is still being worked on” Easley then continued, “Bill, you got anything on that yet?” he then asked Commander Baxter.

“Err, yes and no” Baxter responded, ever so slightly reluctantly, “Unfortunately the area of the station where Gaskill was shot, the cameras had been installed but not actually hooked up yet so all we have is a very distant image of him falling to the floor when he was shot.”

“Ah...” Easley responded.

“In the panic that followed the gunshots ringing out, it looks like our mystery gunman got away in among the crowds, he or she knew what they were doing” Baxter then admitted.

“Right, thanks” Jack was then heard to call over the telephone, “I will be right down.”

“Can we call in some favours and ask our friends at MI5 to look through the footage we have with their facial identification software?” Russell suggested.

“Sounds like a good idea” Jack agreed as he hung up the telephone and stood up, “At the very least, see if you can trace the victim’s journey, working backwards from when he was shot.”

“I’ll call Thames House right now” Baxter confirmed, reaching for the telephone.

“In the meantime, carry on” Jack prompted, “I have to go downstairs and meet someone. Won’t be long” he then called before leaving the room.

As the north staircase was closer, Jack used that to head downstairs, and it was as he was descending that he looked out of the window overlooking High Holborn and noticed a classic 1950’s silver saloon car pull into the side of the road and park.

A few moments later he left the building from the fire exit door at the bottom of the staircase to see the car, a silver Daimler Conquest, registration number DNX 335 with Sturgeon getting out of the driver’s seat.

“Welcome back to the Old Bill” Jack called with a wry smile.

“In all my years since I retired, I never through I would be walking through the doors of a cop shop again” Sturgeon admitted as Jack escorted him along the pavement and then around the corner towards the main entrance.

“I think you will find it has changed a bit since your day” Jack remarked as they approached the doors, and they slid majestically open.

“Yeah, we used to have that old fashioned invention called a doorknob” Sturgeon joked as they arrived at Reception where Alison Headway, the Receptionist looked on, slightly confused.

“Divisional Commander” Alison remarked, “Do you know that in the last thirty minutes you have entered the building twice without leaving it?”

“Oh...” Jack responded, “I snuck out of the fire escape just now, sorry...”

“I’ll let you off Sir” Alison then replied with a smile, “This time...”

“Nothing much gets past our Alison here” Jack admitted.

“And who is out guest?” Alison then inquired.

“Retired Detective Inspector Edward Sturgeon, at your service my dear...” he declared, stepping forward with a warm handshake and a smile, “My friends call me Ted...”

“You old smoothie...” Jack remarked.

“Welcome” Alison responded, “If you could just sign in please and I will get you a visitor’s badge.”

“Doesn’t this count?” Sturgeon then asked as he produced his old Police Warrant Card from his pocket.

“I think it might have expired by now” Jack had to admit “but it’ll do.”

“There” Sturgeon declared as he put the warrant card in the top front pocket of his jacket with the cast metal badge outwards on display, “That was how we used to do it.”

“This way” Jack then led Sturgeon towards the lifts.

“It’s busy around here, isn’t it?” Sturgeon remarked as he saw the activity going on around him whilst they waited for the lift.

“Well, we haven’t had a real live murder on our patch for a while” Jack confirmed, “That is usually the Metropolitan Division’s problem.”

“That shooting in Battersea that you rushed off to?” Sturgeon asked as the lift arrived and the doors opened, allowing them to step inside.

“Yes” Jack confirmed as the lift began to rise, “Some bloke in his eighties called Alfred Gaskill if I remember correctly.”

“Whoa...” Sturgeon exclaimed, “Are you sure about that?” he then asked.

Jack dug into his pocket and found his official notebook, “Yep, here it is” he then showed Sturgeon the written details, “Why, do you know him?”

“I should do” Sturgeon exclaimed, “I nicked him enough times when I was a young copper, even sent him down for a twelve stretch with that devious bastard of a brother of his when I was attached to the Robbery Squad in the early 1970’s.”

“What did he get sent down for?” Jack then asked as the lift stopped and the doors opened on the top floor.

“The Gaskill’s prime stock in trade” Sturgeon confirmed, “Armed robbery...”

“The shell casing that we found with George Robert’s body” Jack then informed him as they made their way down the corridor, “According to the Ballistics Lab, they match numerous crimes dating back to the 1950’s so that gun has some serious history.”

“I have a theory about that” Sturgeon responded thoughtfully as they arrived at the door of the Major Investigation Room and Jack led him inside.

“As promised, I am back” Jack declared as he arrived, “This is retired Detective Inspector Edward Sturgeon” he then introduced the tall senior man with him, “Formerly of the Transport Commission Police and colleague of the late Sergeant Roberts.”

“Pleased to meet you all” Sturgeon responded before taking a look at the display board that had the Battersea crime scene photographs on it, concentrating in particular at the image of the deceased showing his face.

“Is that him?” Jack asked.

“Yeah, that’s him all right” Sturgeon confirmed, “Run his name through your new-fangled computer records and see what goes ping” he then suggested.

“Bill?” Jack called to Tarbett who immediately set to work on the computer workstation he was sat at.

“Oh, my goodness” Tarbett remarked as the results of the search of the National Criminal Intelligence System database began to scroll across the screen, “More form than the Racing Post...”

“My, my, my, he was a busy boy, wasn’t he?” Russell commented.

“What was he, a one-man crime wave or something?” Chambers asked.

“Young lady” Sturgeon responded, “I think one family crime wave would be more appropriate.”

“There was more than one of them?” Jack asked, sensing this as getting interesting.

“A whole family of them” Sturgeon confirmed, “Alfred Gaskill was the middle of three brothers, his older brother Ralph was also prolific in thieving, petty thuggery and armed robbery whilst the younger brother, Brian was the brains of the gang, taking over after their father died in about 1955, I think.”

“Are any of them still around?” Jack asked.

“Ralph was stabbed to death in a prison riot sometime in the 1980’s I think” Sturgeon recalled, Brian is probably still around and, well it looks like Alfred is no more.”

“What were they into?” Tarbett asked, “Alfred Gaskill’s record shows a pretty continuous list of suspicion of robbery, assault, GBH, going equipped, blagging etcetera, etcetera.”

“Protection rackets, gambling, prostitution, illegal alcohol, forgery, you name it” Sturgeon confirmed, “It took the thick end of twenty years to finally nail the three brothers; they were on an armed robbery that went very pear shaped.”

“Now, something doesn’t add up here” Tarbett then remarked as he compared two extensive lists on his screens, “The incidents that the Ballistics Lab have confirmed the Nine Elms shell casings relate to don’t all match up with the crimes Gaskill was suspected and or convicted of and vice versa.”

“Another of the Gaskill family’s little side-lines” Sturgeon explained, “One we could never conclusively prove either. They were suspected of running a firearms hire business.”

“Ah yes, I have heard of this” Jack remarked, “You have a gang or an individual who wants to pull off a job but needs a shooter or three, he goes to a certain pub or bar, meets a certain individual, they thrash out a deal over a pint or seven and in exchange for either a non-refundable cash deposit or a percentage of the swag, they get to hire some guns for the job.”

“All clean and untraceable, well that is what the hirer is told anyway” Sturgeon agreed, “You see the same firearms were turning up time and again in different jobs and in the hands of different villains right throughout the 1960’s and they were still turning up on bank and security van jobs into the 1990’s.”

“Sawn Off’s ‘R’ Us...” Tarbett concluded.

“Yep!” Sturgeon confirmed, “Sawn offs and pistols, a lot of ex wartime Webley’s or German Luger pistols, all very popular tools of the trade.”

“And now there is the significant possibility that one of these is back in action on my manor” Jack concluded.

“This is extraordinary” Chambers remarked as she read through the list of firearms incidents that the Nine Elms bullets had been positively linked to, “It was used on average three or four times a year, that we know of from its first recorded shooting of a wages clerk in a cash snatch in 1956 through to one of the weapons used on a diamond raid in Lewisham in 1969.”

“That rings a bell...” Jack quietly muttered to himself under his breath.

“Oh, here we go” Tarbett then called as a report arrived on his screen, urgent message from the Ballistics Lab, the gun used to kill Alfred Gaskill earlier, it was the same weapon.”

“The words cat and pigeons springs to mind...” Sturgeon suggested.

“It must have been triggered by us discovering George Robert’s body yesterday” Jack concluded, “Someone is afraid we are going to find out what really happened.”

“Well, I for one want to know what really happened to my friend that night” Sturgeon insisted, “We never found his body and had no clues what happened to him other than the gunshot I heard, that still echoes around inside me to this day, haunting me.”

“I intend to find out” Jack confirmed, even it means kicking over rocks that have not moved for over half a century and seeing what crawls out.”

“I can request Archives sends over everything we have on these Gaskill brothers and any known associates” Tarbett suggested.

“Get on it” Jack agreed, “Somewhere there is a connection, and I am willing to bet that connection has a 9mm Luger pistol about their person.”

An abandoned underground passage, seemingly untouched for decades was suddenly disturbed when a door was forced open, the sound echoing all around and the incoming draft shifting the years of accumulated dust, resulting in a foggy mist in the room.

The beam of a torch pierced the darkness as the man from the Battersea Power Station shooting struggled through the strewn wreckage until he reached an old filing cabinet that was dumped in a corner, surrounded, almost buried underneath cardboard boxes and rusty old signs.

Perching the torch above with the beam of light trained on the lower half of the rusty old filing cabinet, the man proceeded to unlock it and then open the bottom drawer, revealing a number of paper wrapped packages inside, many of them in newspaper that was yellowed with age signifying that they had been there for a very long time.

Reaching inside his coat pocket, the man extracted the gun he had used earlier, picked up an empty piece of newspaper and carefully wrapped it before placing it in the drawer, closing and locking it securely.

The seemingly long forgotten location soon fell silent and dark once again as the man left, closing the door firmly behind him.

“Step into my office...” Jack remarked as he showed Sturgeon in.

“You just love saying that don't you?” Sturgeon responded with a knowing smile as they sat down around the desk.

“Yeah...” Jack admitted.

“The wife?” Sturgeon indicated the photo frame on the desk showing Jack and Megan together.

“Fiancé” Jack confirmed, “She is in hospital at the moment, recovering from an operation.”

“You should be with her” Sturgeon then suggested.

“Megan reckons I am better at work than moping around hospital waiting rooms” Jack explained, “She's right of course, she always is.”

“I hope you don't mind a bit of advice from an old hand” Sturgeon then remarked to which Jack nodded in agreement, “Relationships in this game need a lot of work,

when you find a good woman, do everything you can to keep her” he then strongly advised.

“Oh, don't you worry, I intend to” Jack confirmed.

“Good” Sturgeon responded, “Now, a little extra reading material for you” he then declared, producing a large tatty brown envelope, and placing it on the desk.

“What goodies have you brought me?” Jack wondered as he took the envelope and carefully removed its contents, revealing it to be a number of documents, photographs and a couple of official Police notebooks.

“The history of what once was” Sturgeon confirmed, “Did you know that Sergeant Roberts was a poster boy for the Force back then?”

“Oh, so I see...” Jack responded as he began to look through the photographs, a number of clear black and white prints, the subject matter in terms of the setting and the clothes being worn clearly dating them to the late 1950's or early 1960's.

“At the time of George's death, the Transport Commission was being restructured and we were in the midst of being transformed into the British Transport Police” Sturgeon explained, “They wanted some photogenic young officers to appear in a recruitment and information campaign, George was one of the youngest ever officers to reach the rank of Sergeant in the Force, so he was one of those chosen.”

“That looks like the old London Bridge Station” Jack remarked on looking at a couple of photographs, “They have rebuilt the place at least twice since then.”

“Yes, we did photographs at London Bridge, some on the Northern Line, a few around the goods yards and sidings near Stewarts Lane and I think Waterloo East as well” Sturgeon recalled from memory.

“Hang on a minute...” Jack then stopped as he did a second take at one particular photograph.

“Yeah, I thought that one might interest you” Sturgeon remarked with a smile.

The photograph was in colour, comparatively rare at the time but more common in commercial photography such as this, it showed two British Transport Commission officers, one was Sturgeon and the other Roberts, standing in their smartly turned out full uniforms on the platform at London Bridge Station in front of the cab of a dark green steam locomotive, talking to a young boy in the classic school uniform of the period, holding a pencil and a notebook as the crew looked on from the cab footplate.

On the back of the photograph was a caption which Jack duly read with a certain sense of amazement.

'Sergeant George Roberts and Constable Edward Sturgeon talk to a young railway enthusiast, Eddie Regent aged 7 of Lewisham on London Bridge Station, October 15th, 1962'

“It can't be?” Jack then remarked but then looked closer at the young boy in the photograph, “Well I will be damned, it is. Isn't it?” he looked up at Sturgeon.

“Yes, it is” Sturgeon confirmed, “He was quite a regular around the main line terminus stations and the loco sheds when he was a little lad, well until that Lewisham business of course.”

“Our Ballistics Lab guys sent over a list of the incidents that the weapon used on Sergeant Roberts also matches up with” Jack then extracted the sheets of paper from his file on the desk and passed it across to him, “The Lewisham Diamond Heist just happens to be one of those where shell casings or slugs from the same firearm were used.”

“Small world, isn't it?” Sturgeon responded, “It lends further weight to my theory that it was a hire gun, used by countless villains on numerous jobs and then returned to the lender after the job was done.”

“It was last recorded as being used on the Lewisham job” Jack confirmed from the file, “Until today that is...”

“So, it is the same gun?” Sturgeon asked.

“It looks like it” Jack replied, “I guess that shooting a twelve year old in cold blood right outside the front door of New Scotland Yard probably made it just a little bit too hot to handle.”

“Nothing like a high-profile case to have certain elements of the organised crime scene reaching for the deep holes in the ground and the paper shredders” Sturgeon agreed, “Mind you, the same could be said for politicians too...”

“My question is, prior to Sergeant Roberts's death, where was this gun and what was it doing on the afternoon and evening of January fourteenth, 1963?” Jack then asked.

Sturgeon relaxed in his chair on the other side of the desk, stroked his moustache thoughtfully and then took a sip of coffee before he began.

“Looking back” he then began as Jack listened intently, “I reckon the events leading up to that night began a few days earlier.”

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The headlights of the Daimler Conquest saloon car pierced the foggy early January gloom as Sturgeon turned off Waterloo Road and into the service tunnel that runs beneath the main platforms and concourse of Waterloo Station itself, the clunking of slowly moving trains arriving and departing above, echoing throughout.

It was almost eight o'clock in the evening of Friday January the eleventh, 1963 and the night shift at the Waterloo Station offices of the British Transport Commission Police were just arriving for duty.

“Thanks for the lift, Ted” Roberts remarked as he got out of the front passenger seat of Sturgeon’s car, then just a few years old but still the same one he was destined to own for decades to come.

“No problem, mate” Sturgeon confirmed as he proceeded to lock the car up despite it being parked in the secure parking area reserved for the working and private vehicles of the British Transport Commission Police officers and staff at Waterloo Station.

The echoes of steam locomotive whistles, the roar of the electric motors of the third rail powered multiple unit trains and the clanking of wheels across joints in the rails drifted through the air from the station above as Roberts and Sturgeon made their way through a blue door set into the wall, just a discrete sign mounted overhead giving any indication as to what was inside.

Shift change was always a busy time here despite the comparatively few officers allocated to this station compared with some of the larger Police Stations of the Metropolitan Police Force who were responsible for almost everything outside of the railways, the cramped nature of the old facilities, effectively shoe horned into a tight space in among a veritable rabbit warren of passageways, tunnels and forgotten corners that stretched right across the entire width of the huge Waterloo Railway Station complex and beyond.

Even then there was more to the site with the Underground Station directly beneath serving three tube lines in those days, the Bakerloo and Northern plus the short Waterloo & City line that shuttled just the one stop to Bank and back, in those days operated by British Railways rather than London Underground.

Roberts had only passed his Sergeants Exams the previous September, donning the distinctive chevron stripes on his shoulder epaulettes for the first time a few weeks later. Whilst he would have been too shy to publicly admit it, even to his colleagues, it did make him feel just that little bit taller.

Sturgeon followed Roberts and a couple of their colleagues through to the locker room where they quickly changed into their full uniforms and checked they had all their equipment which in those days consisted of little more than a truncheon, either cap or helmet depending on what their allocated duty that shift was going to be plus whistle and the all-important warrant card and official notebook.

January 1963 was the middle of one of the coldest winters on record in the United Kingdom, average temperatures in London barely got above freezing even during the middle of the day and so the official uniform overcoat and gloves were essential too.

There was the usual banter among the officers as they got ready before heading to the main briefing room, passing their colleagues who were heading home as their shift was now ending.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen” the stout authoritative figure of Inspector William Clark called, tapping the edge of his clipboard impatiently as the officers

filed into the small, cramped room, “I hope you have all wrapped up warm as it is going to be another cold one, you will not be surprised to hear.”

“Sir!” one officer then asked, “Have they fixed the heater on the van yet?” he inquired.

“Not yet Constable Carlson” Inspector Clark confirmed to a number of discreet mutters from the others which were quickly silenced by the stern look that he then cast around the room in response.

“Thank you...” Inspector Clark then concluded, “Assignments for this glorious night shift, ladies and gentlemen are as follows” he then consulted his clipboard.

“1932, Sturgeon and 1832, Roberts” he then announced, “General Patrol, Waterloo and the Underground.”

“Sir...” both Roberts and Sturgeon formally acknowledged.

“1989, Carlson” Inspector Clark looked across at the young officer, “relax lad, you are the Custody officer tonight, you can stay in the warm.”

“Thanks Sir” Carlson responded with a noticeable sigh of relief.

“1975, Moore and 1833, French” Inspector Clark then looked across at the only woman present, Woman Police Constable or WPC Roberta Moore, one of only a handful of female officers across the whole of Greater London at that time in what was very much a male dominated world, “You two are in the car, stay close to the mainline stations for tonight in case anything kicks off.”

“Sir” the two officers confirmed.

“1066, Hastings, err I mean Havers” Inspector Clark quickly corrected himself having fallen into the standing joke of Waterloo’s A Shift because of Sergeant Frank Havers’ number, “Front desk and communications.”

“Yes Sir...” Sergeant Havers responded, nodding as he accepted hearing the running joke for, what seemed to him to be the thousandth time.

“1445, Talbot” Inspector Clark looked across at Constable Robert Talbot, standing near the door, “I would like you to patrol around Nine Elms tonight, the Shed has filed a few reports of trespassers, possibly trying to steal coal” he informed him, “You might need to check the goods yards too.”

“Will do Sir” Talbot confirmed.

“1128, Todd and 1732, Forbes” Inspector Clark then addressed the last two so far unassigned officers in the room, “You are our spares for this evening but as it is Friday night, I wouldn’t get too comfortable” he then suggested.

“Understood Sir” Constable Forbes agreed whilst Constable Todd merely nodded in agreement.

“Right then boys, oh and girl” Inspector Clark then acknowledged WPC Moore with a smile, “A few notices for you before you all head out there, firstly Crystal Palace are playing at their arch-rivals Brighton & Hove Albion tomorrow afternoon which means British Railways are laying on a couple of FootEx special trains from Victoria, volunteers looking for a bit of overtime helping out our colleagues over there would be appreciated.”

“Hmmm, nah!” Sturgeon responded aside to Roberts who smiled in response.

“We are also looking for volunteers to help out when Spurs are playing on Wednesday evening in the FA Cup” Inspector Clark then continued, “Anyone who fancies giving up their precious free time to stand in the freezing cold being sung out of tune at by half drunk football supporters in exchange for some extra shillings, see the roster clerk at the end of shift.”

Inspector Clark looked around the room briefly and was not the least bit surprised to see little interest.

“Finally everyone, make sure you have one of these, hot off the Roneo Duplicator” Inspector then passed out a set of papers, the distinctive smell of the purple spirit based ink so much a part of that era, decades before photocopiers were invented, “A request from our colleagues at the Metropolitan Police Robbery Squad over at New Scotland Yard.”

“Robbery Squad?” Sturgeon remarked as he received the pile of paper, took a copy for himself and then passed the remainder onto the next officer around, “Not like them to remember us Transport Plod exist.”

“It is rather unusual, I grant you” Inspector Clark agreed, “However, they have an ongoing operation targeting the growing number of armed robberies taking place on commercial premises, wages snatches, that sort of thing” he then went on to explain, “and they think that there could be a possible railway connection to some of the crimes so they want us to keep them peeled and report anything you find, no matter how insignificant it may seem.”

“There was that attempted raid on Balham Ticket Office a couple of months back” Roberts recalled, “I don’t think anyone has been nicked for that one yet.”

“Just one of the ones on the list Sergeant” Inspector Clark pointed out on his copy of the four-page document that had just been distributed among them.

“Any names in the frame?” Sturgeon then asked.

“I expect our dedicated local tea leaves are keeping themselves busy despite the weather” Inspector Clark agreed “so keep your ears to the ground, something may come up.”

There were affirmative responses from all those present which made Inspector Clark scan around the room to make sure he was fully understood.

“All right then everyone” he then declared, “Let's get to work, be careful out there.”

Ten minutes later, Sturgeon and Roberts emerged from a doorway onto the busy concourse of Waterloo Main Line Station, the atmosphere filled with the steam and smoke from the various locomotives at rest beneath the huge overall roof that covered all the platforms.

The sounds around them with the slamming of carriage doors, platform staff and guard whistles and the sounds of both mighty but grimy steam locomotives alongside their brand new shiny but far less appealing diesel successors added to the sense of the place, an atmosphere now long since lost to history.

“Now, there is a happy looking chappie” Sturgeon remarked, indicating towards one of the gateways that led on to platforms eleven and twelve where a Platform Assistant, a young man in his late teens, dressed in the formal and very neat gold braided uniform of the period, complete with similarly decorated peak cap was waving the last few intending passengers through, quickly checking their tickets as they passed.

“Last call ladies and gentlemen for the half eight to Bournemouth!” the Platform Assistant called in a very friendly voice, “First Class at the rear, buffet can be found in car number five!”

“Evening John” Sturgeon called as he and Roberts approached.

“Good evening, Ted, George” John responded as the last couple of passengers rushed up, showed their tickets and he quickly allowed them through, “Nice night for it!” he then remarked.

“You can say that again” Roberts agreed, rubbing his hands together as, despite wearing thick winter gloves, they were still cold.

“Busy tonight?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Not so you would notice” John admitted, “The previous Bournemouth got cancelled so everyone is on this one but even then, with the weather, there are not that many risking it” he explained, “Indeed with the snow drifts down Dorset way, this one is going to struggle to get there as it is.”

“Driver is going to have his work cut out then” Roberts remarked.

“Both of them” John confirmed, “The loco from the cancelled one an hour ago is needed back in Bournemouth tonight so they have shoved it on with the other one.”

“Well, this has got to be worth a look” Sturgeon remarked, “May we...?” he indicated through the ornate wrought iron gateway to the murky platform beyond.

“Be my guest gentlemen” John happily confirmed, allowing them to pass through before calling back towards the concourse, “Last Call!” he shouted but with no one approaching, he duly proceeded to draw shut the lattice metal gates across the opening with a loud metallic clatter.

At the buffer stops stood a small grimy British Railways design Standard 3MT type tank locomotive that had been used to bring in the empty coaching stock up from Clapham Junction Yard to form the service, its crew taking the moment to relax a little, taking a much-needed hot drink from their flasks where, despite the intense heat from the firebox in their cab, the cold was still very much felt.

The locomotive was very much a workhorse, not one of the big bold ones, its typical grimy exterior hiding that at one point this little machine, hissing away quietly to itself was once shiny in black with ornate hand painted outlining, now only its number was visible thanks to very selective cleaning, the nine-inch-high numerals recording this as number 82019.

The coaches themselves, bathed in an ethereal mixture of steam seeping from the heating pipes and the low glow of the interior lighting were an eccentric mixture themselves, a fine layer of ingrained soot slightly marred the finish that on most was a deep green colour with sign written gold leaf lettering and numbering whilst some slightly more modern looking ones were a maroon colour.

The waft of fresh cooking greeted the two officers as they passed the kitchen car about two thirds of the way along the platform, the smell drifting through a couple of partially open windows and the sound of crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils being gathered for the long journey ahead being audible from inside.

The guard for the train was waiting by his brake van compartment door, checking his officially issued pocket watch and waiting, poised with his whistle ready and acknowledging the two officers as they strolled past.

Sturgeon and Roberts soon reached the head of the train at the far end of Platform 12 which was outside the protection of the overall roof and where it was noticeably colder and wintrier.

In among clouds of steam drifting around and porters loading the last parcels into the van stood two mighty express steam locomotives, one behind the other and just coupled up to the lengthy train where the Shunter was attaching the brake hoses and ensuring they were secure.

A fine layer of grime and accumulated dirt in nooks and gaps did little to detract from the immense size and strangely alluring beauty of these two fine machines, the one nearest the coaches being a lined green painted West Country Class Light Pacific type, proudly displaying its number on the cab side, 34007 and on the side of the streamlined boiler section, a red painted nameplate ‘Wadebridge’.

It’s crew, grimy and soot covered stood on the footplate waiting for the off, looking proud of their charge which, unlike the work a day little tank locomotive at the other

end, was kept as clean as the horrid winter weather conditions and the nature of steam locomotive operation could allow.

On the front smoke box door was affixed a cast metal number plate repeating its numeral identification whilst a small oval cast plate below confirmed this to be allocated to 70A, the code for Nine Elms Shed located just a couple of miles south of Waterloo Station.

Leading the train was another Pacific type express passenger locomotive, but this time one of the slightly larger Merchant Navy class, more conventional in appearance having had a major rebuild a couple of years earlier but still proudly carrying its number, 35017 'Belgian Marine' being, like the others of the type, named after one of the many Merchant Navy ship operators that at that time still worked out of docks like Southampton which these locomotives often served on special Boat Trains.

"Hello Fred" Sturgeon called up to the driver on the footplate of 35017.

"Ted!" Fred called back, pushing the peak of his grease cap back off his forehead with his soot covered hand, leaving a black mark across his brow but merely adding to the overall layer of muck in which he was covered head to foot, "What brings you here at this time of night?" he then asked.

"Just taking a look around" Sturgeon confirmed, "You look happy" he then remarked.

"Only half a job Ted" Fred explained, "Take this old girl as far as Woking then on the cushions back to Wimbledon and home, plus payday is coming up."

"Very important" Roberts agreed.

At that point there was a cacophony of whistles through the air as the signal at the head of the platform had just changed to green and the platform staff ushered the last people aboard, ready for immediate departure.

"Right Away mate!" the platform supervisor then indicated to the Guard who himself made one final check before blowing his own whistle and showing a green lamp to the driver.

"See you later fellas" Fred then called before returning to the driving controls, sounding the loud whistle of the locomotive which was duly replicated by the crew of the second one.

The Guard quickly got back in his brake van compartment door and stood in the opening, watching carefully as they were about to start moving.

Sturgeon and Roberts stood back as with a tremendous amount of hissing and clouds of steam, the two mighty locomotives began to move, their mighty driving wheels starting to rotate, slipping a little on the cold rails as they took the strain of the twelve loaded carriages behind them but the two drivers knew what to do, expertise saw them carefully control the slip whilst their respective firemen laid down sand for extra grip and slowly but surely, the heavy train began to pick up speed.

Chuffing hard, the two locomotives moved out of the station, the glow from the fireboxes sending a hot orangey red glow out as they headed into the darkness.

Clanking over the joints in the tracks, the coaches duly followed with the sound of the locomotives still audible ahead, a sound that did not finally die away until the red glow from the oil tail lamp on the rear most coach disappeared from sight, leaving just smoke hanging in the air in their wake.

“Do you know, they reckon all the steamers will be gone in a few years” Roberts remarked with a tone of sadness.

“Yeah...” Sturgeon reluctantly agreed as they looked across to Platform Nine nearby where a BRCW Type 3 diesel locomotive, barely a year old and still looking shiny in its green and off-white paint scheme, was burbling away to itself, waiting to take another train out to Basingstoke, “Those boxes on wheels just don’t have the same appeal, do they?”

It was at that point that the grimy little tank locomotive came shuffling along the platform having been released from the buffer stops with the departure of the Bournemouth Express before it came to a halt at the end to await the change of signal.

It was obvious that this locomotive was in poor condition both in terms of maintenance and cleanliness, but the crew were still proud of it.

“She may not look much but she still gets the job done” the Driver admitted to the two officers with a smile before the signal ahead went to green again, “Come on Jim” he then called to his Fireman, “Let’s get this old girl to bed, it’s time to go home” he declared before sounding the shrill whistle and setting off, clanking and hissing off into the darkness.

Adjacent to Platform 12 was a couple of short bays where only a few vans or a spare locomotive could stable between jobs or awaiting unloading of parcels and other goods.

That evening, there were two vans present on one of the short bays whilst another small tank locomotive bearing the number 41312 sat alongside.

Roberts noticed something about the nearest van first which now that the steam from the surrounding trains had dissipated, was more visible.

“Ted, does something not look right to you there?” he then asked, motioning towards the van closest to them, a dark green painted bogie van of some age with its horizontal wooden planking style bodywork and work weary appearance.

“I think you may be right George” Sturgeon agreed as they proceed to walk over to the van where two of the doors had been left open and unattended, a porter’s trolley alongside, up tipped with a number of packages split open on the platform surface.

“What the hell happened here?” Roberts then asked as he proceeded to take out his torch and shine it inside the dark interior of the van but finding nothing other than a few discarded empty wooden packing crates and some straw packaging material strewn about.

“There is no way the station staff would leave this open and unattended like this” Sturgeon commented, “That is practically a sacking offence, they would be out of the door faster than you can say Form One” he remarked, referring to the infamous and dreaded official British Railways form which marked the commencement of disciplinary proceedings against an employee for gross negligence or other offences which could ultimately lead to instant dismissal, known throughout the railway industry even to the present day as a Form One Offence even though the legendary document itself was abolished back in the 1980’s.

“We best get this area secured” Roberts responded, looking around to a nod of agreement from Sturgeon, “What about the other van?” he then asked.

Sturgeon duly approached the second van, coupled just inside the first, passing through a cloud of steam being emitted from the adjacent shunting locomotive that was stabled alongside.

Checking the double doors revealed that they were locked and secured but something protruding from behind a pile of cases on the platform immediately caught Sturgeon's attention and he flicked his torch towards it.

“George!” he then called which prompted Roberts to step over and then look down at where the beam of his torch was pointing.

“Oh...” Roberts responded as he then stooped down and checked the foot that could be seen, that of a man unconscious and lying almost totally obscured beneath a porter’s trolley and would have been easily missed by many a passer-by.

“He’s still with us” Sturgeon confirmed, as he checked for a pulse whilst Roberts carefully moved the cases and the porter’s trolley to reveal the unconscious man to be a porter or luggage handler of some kind, dressed in a typical for the period light brown long overall that was often worn by shop and warehouse staff.

“I’ll get help” Roberts confirmed, “You stay with him Ted” he then instructed before leaving to summon assistance.

Other than put his overcoat over the freezing cold unconscious man, there was little more that Sturgeon could do. Whilst the wound to the back of the man’s head looked fairly superficial, enough to render him unconscious but not hard enough to be intent to kill, the bitterly cold winter weather meant that any injury, even the most minor could prove fatal in these conditions.

As he waited for Roberts to return, Sturgeon checked the unconscious man's pockets for some form of identification but apart from a laundry ticket and some coins, his pockets were oddly empty.

It was a few minutes before Roberts came back with two Ambulance men and a doctor who he had managed to locate on the concourse of the station.

“Any change?” Roberts asked as the Doctor checked the unconscious man.

“Out cold, literally” Sturgeon confirmed, “and he has no identification on him either.”

“We need to get this guy to hospital as soon as possible” the Doctor confirmed, “He is safe to move though.”

“Right then, let’s get him shifted” one of the Ambulance Men responded whereupon with Sturgeon and the Doctor's help, they lifted the man onto the stretcher.

Unlike modern day paramedics, ambulance men in those days were merely porters in effect, solely charged with moving the sick and injured around to hospital, it was only blind luck that Roberts managed to find a doctor on the station.

“I should ask around, see if there were any witnesses” Roberts then suggested.

“I’ll do that” Sturgeon confirmed, “You check the area again, see if there is anything we missed.”

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“So, did you find anything?” Jack asked as Sturgeon finished his drink.

“There was nothing where we found him” Sturgeon confirmed, “Of course we did not have all those fancy forensic scene examiners in those days to minutely take the place apart, it was a busy working dirty and grimy railway station in the early 1960’s plus God knows how many hundreds, even thousands of people had wandered through there.”

“But something was definitely stolen?” Jack then checked.

“Oh yes, no idea what though as we were never able to trace either the shipper or receiver of the missing or opened packages” Sturgeon explained, “and nobody ever came forward to claim them either.”

“What about the guy you found?” Jack asked.

“That is where it got interesting” Sturgeon confirmed, “The man in question was one Stephen Grace, he was a warehouse operative working in one of the caverns underneath the station” he explained, “He spent the next three days in hospital unconscious and then vanished, never to be seen again.”

“False identity?” Jack suggested.

“Probably” Sturgeon agreed, “In those days there was no way to check who was legit and who was faking it, most employers, especially those who paid cash in hand for casual labour never bothered to check and didn’t ask questions.”

“So, how does all this fit in with the death of Sergeant Roberts?” Jack then asked.

“The name Stephen Grace came up again a couple of days later when Constable Ian Carlson received a tip off from a snout he had” Sturgeon continued, “The word was he and three other men were taking an interest in certain cash transactions, particularly the transport thereof.”

“Setting up a job?” Jack asked.

“That was the theory” Sturgeon agreed, “Carlson told me about what he had heard, and we passed that information on to The Yard but that was the last we heard about it.”

“Until the fateful night of January the fourteenth by any chance?” Jack asked.

“Exactly!” Sturgeon confirmed, “That day we were on late day shift, midday to half eight in the evening and boy, was it a cold night even for that winter, fortunately we were paired up in the car that afternoon.”

“Riley Pathfinder by any chance?” Jack asked.

“You know your motors young man, very good” Sturgeon duly complimented him, “There was a report earlier that day of someone hanging around near the old goods yard off Pascal Street.”

“Now there is irony” Jack remarked, “I was there yesterday at the opening of the new Nine Elms Tube Station, it’s on the corner.

“Nine Elms has a Tube Station too now?” Sturgeon responded to which Jack merely nodded with a smile, “Wow...”

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“Do you know what the Traffic Guys over on the Met call these cars?” Roberts remarked as Sturgeon drove up Wandsworth Road in one of the British Transport Commission Division’s cars, a black Riley Pathfinder saloon bearing the added refinements of a large POLICE sign across the chrome finish front radiator, extra spot lamps and the distinctive shiny Winkworth bell mounted on the front bumper.

“Oh yes, Riley Ditchfinder!” Sturgeon recalled with a laugh.

“One of the Essex Inspectors managed to lose control of his car the other day as the rear suspension was clogged with snow and ice and duly landed on his roof in a farmers field” Roberts recalled, “Apparently his pride was more hurt than he was fortunately.”

It was only half past three in the afternoon of that wintry day, Monday the fourteenth of January 1963, but it was already getting dark and cold as witnessed by the windows of the car starting to mist up despite the efforts of the rather poor heater fitted.

They were heading northeast up the Wandsworth Road through the Nine Elms area, the streets were fairly quiet, some slushy snow remained in the gutters and flakes of drifting snow still swirled about in the air.

“Pascal Street second left I think” Roberts remarked, indicating ahead.

“Got it” Sturgeon confirmed as he slowed to turn left into Pascal Street, a very different place to today where the new Nine Elms Underground Station is located. Back then it was all still mostly 1940’s blocks of flats, now largely swept away themselves like the Victorian era terraced slums they themselves replaced.

The far end of the street was dominated by the high roof of the massive goods depot, one of many railway served facilities across the city back then handling all types of merchandise, products and materials from across the country and beyond.

Sturgeon stopped the car just inside the gateway of the Goods Yard and they got out, looking across towards the main sorting and dispatch shed ahead.

“It all looks quiet to me” Roberts remarked as the two officers stood still and looked all around, the misty atmosphere making visibility difficult, the ethereal atmosphere enhanced by the ghostly sound of distant trains rattling across the viaduct that ran across the west side of the site, their whistles echoing through the air.

“Yeah...” Sturgeon agreed, “Come on, let’s find the Yard Supervisor, he will know what is going on.”

The two officers headed off across the deserted goods yard towards the main shed, carefully crossing the railway tracks of the sidings where a motley assortment of empty and abandoned goods wagons were randomly scattered about either waiting for their next job, to be returned empty to their point of origin or out of service with some sort of fault.

They soon found the Supervisors Office, a small brick-built building with just a couple of windows, a pale green door with peeling paint and a red fire bucket hanging up outside where it had remained unused since the war to the point where it was rusted to the bracket with weeds growing in the sand contained within.

Someone was in though as a pale light shone from the windows and a column of smoke could be seen rising from the small chimney that poked up through the battered roof.

“Hello?” Roberts called as he knocked on the door and tentatively opened it, “Anybody there?”

“Oh!” came the response from the man they found inside, a short portly man, balding and in his late fifties who shifted around in his chair that was positioned in front of an

old desk upon which were seemingly hundreds of goods tickets, ledgers and records, “Evening, what can I do for you?” he then asked.

“Sergeant Roberts and Constable Sturgeon, Transport Police” Roberts introduced themselves, “Are you the chap in charge?” he then asked, looking around the room which looked like it had not seen any kind of investment or redecoration since before the war, still lit by a couple of gas lamps and with a cast iron fire grate set into the far corner.

“Welcome to my empire!” the Supervisor gestured around with a laugh, the cigarette in his mouth wobbling up and down with his mouth movements.

“We had a report of possible intruders in the yard?” Sturgeon asked.

“Oh yes, so there was” the Supervisor confirmed as the kettle on the top of the fire grate boiled and he shuffled to his feet in order to attend to it, “Would you gentlemen care for some tea?” he then asked.

“Wouldn’t say no” Roberts confirmed with Sturgeon nodding in agreement.

“Yes, there have been a few sightings over the weekend” the Supervisor explained as he proceeded to pour three cups of tea, “It is not uncommon for people to wander across the yard, sometimes it is just people looking for some coal for the fire back home, we have had more of that since this blasted winter came in, other times it is people looking to see if they can lift anything that has ‘fallen’ off the back of a wagon, if you get my drift.”

“Black marketeers” Sturgeon concluded.

“Indeed” the Supervisor agreed as he handed them their tea in proper old fashioned enamel mugs, bearing the marks of the War Office which dated them to at least the early 1940’s and still doing sterling service, “We also get the occasional train spotter trying to sneak along the siding to get into Nine Elms Shed next door when old Ernie is on guard at the main gate.”

“He is still there?” Roberts remarked with a look of surprise.

“When he is busy not propping up the bar in the Brooklands Arms” Sturgeon confirmed, “Boring the regulars with his war stories about how he lost his leg battling ten thousand German paratroopers single handed using just a bayonet and a claw hammer.”

“That story gets more elaborate every time he tells it” The Supervisor agreed, “Especially when he has sunk a few jars.”

“So, what was different about these guys?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Whoever they were, they weren’t interested in the contents of the Yard” the Supervisor explained, “Apparently from what I have been told by some of the guys here who saw them, they didn’t look at any wagons or goods, never went anywhere

near the main shed and certainly were not interested in the trains passing by over on the far side there” he indicated away towards where the main Waterloo to Clapham Junction line passed over in the distance “plus Terry, my morning shift supervisor reckons when they left, they got into a rather posh motor for this part of town, possibly a Jag he said.”

“Standard vehicle of choice for the local villains” Roberts concluded to which Sturgeon agreed.

“It wouldn’t be terrorists, would it?” the Supervisor then suggested, “You hear about them Irish guys you know.”

“I doubt it” Sturgeon replied, “More likely someone casing the place for some reason.”

“Well, you are welcome to take a look around” the Supervisor then confirmed as he took their now empty tea mugs back, “There is not much happening around here tonight so it should be quiet.”

“Sounds like a good idea” Roberts agreed, “Thanks for the tea” he then responded before he and Sturgeon duly proceeded to leave.

“Anytime officers” the Supervisor confirmed before they headed back into the cold and dark, closing the door behind them.

As Roberts and Sturgeon proceeded across the yard, torches in hand and looking all around, their colleague, Constable Ian Carlson a couple of miles away, heading up the stairs from the Underground Station part of Waterloo onto the mainline concourse having spent half an hour on the Northern Line platform dealing with reports of a pickpocket that was in the end never found.

He was naturally frustrated, Carlson was a keen and dedicated officer with fifteen years’ service and despite his experience, had no ambition for promotion, eschewing several attempts by his senior officers to try and get him to accept a Sergeants position, instead preferring to remain a Constable and stick to everyday frontline work.

It was as he emerged into the smoky atmosphere of the main concourse that he noticed the Station Manager nearby who, upon seeing the uniformed officer appear, quickly walked towards him.

“Evening Sir” Carlson remarked as the Station Manager, dressed in his full gold braided railway uniform approached, “Something I can help you with?” he then asked.

“Some fool has parked their car right outside the side entrance, Constable” the Station Manager confirmed as he led the way towards the east entrance, adjacent to Platform One, leading out onto the cab road that wrapped around the east side of the station and the around toward the front.

There was some angry sounding of horns as the normally placid queue of taxi's waiting to approach the front of the rank were forced to move around a silver Jaguar Mk II that had been parked apparently in the middle of the taxi lane, the engine still running but with nobody inside it.

"How long has this been here?" Carlson then asked as he opened the passenger door and looked inside.

"At least fifteen minutes" the Station Manager confirmed, "The cabbies are threatening to move it themselves, and not exactly subtly either."

"Right, I'll call my Inspector and get authorisation to get it shifted" Carlson then confirmed, "With the keys in, that shouldn't be too difficult."

Over on the other side of Waterloo Station in the building that sits high above the rear wall of the concourse are the offices of the Southwestern Division of the Southern Region of British Railways and the owner of that car was one of four men who were making their way through the marble floor corridors with a purposeful stride.

All four of them were dressed very smartly in identical black suits, ties and long overcoats, army issue boots on their feet polished to the very maximum limit of shine, moving in sequence with almost military precision, the hard soles on the marble floor echoing through the offices which at that time of the evening were largely deserted.

"Boss..." one of the men nodded towards a door just ahead, much like the others, painted dark green, this one being identified by the words 'CASH OFFICE' in white lettering on a matching dark green enamelled sign.

The four men split up, two standing each side of the door before the leader nodded which was the cue for them all to put on masks and take out weapons that were hidden inside the long coats they were wearing.

For the cashiers working inside, the first thing they knew was when the doors were forced in and suddenly, they were confronted by four masked men armed with guns and coshes.

"ALL THE CASH, ALL OF IT!!" one of the men shouted, waving the sawn-off shotgun he was holding around with maximum menace, "NOW!!!"

The cashiers, who were cowering beneath their desks, reluctantly began to get up, their hands held up and in no fit state to do anything, so with the leader watching them with his sawn-off in hand and a second man watching the door, carrying a wartime German Luger semi-automatic pistol, the other two proceeded to fill their holdalls with as much cash as they could grab from the room.

"DON'T BE A HERO!" one of the men warned when it looked like one of the cashiers was about to try and intercede but soon thought better of it and stepped back again whilst the cash grab continued unabated.

“That’s the lot boss” one of the men confirmed as he up tipped one of the desks to make sure there was no more cash anywhere to be had.

“THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!” the leader then remarked with a bit of an evil laugh as they backed out of the room, the guns still pointing at the cashiers, “STAY HERE!” he then ordered, “SOMEONE WILL BE WATCHING!”

With that, the cashiers breathed a huge sigh of relief as the robbers left and the door was closed.

Outside in the deserted corridor, the four men quickly removed their masks and hid their weapons as they proceeded at a rapid pace down the corridor towards the far end.

The staircase at the far end with its brass banisters and marble steps echoed to the sound of their rapid footsteps as they made their way downstairs to the ground level, emerging onto the main concourse at the east end and then turning smartly to the left to exit the station only to find an unexpected complication.

“Excuse me gentlemen, is this your car?” Carlson called as he turned around to face the men, only then on seeing them realising that something was very wrong.

“Don’t be a hero, copper!” one of the men angrily called, pulling out the Luger pistol and aiming it at Carlson who calmly responded by holding his hands up and taking a step back.

“Put that away!” the leader briskly responded, pushing the other man’s arm down.

At that point, the sound of Police whistles could be heard from somewhere nearby.

“Plan B gentlemen” the leader then declared, “See you around” he then remarked to Carlson before leading the others back inside the station just as Inspector Clark and Sergeant Havers arrived having come up from Lower Marsh Street.

“Sir!” Carlson called as his two colleagues neared him, “We have got robbers on the plot!”

“Havers, go and raise the alarm, get as much backup as you can muster” Inspector Clark quickly took control of the situation.

“Yes Sir” Havers confirmed and then hurried off.

“Carlson, you are with me” Inspector Clark then declared as they headed into the station in pursuit.

“MOVE IT, MOVE IT!” the leader of the robbers called to people on the concourse, raising screams and panic as his gang made their way quickly through the station only to be confronted by the sound of more Police whistles coming towards them from the opposite direction.

“Police!” came the call from two Metropolitan Police Force officers who were running towards them, unaware of the exact nature of what was going on and what they were about to be confronted by.

“Rozzers!” one of the robbers called whereupon the leader looked across towards the platforms and then behind where he could see Carlson and Inspector Clark approaching too along with a number of other officers in the distance.

“Come on!” the leader then called whereupon they changed direction and headed towards the gateway to platforms eleven and twelve where John, the platform assistant was just closing the gates.

“Open them, NOW!” the leader demanded as they arrived.

“But, the train has gone mate” John responded, not initially realising the danger he was in at that moment.

“The man said, open them, NOW!” the robber with the Luger pistol then angrily called, producing his weapon, and then striking John across the back of the head, sending him crashing to the floor before turning the gun on the gates themselves and opening fire on the lock, breaking it open in an instant.

As soon as the gates had been forced open, the gang bundled through and ran along the length of the apparently empty platforms eleven and twelve.

“John, are you okay mate?” Carlson asked as he and Inspector Clark arrived at the gates and helped him back to his feet where they could see he was bleeding from a wound across the back of his head but was still conscious.

“What the hell is going on?” John asked, clearly in quite a disorientated state.

“A very good question” Inspector Clark grimly responded.

Whether the gang actually had a Plan B as the leader called it or not, now that their getaway car was no longer available and the Police were closing in was debatable and when they approached the far end of the platforms, there was little choice remaining for them to continue.

“That’ll do” the leader then indicated over to a steam locomotive on its own without any attached train, sitting tender first at the top end of the platform just before the signal gantry.

The locomotive, a fine looking rebuilt Merchant Navy Class pacific type express passenger engine, has just been released from the buffer stops when the coaches of the train it had hauled in from Bournemouth had departed a couple of minutes earlier and its crew, waiting for the proceed signal were on the footplate in the cab, eager to get back to the depot and then home for the night.

“Okay Tim, let’s get old Clanny Draws here back to Nine Elms and then it is three days off” the driver of the locomotive, number 35028 ‘Clan Line’ called across to his fireman.

Both men were covered head to foot in soot and ash dust from having fired and driven the locomotive for the last three and a half hours, their faces almost grey and their overalls barely recognisable as to what their original colour was.

“Join Fred and the lads for a birthday pint in the Brooklands Arms on the way home Geoff?” Tim, the fireman then suggested.

“Sounds like a plan mate” Geoff agreed as he looked out of the side of the cab at the signal gantry, “Come on...” he then gestured towards the colour light signal for their line which was still at red.

Suddenly, the two crew became aware of someone approaching their cab and expecting a traction inspector or other senior official, Geoff brushed down his overalls and polished the British Railways enamel badge on the front of his grease cap before replacing it on his head.

“We need a ride, gentlemen!” the brusque voice of the leader of the gang called as he stood on the platform by the cab access steps.

“Huh...” Geoff responded with a little chuckle as he lent over on the side of the cab, unaware of where this was going, “Got a ticket then mate?” he asked.

“As it happens...” the leader confirmed, pulling out the sawn-off shotgun and pointing it directly up at Geoff as Tim looked over his shoulder to see for himself what was going on.

“Whoa mate...” Geoff calmly responded, raising his hands as Tim did the same whereupon the second man produced his Luger pistol and a third, another sawn-off to back up their point.

“Co-operate and you will not be harmed” the leader then confirmed before handing his weapon to one of the other men who continued to point it up at the crew whilst he climbed aboard, swiftly followed by the other three.

“It’s going to be a tight fit...” Tim remarked as they all squeezed into the cab which was never designed to hold six people at once, even with four in which sometimes happened, it could get a bit crowded.

“We are only going as far as Vauxhall though” Geoff advised them as he returned to the driving controls and looked around, slightly nervously. He was bluffing though as they were booked to go right through, past Vauxhall Station and on to Nine Elms Shed itself some two and a half miles away.

“It’ll do” the leader agreed, maintaining his aim towards them as they stood at the back of the cab and watched the train crew very carefully to make sure they did not try anything.

“Got the road” Tim confirmed as he noted that the signal had now changed to green, meaning they could now proceed.

“Okay then” Geoff confirmed by checking the signal for himself, “Here we go then...”

Carlson and Inspector Clark just managed to reach the end of the platform to see the red tail lamp on the locomotive disappearing off into the night amid a huge cloud of smoke and steam as its whistle echoed through the air.

“We need to find out where that loco is going and stop it” Inspector Clark then called as he and Carlson, both out of breath stood panting near the end of the platform.

“Light engine” Carlson responded, “She’ll be heading for Nine Elms most likely.”

“Right, let’s find out what they were up to and summon the cavalry” Inspector Clark confirmed as they both turned and began to head back up the platform towards the concourse.

In the Yard Supervisors office at Pascal Street Goods Depot, the Supervisor looked up from his newspaper when the old telephone began to ring.

“Pascal Street Yard Office” he then answered over the old black Bakelite telephone handset, “Yeah, there are a couple of your guys here, they are out in the Yard I think” he then confirmed, “Hang on, I’ll go and get them.”

A few moments later, Roberts and Sturgeon looked across the Yard as they head the Supervisor shouting across towards them.

“What’s up mate?” Sturgeon called back as they started back towards him.

“Telephone call for you” the Supervisor confirmed, indicating his office behind him, “Some sort of robbery just happened at Waterloo Station, and they think the robbers may be heading south on a loco in this direction.”

“Bloody hell” Roberts responded as he and Sturgeon picked up the pace.

“Thanks mate” Sturgeon called as they reached the Supervisor and headed back to the office.

“Sergeant Roberts” he then called as soon as he had picked up the telephone handset, “Give me the details” he then requested after receiving the initial message, “Right, thanks” he then called, “We’ll head down there now.”

“What have we got?” Sturgeon asked as Roberts hung up the telephone.

“Armed robbery at the cash office at Waterloo Station” Roberts confirmed, “Robbers tried to escape in a silver Jaguar but were thwarted by one of our guys and may have jumped on a light engine that is heading down this way now.”

“Light engine?” Sturgeon responded, “I think I know where they might be going then.”

“So do I” Roberts agreed, “Nine Elms Shed.”

Moments later, the two officers reached their car having run from the office all the way across the sidings and quickly got in.

“Come on...” Roberts then called to the car as he attempted to start it, fortunately it responded first time thanks to the meticulous maintenance that the Police Vehicle Workshops always gave them and, with the Winkworth bell on the front bumper ringing away, he proceeded to reverse back out of the gate and onto the street before heading at high speed, left along the service road that ran between the backs of the houses and the railway yards.

The road was quite rough, and they were thrown about quite a bit as they raced through the back streets until they reached the gateways of Nine Elms Shed, turning sharply right and into the yard before coming to a stop just short of the retaining wall atop of which sat the nearest set of lines within the shed complex itself.

“We should call in and find out what is going on” Sturgeon suggested as he and Roberts got out of the car.

“Good idea” Roberts readily agreed as they headed for the Depot Offices nearby where a couple of off duty train crew were somewhat surprised to see the two Police officers come in.

“Sorry guys for the interruption” Sturgeon called, “Just need to use the phone” he then announced as he picked up the handset and dialled a number.

“Something going off is it?” one of the train crew asked, sensing the urgency that was being exhibited.

“Someone seems to have knocked off the Waterloo cash office” Roberts explained, “The gang may be heading this way.”

“What, here?” another member of train crew remarked with a slightly disbelieving look.

“Apparently” Sturgeon confirmed as he hung up the telephone handset, “Where would a light engine from Waterloo most likely be heading?” he then asked.

“What time is it, Bert?” one of the crew asked his mate.

“Half seven” the other crew member confirmed from his railway issue pocket watch.

“That’ll be the one off the up Bournemouth then” the first crew member recalled, “Should be somewhere near Vauxhall by now, assuming the down locals aren’t running late again.”

The locomotive with the gang on board was moving slowly south bound, approaching Vauxhall Station, approximately halfway between Waterloo and Clapham Junction. The restrictive signals meant it was easier for the crew to prolong the journey as long as possible in the hope that some sort of rescue would be possible further down the line and thanks to the apparent inexperience of the gang in railway operations, they appeared to be none the wiser.

There was no radio on the locomotive, no way of communicating with the outside world unless the crew stopped and stepped down on to the side of the line and used a signal post telephone and even then, there were not very reliable, and it was highly unlikely that the gang would allow them to anyway.

“Coming up on Vauxhall gentlemen” Geoff called from the driving seat as he saw the lights of the platforms at Vauxhall Station ahead where there was a red signal at the end, “Looks like we are going to be held there too” he then remarked.

“Wimbledon loop local must be late again” Tim remarked as he shovelled another load of coal through the firebox door and then closed it again.

“Probably” Geoff agreed although both he and Tim were actually quietly hoping that the red signal ahead meant that help was on the way.

Running tender first, the large locomotive was more difficult to drive, essentially it was travelling backwards, and Geoff had to be extra careful as his view of the line ahead was no way near as clear if it had been running forwards, boiler first.

“Still red mate” Tim then called whereupon, with the gang still looking on, weapons drawn, Geoff began to apply the brake and slow down.

At that point, the robber with the Luger pistol looked out of the side of the cab at the station that was now coming into view as the tender reached the platform ramp and noticed something moving in the shadows.

“Filth!” he then called, waving his gun wildly outwards.

“Keep going!” the leader ordered as he checked and confirmed that there were Police waiting on the platform for them to arrive.

“We have to stop; the signal is red!” Geoff protested, pointing ahead at the red light visible on top of the gantry at the far end of the platform which was when the warning horn for the Advanced Warning System sounded in the cab, the audio warning for the crew of the signal aspect ahead.

It did not matter what the gang did now, there was no way either Geoff or Tim were going to let the locomotive pass that signal at danger, the result could be a

catastrophic accident, a derailment or worst of all, a collision with another train ahead, better to be shot than to proceed and risk disaster.

The locomotive continued to slow to almost walking pace which was when the Police officers emerged and approached.

“GET BACK!” the Luger pistol robber warned, firing off a couple of warning shots in their general direction, forcing the Police officers to run for cover.

The leader of the gang duly decided to act and with Geoff’s continued refusal to proceed, stuck him across the back of the head and pulled him away from the controls whilst Tim was also quickly restrained.

“Do it” the Leader then called to one member of the gang who duly stepped forwards and took over the controls.

“Here we go!” the gang member now driving then called as he released the brake and the locomotive began to speed up, heading towards the signal that was still red, only for it to suddenly turn to green, just as the buffers of the tender reached it.

“Ah, that’s got it!” the leader called with a sense of great achievement.

“Three, two, one...” Geoff quietly counted down, he knew what was about to happen.

Suddenly there was another warning horn sound from the Automatic Warning System in the cab, only this time with the crew away from the controls, the gang member at the controls had no idea how to cancel it which meant that a few seconds later, the emergency brake was applied and with much screeching and hissing of steam, the locomotive came to an abrupt stop some two hundred yards beyond the south end of Vauxhall Station.

The gang leader scrambled to his feet, having been thrown about the cab by the sudden application of the brakes that even from that comparatively slow speed, is enough to send anyone unprepared tumbling.

“Come on gentlemen” he then called to his fellow robbers as he looked behind them towards Vauxhall Station in the distance where he could see Police officers with torches beginning to head towards them from the platforms, “Time to go.”

With that order, the four members of the gang clambered down onto the ballast beside the track whilst the loco crew looked on.

“Ten shillings say one of them hits the third rail and gets fried” Geoff remarked as they watched the four men disappear off into the darkness.

At the south end of the platform back at Vauxhall Station, one of the Transport Commission Police officers quickly opened a small wooden cabinet and picked up the telephone handset inside that automatically connected him to the signal box at Waterloo that controlled all the lines in the area.

“BTC Officer at Vauxhall, this is an emergency call” the officer urgently announced, “All lines south of Vauxhall as far as Clapham Junction, stop all trains and turn off the third rail as quick as you can!”

In the signal box that used to be situated on the west side of the approach lines into and out of Waterloo Station, the duty signallers quickly reacted to the emergency call, rushing to pull small levers in the panels in front of them and press buttons that saw every single signal on the lines between Waterloo itself and Clapham Junction revert to red whilst the man in charge of the electrical supply via the third rail for the electric trains also acted fast, shutting off the power.

Across three miles of route and several parallel running lines, the electric trains immediately came to a halt with the traction current being switched off whilst those trains powered by diesel or steam were also brought to a stand with the red signals.

“Looks like the trains are stopping” one of the members of the gang remarked as they heard the squealing of brakes all around from several trains in the vicinity applying their emergency brakes.

“They are on to us” the leader grimly confirmed as he clambered over the running rails with his three colleagues following him closely.

“I’ll teach them a lesson...” the man at the back gruffly responded, once again brandishing his Luger pistol menacingly.

“For the last time, put that bloody thing away!” the leader admonished him firmly.

The light was poor; a gentle mist filled the air which meant the gang had difficulty seeing exactly where they were going. Being on that section of the line meant they were quite high up on a viaduct that ran for some distance above numerous little side streets and alleyways that crisscrossed like a maze below them.

With no direct communications available to the trains in those days, none of the drivers who had stopped in the area either in response to the signals reverting to red or the traction power being abruptly shut off had any idea what was going on, the first some of them being aware of the issue being when the four members of the gang were spotted hopping over the tracks as they continued to head roughly southwards.

In the signal box at Waterloo, a scene of controlled calm amid the chaos was to be found where Inspector Clark had arrived to see the signalling staff busy, trying to turn around trains who were approaching the shutdown area and also taking a number of telephone calls from drivers who were using the line side signal post telephones to call in, trying to find out what was happening using the only method of communication available to them.

“Ah, Inspector!” the Duty Signalling Supervisor called as he entered the main room, “We just got a call from a driver near Nine Elms Viaduct, apparently he has seen four people, dressed in dark clothing making their way over the lines towards the east side of the tracks.”

“Have you got a map up here?” Inspector Clark then asked.

“Over here Sir” the Supervisor led the Inspector over to a table nearby on which were numerous charts, maps and plans, “From what we can work out, your suspects decamped from the light engine here” he indicated on the track plan a point just south of Vauxhall Station, “The driver of that engine just called in to say they tried to seize the controls as they were passing through the platform but whoever these guys are, they were none too savvy about the safety system which promptly applied the emergency brake.”

“At least that is something” Inspector Clark agreed, “Where could they be heading?” he then asked.

“Educated guess, either one of the goods yards although if they are over on the east side of the lines that rules out all these and the gasworks” the Supervisor indicated the various rail linked industrial sites on the west side of the main line, “Clapham is too far and full of traps, steep drops, etcetera so if I were a betting man, I would get your lads down over here.”

“Pascal Street Goods Yard down to Nine Elms shed” Inspector Clark read from the map, “Right, can I use your phone?” he then asked.

Two and a half miles away at Nine Elms Shed, Sturgeon and Roberts were standing near the mess room and office buildings looking across the yard and towards the locomotive sheds nearby, a run-down tatty looking place now, a far cry from its glory days as one of the largest steam locomotive depots in the country, the war had done a lot of damage to the buildings and infrastructure and the run down of steam operations on British Railways had meant lack of investment and neglect in what remained with only a few years left before the last steam locomotive would be withdrawn and the site would be closed completely and demolished.

“Are there many people about the shed tonight?” Roberts then asked the couple of members of train crew with them, looking out into the dark.

“A few loco cleaners, couple of fitters in the shed and the coaling stage supervisor” Bert, one of the crew members confirmed, “The Duty Depot Foreman is supposed to be around somewhere too, but I reckon he has probably slipped off for a very long liquid lunch down at the Brooklands Arms knowing him.”

“Right, I think we had better take a look around then” Sturgeon declared to which Roberts nodded in agreement, “You guys, see if you can find the Duty Depot Foreman, we are going to need him and if any more officers arrive, get them to follow us across the yard” he then instructed.

“No worries mate” Jim, the other crew member confirmed, “Best get the kettle on Bert, looks like we may be having guests this evening.”

“Okay Ted, where do you want to try first?” Roberts then asked as they looked across the yard towards the huge main shed, just visible in the distance as the light available in the Yard was at best minimal.

“If they come over from the main line then over towards the back of the shed has to be favourite” Sturgeon summarised which was when they duly switched on their battery torches and started walking.

Underfoot, the conditions were difficult to walk on, decades of accumulated soot, ash, unburnt coal and clinker from the locomotives that had continuously passed through there since the turn of the century had left a crusty layer which could have been the moon for all they knew.

The rails themselves were greasy which was the reason why the two officers carefully stepped over any rails rather than perching on them, an accident waiting to happen especially with the cold conditions adding to the hazard.

A simmering shunting locomotive was parked near to the shed, steam gently seeping from leaks in its tired and now only minimally maintained structure.

Roberts climbed up the cab side steps and checked the footplate but apart from an abandoned driver’s flask on the wooden seat, there was no sign of life.

“Nobody's home” Roberts then confirmed as he climbed down again and jumped the last bit onto the ash and clinker contaminated ballast below.

As they approached the main shed, there was a clang from inside that gave them a brief fright, the sound echoing loudly all around.

“Over there I think” Sturgeon whispered, nodding towards the right-hand side where a number of cold silent locomotives were stored out of use, standing in the darkness, waiting for the call to service although for many their next movement was in fact probably going to be to the scrap yard.

As they entered the shed, the dim, soot obscured lighting high above them only providing a modest amount of illumination, it was obvious to both officers that someone was hiding by a locomotive parked further inside.

“Careful...!” Roberts warned Sturgeon before, as quietly as they could, they advanced towards the source of the sound.

Whoever it was, they seemed to be beneath one of the locomotives, a British Railways Standard Type 5MT tender engine that was still in steam but had its round smoke box door open and a set of shovels and long picks leaning up against the front buffer beam.

“Police!” Sturgeon then called which caused whoever it was to look back at them from under the locomotive with a startled expression.

“It's okay, I am the fitter!” the man responded, wriggling out from his position to reveal a short thin man in heavily stained overalls and grease cap, holding a very large adjustable spanner.

“Sorry mate” Roberts apologised whereupon the bemused looking fitter returned to what he was doing, and the two officers carried on.

Finding nothing but grimy locomotives, equipment, and a couple more engineers, they soon reached the back of the shed and, after taking one last look around the vast dark interior with their torches, went through a doorway and out the back, not far from the main lines ahead which were unusually quiet because of all traffic having been stopped.

“What's that?” Roberts then motioned off to their right where, on the other side of the access line to the sheds, something could be seen moving in the dark.

“Someone is down there” Sturgeon confirmed, “Could be them, let's take a look.”

Carefully, the two officers made their way through undergrowth, rubble, and debris towards the start of the viaduct that carries the main lines up at that point towards Vauxhall and Waterloo.

Sure enough, as they approached, the shadowy forms of at least three figures could be seen trying to make their way away from them towards the Goods Yard and Loco Sheds.

“Got 'em” Sturgeon declared.

“Two of us, four of them” Roberts summarised, “I reckon we need backup.”

“No argument there mate” Sturgeon readily agreed.

“We'll just discreetly follow them for now” Roberts then confirmed, “We just have to hope that the cavalry arrives in time to cut them off.”

It took quite a bit of effort to keep the men in their sights, terrible underfoot conditions combined with darkness and bitterly cold weather conspired against them, but they managed it, up to the point where they reached the loco shed and then disappeared from view down the side.

“Come on” Roberts then encouraged Sturgeon and they ran as best as they could across the ground to the corner of the shed before peering around the corner to see four figures just visible in the shadows between a row of withdrawn locomotives and the shed wall.

Using the shadows themselves, the two officers moved to follow the men but moments later they realised that they had disappeared.

“Where the hell did they go?” Sturgeon asked as he and Roberts looked around.

“They can't have vanished” Roberts agreed, “Mind you, this place is a rabbit warren, and they could be anywhere.”

“Let’s try over towards the main gates” Sturgeon then suggested, “They could be hiding in the coaling tower.”

“Trouble with that is it gives them a very good view of us coming from a long way off” Roberts then pointed out.

“Well, I was never one for the subtle approach” Sturgeon admitted.

In the distance, the sound of Police car Winkworth bells could be heard getting closer, the sound drifting across the Yard.

“That’ll put the wind up them” Roberts remarked as they crossed the line, between two rusty old coaches that had been laid up there for years which was when he stubbed his toe on some old bits of metal on the ground which he looked down at with his torch before bending down and casually picking one bit up, a cast oval plate with 70A cast onto the face of it.

“George!” Sturgeon then whispered across, “Over there” he then indicated towards the huge coaling tower that dominated the skyline over the Shed and all around.

“Oh yes, there they are” Roberts confirmed as he also saw someone in the darkness climbing up the access ladder, “Come on” he then encouraged Sturgeon and together they darted across the open gap between the row of old coaches and the coaling tower tracks where a row of coal wagons were sitting.

As they carefully proceeded around the coaling stage area, a significant number of Metropolitan and British Transport Commission Force officers were arriving at the main gate.

“Who is in charge here?” came the authoritative voice of Inspector Clark as he led the officers onto the grounds.

“Barry Franks, acting duty shed foreman” a rather short, down at heel looking man called as he shuffled forward. It was pretty obvious to Inspector Clark that the man had been drinking from the way he was just that little bit too unsteady on his feet but decided, considering the urgency of the situation to overlook the issue for now.

“I got this boss” Bert, the off duty spare driver who Sturgeon and Roberts had spoken to a short while earlier confirmed as he stepped forward, silently rolling his eyes upwards in response to the state that Franks was in and indicating to Inspector Clark with a lifting a glass and drinking motion.

“Is he always like that?” Inspector Clark asked as he and Bert watched Franks shuffle off back towards the nearby Brooklands Arms public house.

“Oh no Inspector” Bert confirmed with considerable regret, “Usually he is utterly incomprehensible; we just interrupted him mid supper if you know what I mean.”

“Hmm, the proverbial liquid lunch...” Inspector Clark responded, “Anyway, are there any other officers here?” he then asked, indicating the Riley Pathfinder patrol car parked nearby.

“Two of your guys rolled up about fifteen minutes ago and headed out across the yard towards the Old Shed on the right there” Bert confirmed.

“Have you seen anyone else?” Inspector Clark then asked as he looked around.

“No Sir” Bert confirmed, “Nobody has come in or out of here since, we would have seen them.”

“Right” Inspector Clark responded, “Okay, two officers with me, we will head towards the shed, two others, stay here and guard the gate, don’t let anyone in or out and the rest of you head down there” he indicated off down the service road to his left, “I want to make sure these guys don’t try and escape via the Goods Yard down there.”

With his orders issued, the officers quickly dispersed with Inspector Clark leading two of his own officers off across the numerous tracks that spanned the site, mostly leading from the turntable in the corner across to the huge sheds just visible in the distance through the mist and lingering smoke.

“Looks like we have reinforcements Ted” Roberts called, nodding across the yard towards where the lights of torches could be seen in the distance making their way across the ground.

“Look out!” Sturgeon then called, pushing Roberts out of the way just as a huge chunk of coal came crashing to the ground from above then, shattering into tiny pieces.

“Ever get the feeling someone doesn't like you?” Sturgeon remarked as they both looked up.

The sound of Police whistles suddenly pierced the night air from somewhere over on the opposite side of the site and distant shouting could be heard.

“They have split up I reckon” Roberts confirmed, “Come on” he then called as he started to climb up the ladder leading to the upper part of the coaling stage.

“Oh, I hate heights...” Sturgeon remarked as he duly followed but after a few steps up, there was a loud clunk and the sound of running footsteps high above them.

“Over there!” Roberts pointed nearby as two shadowy figures jumped down from the tower onto the top of two full coal wagons before clambering back onto the ground and running off into the dark.

“Rats!” Roberts responded as he and Sturgeon were forced to clamber back down again which was when Inspector Clark came running over to them.

“There you are” Inspector Clark called as he joined them; “You got anything?”

“Two of them just ran off in that direction, Sir” Sturgeon confirmed.

“The other two have just been sighted over on the other side heading back towards the main line” Inspector Clark confirmed.

“We’ll try and track down these two Sir” Roberts confirmed.

“Be careful, we think these guys are armed” Inspector Clark confirmed.

“Yes Sir” both Sturgeon and Roberts confirmed before heading off into the dark whereupon Inspector Clark watched after them before turning smartly on his heels and heading back towards the main gates.

Despite the darkness, two figures could just about be seen in the distance, approaching the high brick wall that separated the shed site from the adjacent goods yard.

The fog was drifting across the open ground, making visibility worse as Roberts and Sturgeon chased the two suspects across the open ground, taking care not to trip over the various rusty railway lines and other debris underfoot.

Looking back, there was no sign of any of the other officers who had all headed off in the opposite direction meaning they were on their own again.

“Drat, they are splitting up” Roberts realised as they noticed that the two shadowy figures had reached the far wall and were now heading off in opposite directions.

“And the cavalry has bugged off in the wrong direction” Sturgeon remarked, “My luck never changes...”

“I’ll take the one on the left, you take the one on the right” Roberts then instructed to which Sturgeon nodded in agreement and they made off into the night.

The ground was uneven and slippery for Sturgeon as he followed the suspect along the length of the perimeter wall, struggling to see in the misty darkness until he was suddenly stopped in his tracks when a figure emerged from the shadows and struck him across the back of the head, sending him to the ground.

As he rolled over onto his back, Sturgeon just managed to make out two figures running off back in the direction they had come and then disappearing from sight.

He struggled to get back to his feet, using the adjacent wall to help him up and then looked all around but it was no good, there was no one in sight anywhere.

In the background, the sound of trains moving once again began to filter through the air as the main line between Clapham Junction and Waterloo had just reopened, their whistles filtering through the misty night air with an ominous echo.

The fog was getting thicker now too, rolling in across the area from the River Thames a short distance away on the other side of the main line.

“Oi!” came the call across the yard which Sturgeon immediately recognised as Roberts’s voice and he headed off towards it.

It was as he made his way towards the rear of the loco sheds that he then noticed the two figures once again, the sound of their running footsteps through puddles could be heard echoing eerily all around.

“Stop! Police!” Sturgeon then called out loudly which prompted the suspects to look behind them.

“Come on!” one of the men called to the other and they made off in a different direction away from Sturgeon’s position.

“Stop!” then came a second voice from a different direction which was when Roberts emerged into view in the dim downward projected light of one of the yard lamps.

“Scarper!” the other suspect was heard to shout, and the two men ran off into the darkness again.

“George?” Sturgeon called.

“Ted” Roberts replied, struggling to breathe having run across the yard as fast as he could, “Where did they go?” he then asked as both of them looked around.

“Can't see a dam thing in this fog” Sturgeon frustratingly admitted.

“You head that way” Roberts then indicated to their right, “I'll head back over towards the sheds.”

“Be careful mate” Sturgeon then advised.

“You too...” Roberts readily agreed before they both set off.

Sturgeon walked briskly across the yard, heading back towards the massive locomotive sheds, squinting to see in the semi darkness, his handheld battery torch offering only limited illumination in the cold dark foggy conditions.

Suddenly, two gunshots rang out across the railway yards which saw Sturgeon swivel around and look on in horror.

“GEORGE!!!” Ted called out when a third shot ominously echoed through the darkness.

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“That gunshot still echoes through my head every time I close my eyes, to this day” Sturgeon then reluctantly admitted.

“Been there, done that” Jack reluctantly agreed, “So, what happened next.”

“The gunshots brought everyone over to the immediate area and we flooded the place with officers from wherever we could find them” Sturgeon continued, “We searched every inch of the loco shed, yard, the adjacent goods depot, even the main line tracks and the railway arches through the night and into the following morning.”

“Did you find anything?” Jack then asked.

“One of the holdalls used in the robbery with just a couple of ten-shilling notes in it” Sturgeon confirmed, “No fingerprints of course...”

“Naturally” Jack responded.

“But no crooks and no sign of George either” Sturgeon then replied, “The thing is, the Duty Shed Supervisor, that drunk idiot who apparently was only filling in for the regular guy was so bloody obstructive, Inspector Clark nearly read him the Riot Act.”

“What about the getaway car?” Jack then asked as he consulted the hastily scribbled notes he had jotted down as Sturgeon has told the story, “I take it, it was still parked up in the taxi rank lane outside Waterloo Station?”

“Oh yeah, we seized that” Sturgeon confirmed, “Hang on a minute” he then remarked as he scabbled around in his jacket pocket and then found a couple of old style Police Note Books which he then consulted, “I wrote it all down at the time from the report that Carlson filed” he then explained as he flicked through the pages, “Ah, here it is” he then passed the note book across to Jack.

“Silver Mk II Jaguar 2.8 litre” Jack read from the notes, “Classic getaway motor” he then remarked.

“Ain’t it just?” Sturgeon agreed.

“Registration number Four Two Seven, Hotel Lima Tango” Jack then continued to read.

“Straight banana” Sturgeon confirmed, “It was reported stolen from somewhere near Tooting I think about two weeks earlier, but the registration number had been changed as it was the old-style plates where you could just take the individual letters and numbers off and rearrange them.”

“Know exactly what you mean” Jack agreed, “Got that type of plate on my Cortina.”

“You have got a Cortina?” Sturgeon remarked with an astounded look.

“Yeah...” Jack confirmed, very matter of factly, “Mk III, GXL 2000, I sort of inherited it really, but it doesn’t half shift, plus it annoys the mayor’s minions

responsible for enforcing the central London Low Emission Zone which is always a bonus.”

“Nice” Sturgeon complimented, “Needless to say our mystery silver Jaguar had no fingerprints on it anywhere, these boys knew what they were doing and no mistake.”

“How much was the take?” Jack then asked.

“About fifteen grand, a hell of a lot of money, especially in 1963” Sturgeon confirmed, “They picked their timing perfectly, lots of extra cash in the office following the end of the Christmas holidays, probably twice what there would normally have been at any other time of year with the possible exception of the summer holiday period.”

“Any leads at all?” Jack inquired as he continued to make notes.

“A few names were tossed about” Sturgeon recalled, “The Gaskill family needless to say floated to the top of the list and the Metropolitan Police Robbery Squad did go and kick some doors in over the next couple of weeks, but nothing turned up, if it was them, they covered their tracks very well.”

“So, in summary” Jack then remarked as he once again consulted his notes, “The gang’s Plan A was to escape in the Jaguar they presumably stole specifically for the job but when that went pear shaped, they resorted to Plan B which was escape by train.”

“Risky plan” Sturgeon commented, “but then again...”

“Someone was seen with a light-coloured car, possible a Jaguar in the vicinity of Pascal Street Goods Yard possibly checking out the area a few days earlier” Jack then recalled, “Same car?”

“There was a fair few of those around at the time, popular model with the Kensington set and also armed blaggers of course” Sturgeon agreed, “but the coincidence is too much to ignore.”

“So, in that case, their escape via the main line and off through either Pascal Street Goods Yard or Nine Elms Shed could well have been carefully planned” Jack then suggested.

“A plan that was going fine until they ran into George and me” Sturgeon added, “Our presence was not in the script.”

“Without you two there, delaying them sufficiently until Inspector Clark and the reinforcements arrived” Jack then remarked, “They would have been off and away to wherever their meeting point was to split up the loot.”

“Which they probably did anyway, just a little later than planned” Sturgeon agreed, “The trouble is someone got their gun off and a Police Officer is missing and that would have upped the ante somewhat.”

“Is anyone from back then still around?” Jack asked.

“Hmm...” Sturgeon thoughtfully stroked his moustache, “Not many, I don’t think any of the officers are around anymore except possibly WPC Moore and I know Carlson is still alive but definitely retired, Inspector Clark died twenty odd years ago, but our useless Chief Inspector Owen retired on a fat pension out to New Zealand I think.”

“Useless?” Jack inquired.

“Professional desk pilot” Sturgeon then explained, “Rarely left his desk which meant he wouldn’t have known what real police work was if it bit him on the bum if you know what I mean.”

“I do indeed” Jack readily agreed.

“Hang on, there is one guy you could talk too” Sturgeon then suddenly remembered, “The station guy, the one on the platform gate at Waterloo, what was his name, John, that’s him.”

“How old was he back then?” Jack asked.

“Late teens or early twenties, I think” Sturgeon confirmed, “Young certainly.”

“Where is he now?” Jack then inquired.

“Still at Waterloo I think” Sturgeon recalled.

“In which case, I might swing by on my way to see Megan tonight” Jack then remarked.

“If you do see him, tell him old Ted sends his regards” Sturgeon then requested.

“Sir!” Lieutenant Chambers called across the Investigation Room which saw Eislely look up from the files he was reading and then come across to her, “I think I have got something.”

“Talk to me Lieutenant” Eislely eagerly responded as he joined her.

“The CCTV quality isn’t that great, but I have managed to back track our victim, Alfred Gaskill back through the streets” Chambers explained, showing Eislely the footage on the screen in front of them which was showing various views from numerous cameras across a wide area of Battersea.

“How did he get there?” Eislely then asked.

“On foot throughout” Chambers confirmed, “There are a couple of points where we lose him but only for a few moments, the key thing however is here” she then froze one piece of footage and pointed to it.

“He made a telephone call” Eisley remarked as he looked at the freeze frame image, showing Gaskill inside the telephone box, clearly making a call as the handset could just about be seen up against his right ear.

“Telephone number for that call box is listed as 0207 511 1642” Chambers confirmed, “I have already got British Telecom working on tracing who he called.”

“Excellent work Lieutenant” Eisley complimented her, “It is a pity we cannot hear the actual call.”

“Actually, I have an idea about that Sir” Chambers admitted, “It’s just a hunch but I think if the Chief was to call in a favour or two, there is a possibility that is worth pursuing...”

“Last call for Bournemouth and Weymouth via Basingstoke, platform eleven!” came the call across the concourse, “Front five coaches only please for stations beyond Bournemouth to Poole and Weymouth!”

This prompted the customary last-minute rush of intending passengers who proceeded through the ticket barriers, some using contactless or smart cards whilst others still had traditional paper tickets for their journey and as ever, a few failed to open the barriers initially, usually due to inserting the wrong ticket.

Help was at hand for those who had problems in the form of John, the Station Assistant who was as ever on duty at the ticket barrier and still as friendly, helpful and approachable as he had been all those decades earlier.

Jack arrived in Waterloo Station by the main entrance and proceeded across the busy concourse to the Information Desk located approximately halfway along.

“Good evening, Sir” the young lady behind the desk responded to Jack’s arrival, “How can I help you officer?” she then inquired.

“I am looking for one of your staff, a John Tattersall?” Jack politely asked.

“Oh, old John” the young lady confirmed, “Yes, he’s here” she then responded, “I think he is over on the gate line this evening.”

“Thank you” Jack responded with a smile before leaving the desk.

“No, front five coaches madam” John was heard to reassure a late running passenger, “Best just jump on the first door and walk through, they are about to go” he then informed her as the whistles of the platform staff began to call.

“John Tattersall?” Jack then called as he approached.

“That’s me” John confirmed as he turned and was surprised to see a Security & Police Service officer approaching.

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent, Transport Division” he confirmed, showing his Warrant Card although he did not really need too, there were very few people in the public transport industry who did not know who he was now.

“An honour Sir” John responded as behind him, amid much whistling from the platform staff, the Bournemouth and Weymouth train started to depart, these days formed of sleek twenty first century electric multiple units, three generations of rolling stock removed from the steam locomotive trains that once departed here on the same service in the 1960’s.

“I was hoping you could help me” Jack then began to explain, “Ted Sturgeon tells me that you have worked on the railways since 1961 I believe?”

“June 12th, 1961” John proudly recalled, “I was fifteen, you could leave school at that age and get a job in those days” he then explained, “I worked here at Waterloo until 1966 then went on to become a Guard and later a Driver before I was supposed to retire but I decided to hang on and came back here.”

“Impressive record” Jack remarked.

“How is old Ted by the way?” John then asked, “I haven’t seen him for a few months.”

“Still pottering on is what he described it to me as” Jack admitted, “I think he has found some fresh enthusiasm though in the last couple of days mind.”

“I err heard about the skeleton you guys found” John then quietly remarked, “Railway bush telegraph you see” he then explained, “you can’t keep anything secret on the railways!”

“So I have heard” Jack agreed with a wry smile.

“Is it him, the missing Sergeant?” John then asked.

“Yes, it is” Jack confirmed, “Nothing is being officially announced to the media until tomorrow, but it seems plenty of people have either found out or put two and two together already.”

“Poor sod...” John responded with his head bowed in respect, “Good kid he was, hard worker, determined but also someone you could just talk to, well they both were him and Ted, they were a team.”

“I gather you were the guy who got coshed by the robbers as they made their escape?” Jack then inquired.

“I think I have still got the dent on the back of my head to this day” John wryly admitted, feeling the back of his head for a moment, “They were a tough gang of lads, ex armed forces I would wager, you could tell the type by the way they went about their business, well three of them anyway.”

“Three of them?” Jack picked up on this point.

“One of them, the tall one seemed to be more uncontrollable” John tried his best to put his feelings into words, “The leader and the other two, they were cool, calm, collected but this fourth one, he was the mouthy one, seemed way too eager to solve every problem by waving a gun in people’s faces and the leader had quite a bit of a job on, keeping him from doing something stupid.”

“A loose cannon on the deck” Jack summarised.

“Yeah, that fits” John readily agreed, “Oh and their escape through this very gate line onto a loco and off down the main line?” he then added, “That was never thought of on the fly, there was no improvisation there no matter what the Robbery Squad Inspector said at the time, they were too professional, they knew exactly what there were doing and that was their back up escape plan all along.”

“Interesting...” Jack responded.

“About the only bit they didn’t plan on was me getting in the way when they came through here and running into your two lads down at Nine Elms Shed” John then added.

“For which you got a knock on the head and poor old Sergeant Roberts got a bullet in his skull” Jack responded.

“No one deserves to die just for doing their job” John remarked to which Jack nodded in agreement, “Of course there was also the second robbery two weeks later.”

“What second robbery?” Jack asked, looking rather confused at this revelation.

“There was a wages snatch, broad daylight in Lower Marsh Street, just around the corner from here” John confirmed, “It was kept all a bit hush hush at the time as there was rumours of some sort of scandal plus there was also the potential issue of several hundred railway workers not getting their pay packet with their Christmas overtime in it which would have led to a riot, so the cash was quietly replaced and nothing more was publicly said about it.”

“Was it investigated?” Jack then asked.

“Not by the regular plod that is for certain” John recalled, “It never made the papers and the rumours that were doing the rounds to the point of railway myth for years afterwards all said that someone saw to it that the matter was buried very quickly.”

“There must be a record of it somewhere” Jack remarked, “Probably an old manila envelope in a dusty filing cabinet somewhere.”

“There were plenty of wages snatches in those days” John explained, “Lots of wages clerks walking around town at the same time on the same route on the same day every week with a briefcase full of cash, another one would have been pretty easy to hide in among the other news like that awful winter we were in the middle of.”

“All before I was born...” Jack admitted, “Is there anyone from that time still about by any chance?” he then asked.

“There are a few” John recalled after a few moments for thought, “a lot have gone now though, it is one of the quirks of the railway industry, when you retire you are either pushing up daisies within six months or spending the next thirty years propping up a bar somewhere.”

“What about the crew of that locomotive that the gang hijacked?” Jack then inquired.

“Possibly” John confirmed, “I cannot be certain of course but what you need to do is track down the Railway Veterans Association, they have an annual get together for a pint or three and a reminisce.”

“Right, thanks” Jack responded.

“Do you think you will get the man that shot the Sergeant?” John then asked.

“Whether he is dead or alive, I fully intend to” Jack determinedly confirmed.

The National Police & Security Service Internal Courier Branch is probably one of the least public facing and unsung parts of the whole organisation, but their job is a vital one.

That evening, one of their couriers was waiting outside the Archival Office in Croydon, South London for a package that had just been located in the archives and was to be taken direct to New Scotland Yard as soon as he had received it.

Despite the urgency of the call out, the Courier was still waiting outside the rear entrance where he had been sitting for a good half an hour now, indeed it was reaching the point where he was going to call in and find out what was happening when the door opened and one of the Archive Officers appeared, carrying a metal briefcase.

“I was beginning to worry” the Courier remarked as he took the case and placed it in the rear of the small saloon car before securing the door.

“It took a while to dig this one out” the Archive Officer confirmed, “Half that weight is dust and cobwebs I reckon.”

“I best get going, thanks” the Courier confirmed as he started the car before heading off at high speed.

Despite not being a front-line operational part of the Service, the Courier Branch still had certain privileges, their drivers were all highly skilled, some ex-Traffic Division and were permitted to travel with sirens and blue lights where the need was urgent.

Being mid evening, the roads of South London were fairly quiet and with the sirens and lights, it only took forty minutes from leaving the suburbs in Croydon to reaching Victoria Embankment and turning left at New Scotland Yard, proceeding past the famous three-sided revolving sign and around the rear of the building, down the ramp into the basement car park.

As soon as he was parked, the Courier retrieved the case from the rear of the car and headed straight for the basement entrance, using his identity swipe card to open the door and then access the lift.

The fifth floor was the Courier’s destination where Divisional Commander Tim Forrester of the Robbery Squad was working late into the night with an overwhelming case load on his desk.

“Come in!” he called when there was the knock on the door whereupon the Courier entered, “Ah, Dave there you are” he then called.

“Sorry for the delay Sir” the Courier apologised, “Apparently it took some considerable time to dig these files out for you.”

“Cheers...” Forrester responded as he took the metal briefcase and then signed for it.

“Will that be all Sir?” the Courier then asked.

“Yeah, thanks Dave” Forrester confirmed, “Much appreciated.”

“Good night, Sir” the Courier then called before leaving.

Forrester waited a few moments for the door to close before sitting back down, hauling the huge pile of current case paperwork off his desk and then dumping it unceremoniously in a heap on the floor.

With space now cleared on his desk, he then brought the case up and turned it so that the catches were facing towards him.

The sound of the metal catches being released clunked loudly before Forrester tentatively opened the case to reveal a number of very old looking paper files neatly stowed inside.

As he had requested, the Archives has sent over everything they could find on cases of robbery and armed violence in the Waterloo and Nine Elms area from late 1962 through to the end of February 1963, there was not a huge amount of material though, the extremely cold winter had seen to it that even the most dedicated villains of the

time had decided it was too cold to work during that period which meant the number of incidents was noticeably less than average for that time.

“Here we go...” he then remarked as, looking through the individual files, he found the one in particular that he was looking for, a thick cream coloured card envelope with the crest of the old Metropolitan Police Force on the cover, just below which was the sub division listed as ‘Department SO7 - Robbery Squad, New Scotland Yard, London SW1’ which in those days was the second New Scotland Yard located in the building next door to the current one and before the Broadway one that did not come into use until the late 1960’s.

“Welcome home file 63-01/23245” Forrester commented as he carefully opened the envelope and extracted the contents, hundreds of pages of paper, forms mostly filled in by hand, some evidence photographs, statements, and background information, much of it slightly yellowed with age and possessing a historical musty smell that was a combination of old printing ink, pipe tobacco and just a hint of alcoholic spirits.

Forrester spent several minutes looking through the material, more from an interest in nostalgia at how things used to be in his Department when there were no computers, no mobile telephones, the only technology back then were old land line based dial telephones and the spirit duplicator whose distinctive ink smell and slightly hazy purple print was still apparent on some of the documents.

He was about to reach for the telephone on his desk himself when there was a polite knock at the door.

“Come in!” Forrester called which was when Tracy appeared, and he began to stand up.

“Relax Tim, it’s just me” Tracy called as she came in.

“I was just about to call you Ma’am” Forrester confirmed as he sat back down again, “You don’t happen to know where Jack is by any chance?” he then explained, “I just found the original case files and I should get them to him as soon as possible.”

“Well,” Tracy checked her watch, “Assuming he is not pulling another all nighter, I expect he will be on his way to the hospital to be with Megan” she then confirmed, “I was going over that way myself, do you want me to take the files to him?” she then suggested.

“If you could, thanks” Forrester agreed, “I do want to make a copy of this material first though.”

“Good grief, it was a completely different world back then” Tracy remarked as she looked through some of the material whilst Forrester made a start on photocopying the rest.

“I can’t even begin to imagine it, Ma’am” Forrester admitted, “All paper based and judging by the smell of these files, involving long hours in the office in a haze of cigarette smoke and backed up by frequent tots of single malt.”

“Old fashioned real police work” Tracy agreed as she handed across the other half of the files for Forrester to photocopy and then took back the first half.

“I wonder what this is?” Forrester then remarked as he reached the last couple of pieces of paper in the file and made their copies, one in particular standing out from the rest.

“Looks like a file reference number of some kind” Tracy commented as she looked at it with Forrester, “Connected case?” she then suggested.

“It’s not a file number format I recognise” Forrester admitted, “Even these old files have a file number format that is familiar, we still use basically the same system to this day.”

“Whatever this file it refers to has probably long since been lost by now anyway I expect” Tracy remarked to which Forrester nodded in agreement.

“Okay, there we are” Forrester then declared as he finished returning the files back to the briefcase before carefully closing the lid and then handing it over to Tracy, “Tell Jack, I’ll try and catch up with him tomorrow.”

“Will do” Tracy agreed as she turned to leave, “And you should get some sleep as well.”

“Sleep?” Forrester replied with a shrug of the shoulders, “What’s that?”

“Go on up, I think we know you by now Sir” the Hospital Receptionist confirmed as Jack arrived, waving him through.

“Thanks” Jack called, making straight for the lifts.

A few moments later Jack arrived at the door to Megan's room and politely knocked before entering.

“Ah, there you are” Megan remarked with a big smile on seeing Jack enter, “I was starting to wonder if I was going to have to send out a search party.”

“Sorry I am late love” Jack profusely apologised “but I have been tied up with this Battersea shooting and the Nine Elms skeleton too.”

“Any luck?” Megan asked.

“They were both shot with the same gun sixty odd years apart” Jack confirmed, “How about that for the coincidence of the century?”

“Blimey...” Megan responded as she sat up in the hospital chair alongside the bed.

“Anyway, enough talking shop” Jack remarked, “How are you?”

“Well, that should be the last operation thank God” Megan confirmed, indicating her heavily bandaged legs, “Now comes months of physio to try and get them working again.”

“You'll do it, I am sure of it” Jack reassured her with an air of confidence.

“Hello?” came a familiar voice at the door which saw them both look up to see Tracy putting her head around the door, “I hope I am not interrupting?” she then asked.

“Do come in Ma'am” Megan quickly responded.

“You know, you can call me Tracy?” she then remarked, “Ma'am all sounds very overly formal.”

“Yes, you are right” Megan agreed.

“Besides, I am going to be your mother-in-law one day” she then reminded her.

“Of course...” Megan responded with a big smile.

“Anyway, I can't stay but I bring gifts...” she then handed across the metal briefcase, “With the compliments of The Sweeney.”

“Wine and chocolates?” Megan wryly suggested as Jack took the case and proceeded to open it.

“Regrettably, no” Jack confirmed.

“Oh...” Megan responded, “Mind you, there is the distinct aroma of something coming out of that case.”

“Sixty year old fumes” Jack confirmed as he got the files out. “The combination of woodbines, single malt and err, what is that chemical smell?” he then asked.

“It's the ink from a spirit duplicator” Tracy confirmed, “I remember we had one when I was at primary school, had to wheel it out every time the school secretary broke the then new-fangled photocopier.”

“Ah, this is it” Jack then confirmed as he found the specific file he was looking for and opened it, “It's all here, the witness statements from the crew, the station staff, the officers involved, photos of the crime scene at Waterloo, the getaway car, the getaway engine and the holdall they found with the two banknotes inside.”

“Sorry, getaway engine?” Megan responded in disbelief.

“Yes” Jack confirmed before explaining, “The robbery took place in the cash office in the offices at Waterloo Station, the getaway car was parked outside on the taxi approach road but they couldn't get to it as a couple of the BTC officers were there so

they activated what appears to be their backup plan which was hijack a steam locomotive and force the crew to take them down the line.”

“How many were there in the gang?” Tracy asked out of curiosity.

“Four did the actual robbery” Jack confirmed, “I reckon there may have been one or two others involved somewhere though.”

“So, which one of them was the current or former British Railways employee then?” Megan asked.

“Huh?” Jack responded.

“Well, it occurs to me from what you have told me that they knew their way around Waterloo Station, plus the locomotive you say they used as a backup getaway and the lay of the land across the Nine Elms area” Megan summarised, “That to me suggests someone on the inside.”

“You know what, that does fit the facts” Jack admitted.

“I had best leave you two too it” Tracy then declared, “I have an early start, breakfast with the Home Secretary, yawn...”

“Rather you than me” Jack agreed, “Not that the Home Secretary isn’t a nice guy you know but he can’t half rabbit on when he gets going.”

“Yeah...” Tracy confirmed.

“Just don’t get him started on golf, horse racing or West Ham’s woeful record in the FA Cup” Jack then suggested.

“Gotcha...” Tracy replied, “Oh, before I forget, there was a sheet of paper in the back of that file that neither I nor Forrester could work out what it was.”

“Erm...” Jack shuffled through the file until he found it and then pulled it out, “This one by any chance?” he then showed it to her.

“That’s the one” Tracy responded, “Probably a dead end or a red herring but just in case...”

“I’ll wash it through the system and see if anything goes ping” Jack agreed.

“All right” Tracy confirmed, “Nighty night guys” she then declared before leaving, quietly closing the door behind her and leaving the couple alone.

“Can I have a look?” Megan then asked, indicating the file/

“Yes, sure” Jack readily agreed, passing over the file to her.

“So, with my prosecution lawyers’ hat on” Megan then remarked as she looked through the file. “This file is a mess, a jumbled pile of paper, no proper filing, coffee stains on some of the witness statements and no indexing of the exhibit photographs.”

“It is of its time” Jack admitted.

“Classy motor” Megan then commented on looking at the photographs of the getaway car, some taken where it had been originally abandoned at Waterloo and others under better conditions at a Police garage somewhere after the event.

“Mk II Jaguar, 2.8 litre” Jack confirmed, “The professional armed blagger’s getaway vehicle of choice, well until the Ford Transit came along that is.”

“Stolen for the job I presume?” Megan then asked.

“Correct, later returned to its very grateful rightful owner” Jack responded, “and the plates had the letters and numerals rearranged to try and hide its identity as a hot motor.”

“Very old school...” Megan commented, “And this must be, and this is definitely a first for me, the getaway engine!” she looked at the photographs taken of the locomotive including close ups of the exterior and interior of the cab, all clearly taken in daylight the day after the incident in a siding somewhere which had probably been secured especially for the purpose of the investigation.

“British Railways Southern Region Bulleid Merchant Navy Pacific locomotive number 35028, named Clan Line which, by strange coincidence, is still around to this day” Jack informed her.

“Trust you to know that love” Megan remarked with a wry smile, “I am willing to bet it is a lot cleaner these days than in these photos from 1963 though.”

“It was an everyday working engine back then” Jack confirmed, “Grimy, dirty and heavily used at speeds of almost a hundred miles an hour on occasion.”

“So, you have got detailed witness statements here from the loco crew involved” Megan then summarised some more of the files, “The handwriting is appalling though, this would have been thrown out as inadmissible by the Criminal Prosecution Service if this were submitted today you know?”

“Yeah, I know that from experience” Jack confirmed.

“The thing we need to do, and thanks to the drugs the doctor has pumped in me, I am going to be awake through the night, is to go through each and every one of these witness statements, the ones we can actually read that is, and see where there is correlation and contradiction” Megan then explained, “and while we are about it, use our fresh eyes to see if there is anything here that got missed, overlooked, whatever.”

“In which case my love” Jack declared as he picked up roughly half of the file contents and passed it across to her, “You start with this pile, I’ll have a go with this lot.”

“It’s amazing anyone from this era is still alive judging by the amount of tobacco and alcohol that must have been consumed when this lot was put together!” Megan remarked on the odour coming from the papers, the edges of some of which had noticeable yellow nicotine staining.

“Here is the witness statements from the loco crew” Jack then remarked as he looked at two separate pieces of paper, both formal forms that had been filled in by hand, “Waiting for the road to go light engine to the shed, men appear, sawn off and pistol, a German pistol” he noted one particular point in the statement “and then forced to take them, reached Vauxhall Station, the leader ordered one of his men to take over the controls which was when they missed cancelling the AWS warning and the emergency brakes came on automatically.”

“I got the cash office clerks here” Megan read from the papers she was looking through, “All looks a very efficient and slick operation, these guys were professionals.”

“Fifteen thousand, four hundred and thirty-seven pounds, eight shillings and four pence” Jack then read from a Police Report which had the signature of Inspector Clark on the bottom of it.

“At 1963 rates, that is a big chunk of dough” Megan remarked.

“It is that” Jack agreed, “Have you got anything here about a wages snatch a couple of weeks later?” he then asked.

“I haven’t seen anything” Megan confirmed, rechecking the documents she had just in case, “There is this though” she then passed across the same piece of paper that Tracy and Forrester had identified earlier, “looks like a cross reference note to another file but I don’t recognise the format.”

“Let me see that?” Jack asked, taking a closer look at the paper, “Oh, I have seen this format before” he then confirmed.

“Really?” Megan replied, “It’s not a Police & Security Service file number, the format is all wrong and it is not a CPS file code either.”

“No. it isn’t” Jack agreed, “This is an MI5 file code.”

“MI5? What have they got to do with this?” Megan asked.

“I don’t know, but I intend to find out” Jack confirmed with clear determination.

“Oh, you are popular” Megan remarked as Jack’s mobile began to ring which prompted him to answer it.

“Jack Regent” he then called, unsure of who was calling.

“Evening Guv, it’s Mos” Eisley called “Sorry to disturb you so late but I thought you might want to know this.”

“No worries, Mos” Jack responded, “I am all ears...”

“We have managed to trace our Battersea victim, Alfred Gaskill via CCTV back to a telephone box where he made a call” Eisley explained.

“Let me guess, he called an unregistered pay as you go mobile?” Jack then asked.

“Got it in one boss” Eisley confirmed, prompting Jack to roll his eyes upwards, “Now, there is something that occurred to us...” he tailed off as he made sure the office door was closed and he could not be overheard, “That telephone box is less than half a mile from the new US Embassy building which gave us an idea.”

“I think I know where this is going” Jack responded with an amused smile, “but do go on” he then prompted.

“Call me paranoid if you like” Eisley then continued “but given the phone box’s proximity to such a key location, what do you think the chances are that our friends over at Thames House have it wired for sound and vision, you know, just in case?”

“I would say the chances of that are pretty much ninety nine percent certain” Jack confirmed, “Right, I like your thinking” he then complimented his Deputy.

“Thanks Guv!” Eisley replied.

“I had better go and see him I suppose” Jack then remarked as he was about to get up, but Megan reached across and stopped him.

“You are going nowhere, get him brought here” Megan firmly suggested, “You are a Divisional Commander, you have power, I suggest you use it...”

“All right” Jack quickly agreed before returning to the telephone, “Mos, strictly on the Q.T. I want you to find Christopher Dent and bring him here” he then instructed, “I want a few words with him and not just about his telephone skills.”

“He might not like that, Guv” Eisley cautioned.

“Tough” Jack responded, “Get him here, drag him out of the office, pub, club, spieler, wherever he may be, arrest him if you have to, I want to see him right now.”

“You got it Guv” Eisley enthusiastically confirmed, “See you later.”

“There you go Love” Megan remarked with a smile, “Power, perfect when applied in just the right amount at just the right time in just the right place.”

In a pub in Southwark, a man was trying to enjoy his pint in the saloon bar but was having trouble, the contents of that evening's edition of the London Evening Standard which was making for disturbing reading.

“BODY OF MISSING POLICE OFFICER FOUND AFTER SEVEN DECADES” read the headline across the third page which had a photograph of the scene taken from some distance away, showing the large hole and numerous Police & Security Service personnel in attendance along with an inset close-up photograph of Jack standing near his car, taken at the same time.

The front page was dominated by the Battersea Power Station Tube shooting, probably one of the most serious events that had occurred in London that year so far, but the man had wisely decided not to concentrate on that as he was after all responsible for it and was keeping a low profile for obvious reasons.

“LAST ORDERS PLEASE!” the Landlord of the Pub called out across the bar, ringing the bell in the time-honoured fashion.

The man contemplated another drink but decided to pass, instead, folding up his newspaper and tucking it under his arm as he stood up and made for the side exit out into the street.

It was almost eleven o'clock and the traffic was light which meant the man easily managed to cross the road quickly despite his advancing age, dodging around the rear of a passing London Night Bus before heading off down a cobbled side street, one of only a few old style back streets still in existence now that had not been touched by modern redevelopment or indeed in many cases, demolished off the map entirely.

Rain began to gently fall which prompted the man to hunker under his long overcoat and use the newspaper over his head as a makeshift umbrella until he stopped when a car parked in the shadows at the far end of the side street flashed its headlights at him three times.

“There you are, you old bastard...” the man remarked to himself before walking over to the car, a late 1950's vintage silver Mk II Jaguar and opening the front passenger door before getting in whereupon the leather seat upholstery and springing within creaked as he sat down.

“Hello Barry” the man called across to the driver, “What's it been? Twenty years?”

“Try thirty” Barry gruffly responded, “You are looking well Brian” he then complemented, “Especially seeing as you shot your own brother dead this morning. I presume that was you?”

“Yeah...” Brian confirmed.

“I thought I recognised the style” Barry then remarked, “So, it seems certain chickens are coming home to roost” he then continued, “What are we going to do about it?”

“We need to make sure nobody talks” Brian responded, “My brother was getting in a panic, he had to be taken care of, I had no choice.”

“It served its purpose” Barry agreed, “It will act as a warning to the others who are still around.”

“I am concerned though” Brian then continued, producing the newspaper, “Have you seen this?” he showed Barry the inner page with the Nine Elms body story.

“Ah yes” Barry responded as he took the paper and looked at it, “I was rather hoping that if the late Sergeant resurfaced, it would have been sufficient time for the whole thing to be forgotten about and filed.”

“Not with this young man on the case” Brian indicated the picture of Jack in the paper, “He is a determined guy, if he digs around sufficiently, he could cause us problems.”

“Someone must be helping him” Barry concluded, “Ask around, see who from back then is still about.”

“I bet it is that copper from the Robbery Squad, Detective Inspector Ted Sturgeon” Brian responded, “That guy sent Alfred and me down for a ten stretch in 1976 for that botched warehouse blag” he recalled, “If it isn’t him, then it will be someone from the Roehampton CID Squad, you can be certain of that.”

“Listen Brian” Barry tried to reassure him, “We are good, we have more money in the bank than we can count and nobody, not Sturgeon, not this Regent guy, not anyone from the past or the present is going to interfere with that, do you understand?”

“I got it” Brian nodded in agreement, “So, what do you think we should do about it?” he then asked.

“I’ll check with a few contacts on whether DI Ted Sturgeon is still around and put some wheels in motion” Barry confirmed, “If he or anyone else is starting to poke their noses in where we don’t want them too, we should deal with them.”

“Right” Brian responded, “But, this guy” he then indicated Jack’s picture in the paper again, “He is a Divisional Commander, that is almost as high a ranking copper as you can get. We can’t just deal with him, can we?”

“Leave that to me” Barry reassured him, “There are ways and means my old friend, ways and means...”

“I had better get the tools of the trade then” Brian responded as he prepared to get out of the car.

“Call me at nine o’clock sharp tomorrow” Barry then called after him as he got out of the car again, “Usual procedure, don’t use a landline like that idiot of a brother of yours.”

“Speak to you tomorrow” Brian confirmed before closing the door whereupon Barry started the engine, switched on the headlights, and drove off.

“Summoned, I come...” Dent remarked as he arrived in the hospital room with Easley in close escort just behind him.

“Thanks for coming” Jack responded before silently indicating towards Easley who nodded in response and left, closing the door behind him.

“I got the distinct impression this was less an invitation and more a Papal Bull” Dent then remarked as he took a seat.

“My idea!” Megan called across with a smirk.

“Ah well, mustn’t complain” Dent responded, “You have saved me from a tedious late night with the Director General in that dingy club of his.”

“Oh gawd, that place” Jack remarked.

“Anyway, how are you?” Dent then asked Megan.

“Well and truly on the mend, thanks” Megan confirmed with a thumbs up.

“Good, good” Dent responded, “So, to what do I owe the pleasure?” he then enquired.

“Two things I think you can help with” Jack responded, “Firstly, I want this file” he then showed Dent the piece of paper with the MI5 File Code on it.

“Definitely one of ours” Dent agreed, “Looks like mid 1963 from the date code.”

“That fits” Jack agreed.

“If it still exists, it will probably in the Registry Archive somewhere, assuming it doesn’t have some sort of one hundred year long restriction on it, I can probably track it down for you” Dent confirmed, “What’s in it?” he then asked.

“If my theory is right” Jack replied, “Details of a wages snatch that occurred near Waterloo Station sometime in late January or early February 1963 which was covered up for some as yet unknown reason.”

“Is this connected with that skeleton you found the other day?” Dent asked.

“Possibly” Jack confirmed, “Admittedly it is a bit of the proverbial straw clutching we are doing here.”

“All right, I’ll get Registry on the case and see if it is there” Dent agreed, “and the other thing?” he then asked.

“My dead body in Battersea Tube Station” Jack then continued “We have managed to trace his movements that morning up to the point of his untimely demise and it seems that he made a call from a telephone box.”

“A telephone box?” Dent responded to a nod of confirmation from Jack, “And what has this to do with me?” he then asked.

“The aforementioned telephone box is located less than a half mile from the new US Embassy which means that there is a very good chance you have got it and probably every other telephone line and carrier pigeon for a two-mile radius wired for sound and vision, just on the off chance” Jack suggested.

“Erm...” Dent responded awkwardly.

“That’ll be a yes then” Megan remarked with a smile.

“All right, I am not saying we do” Dent tried to rescue the situation, “but supposing for arguments sake, completely hypothetically of course...”

“...of course” Jack nodded in agreement.

“...we did do something as outrageous as bug every telephone box in SW11 and SW8, just on the off chance” Dent continued, “What would you hope to find?”

“A recording and or transcript of the telephone call which Alfred Gaskill made” Jack formally requested, “We know he called an unregistered and therefore untraceable pay as you go mobile but that is where the trail ends.”

“Oh, nothing is ever that untraceable, believe me” Dent responded with a knowing smirk.

“I was hoping you would say that” Jack replied, “So, can you help me?”

“Hmm...” Dent thought for a few moments, “All right, as it is you, but this goes no further than between us, we don’t want the entire world finding out we are in the habit of randomly bugging telephone boxes.”

“Hypothetically of course...” Jack added.

“Give me the details, I will see what I can do, but no promises” Dent then confirmed.

“Of course” Jack agreed, “Thanks.”

Everything that had happened in the last day or so had brought it all back to Sturgeon, most of all, the dreadful sound of the gunshots echoing across the yard that fateful night so many years ago.

He woke with a start, the sound of those gunshots still running through his mind and looked around him.

Sturgeon had fallen asleep in his easy chair in front of the television, an undrunk glass of scotch on the coffee table beside him.

Struggling to see in the dim light of the old television set, Sturgeon just about managed to establish that it was gone midnight but having already slept and with the bad dreams he was having when he was asleep, he was going to be awake for much of the night now.

Instead, thinking back to his dreams and what had occurred earlier that day, he decided to go and look for something which meant a journey up the stairs and on into the attic where the fifty year old twenty watt light bulb shed some illumination on years of accumulated dust on numerous old cardboard boxes and packing crates, many of which had remained undisturbed up there for years.

“I really must get around to sorting this lot out...” Sturgeon remarked to himself with a bit of a smile as that was what he said pretty much every time he came up here, but he still had not got around to it.

“Right, where are you?” Sturgeon then remarked as he started to shift some boxes, releasing a load of dust into the atmosphere that hung in the air, illuminated by the light of the dim bulb, “There you are” he then declared as he found what he was looking for.

It took a bit of manoeuvring, but he managed to get the box back through the attic hatch and then downstairs, placing it on the living room table before opening it.

The contents were documents, files and newspaper cuttings from when he was a Police officer which included many of his old official notebooks which displayed the crests of respectively, the British Transport Commission Police, the British Transport Police, the Metropolitan Police and then finally his last posting, the Essex Police Force.

It was one of the old newspapers that he looked at first, dated 1976 and showing a photograph of a much younger Sturgeon when he was a Detective Inspector with the Robbery Squad, based at New Scotland Yard back in the days of the old Metropolitan Police Force.

“Handsome devil...” he remarked with a smile.

The article that the main photograph of him illustrated was the successful prosecution of the Gaskill Brothers for an attempted armed robbery, a sentence of ten years each being handed down by the judge after they were found guilty following a trial that lasted almost two months.

Some of the related personal case notes were also present but what Sturgeon was seeking was buried further down in the box requiring some excavation through layers of history to reach it.

“Ah, there you are” Sturgeon the called as he found the papers he was looking for, one a newspaper which was barely a paragraph that was inserted into the late breaking news section of an edition of the Evening Standard concerning the report of a wages snatch, this being the only publicly published notification that it had occurred as subsequent editions of the paper that evening never mentioned it.

The other item were some notes and a few photographs that Sturgeon had acquired at the time from a colleague in the Metropolitan Force who was among the first on the scene of the wages snatch, again one of only a few publicly existing documents that he knew to exist, such was the secrecy that surrounded the crime within a matter of just a couple of hours after it had happened.

Sturgeon sat back and relaxed in his chair and began to read through the notes and look at the pictures before he noticed something that had not occurred to him at the time back in 1963, prompting him to look closer at one photograph in particular.

“Coincidence?” he then asked himself as he tried to put two and two together in his mind. “Maybe...”

Still deep in thought, Sturgeon then put aside the documents and photographs and looked over at the box next to him, his eyes settling on the official notebooks, now stacked up next to it which was when another thought occurred to him and he looked across at the framed photograph on the mantelpiece nearby of him and Sergeant George Roberts standing by their Riley Pathfinder Police Car back in 1962.

“George, me old mate” Sturgeon then called to the photograph, “What happened to your notebook?”

The rattling of the hospital catering trolley bringing breakfast around at half six in the morning was what woke Jack up, suddenly coming to life as if he had been prodded with a sharp stick.

“Morning sleepy head” Megan called, “You been dreaming again?” she then asked.

“Err, I am not entirely sure love” Jack admitted as he slowly stood up and brushed himself down, “Have I been asleep long?” he then asked.

“You dozed off at about two o’clock” Megan confirmed, “I thought I would leave you to it, you need the sleep.”

“You can say that again” Jack readily agreed as the catering lady appeared at the door and brought in two breakfast trays.

“Oh, cheers” Jack responded.

“Thanks” Megan added.

“You are welcome me dears” the catering lady confirmed before leaving them to it.

“As you were snoring last night...” Megan then began.

“I snore?” Jack responded with a raised eyebrow.

“Like the foghorn from the Queen Mary my dear” Megan then confirmed with a cheeky giggle.

“Oh...” Jack looked a little disheartened in response.

“Anyway, I was thinking about all this” Megan then indicated the files now neatly stacked on the table beside her, “and it occurs to me that there is a lot of disjointed material here, nothing has been organised and filed properly, it has all been gathered up off whatever desk, chair, bar or patrol car back seat it was abandoned on, shoved in this folder and then stuffed in a dusty corner of the archives as nobody I presume ever thought it would be needed again.”

“Hmm, what is it you propose?” Jack then asked as he munched on a warm croissant.

“I am going to spend the morning collating this mess into some sort of order for you” Megan then declared, “Hopefully along the way I will start to see some correlation between the various pieces of evidence here and find something that has been missed.”

“Okay” Jack readily agreed.

“In the meantime, I think you should revisit the scene of the crime” Megan then suggested, “Dig around, see if anything that we have read here fits into place and look out for anything that doesn’t.”

“I’ll give it a try my love” Jack confirmed, “Mind you, a lot will have changed in all that time” he then admitted.

“Oh, and another thing, today is supposed to be your day off” Megan then reminded him.

“Ah...” Jack responded.

“Phone” Megan then called, holding out her hand whereupon Jack took out his mobile and passed it across to her which saw her immediately dial a number.

“Mos?” she then called as soon as Eisley answered the call, “Its Megan” she then declared, “Just wanted to remind you that it is my fiancé’s day off today?”

“It is indeed” Eisley agreed as he swung around in his office chair to look at the wall planner “It is even written in permanent pen on the calendar” he then confirmed.

“I know, I wrote it there” Megan confirmed with a wry smirk, “Now, I know it is a tad busy at the moment.”

“When isn’t it?” Easley remarked.

“Quite” Megan agreed, “Now, I am giving my Jack permission to look into the background of the Nine Elms skeleton case on his day off but no more” she then stated, “So, until nine o’clock tomorrow morning, you are in charge, okay?”

“Understood Ma’am” Easley readily agreed.

“Thanks Mos” Megan then called, “Have a nice day” she concluded before hanging up and handing Jack his mobile back.

“That told him...” Jack wryly remarked.

“Now, where were we?” Megan then asked.

“The case of the Nine Elms skeleton” Jack reminded her.

“Ah yes” Megan confirmed, “So, what’s your plan then?” she then asked.

“First stop, Waterloo then on to Nine Elms” Jack confirmed, “After which I am going down to East Grinstead.”

“East Grinstead?” Megan responded, not understanding the connection.

“The annual meeting of the Railway Veterans Association, including a few who were based at Nine Elms Shed during the time in question” Jack explained, “I want to ask them if they remember anything.”

“If they are anything like my old granddad” Megan advised, “Wait until after they have had their first real ale, then the stories should come tumbling out.”

The sound of the old metal door being wrenched open echoed throughout the dusty abandoned passageways and tunnels beneath Waterloo Station once again as Brian Gaskill entered the complex of long forgotten caverns and storerooms and made his way past the abandoned junk towards the location of the old rusty filing cabinet.

Since he was there last, some of the old rubbish had fallen down and blocked the bottom two drawers, probably disturbed by rats or vibrations from the heavy trains moving directly overhead or maybe just the wind that blew through there seemingly endlessly.

It took some excavation of the fallen material, mostly old newspapers, and bits of timber before Brian reached the drawers which he then proceeded to unlock.

Opening the bottom drawer first, he proceeded to retrieve three items, all carefully wrapped in old newspaper and place them on the top of the cabinet, then from the

next drawer up, he took out an old-style leather holdall which he opened by way of the clasp fastening and then put the packages inside.

“Right” Brian then remarked to himself as he secured the filing cabinet drawers once again and then pushed the rubbish back up against them, “Time to get down to business.”

In the intervening decades, Waterloo Station had changed a lot but much of it would still have been recognisable to someone who had stood where Jack was now standing, on the main concourse near to the ticket barrier gate lines of platforms one through four with the rest of the station stretching off ahead of him and the tracks themselves on his left.

The air echoed to the sound of automated announcements for departures and some arrivals, interspersed with the regular security messages like ‘See It, Say It, Sorted’ that most people just ignored, Jack included, the sound reverberating around the brightly lit huge overall roof, a contrast to the dingy, dimly lit and smoke filled atmosphere of long ago.

Jack decided to head to the east exit at the end of the concourse and so turned around and walked through what is effectively a large hole in the wall which brought him out onto the road that wraps around the east side of the station and then goes around the corner to the front where, as then the left hand lane is exclusively reserved for taxi’s queuing to get to the front of the rank.

It was slightly strange to think that where he was standing, Jack was now in the exact same spot where Constable Carlson had stood decades earlier, examining the getaway car that was parked there, now not such an accessible option since the edge of the pavement was fitted with pedestrian barriers sometime in the early 1980’s, and that Inspector Clark had been there too when the robbery took place, a confrontation with an armed gang occurring right there.

Turning smartly on his feet, Jack turned towards the back wall of the concourse, a much modernised place now although the architecture of the original building had been retained and restored, much of it was now sadly obscured by hoardings, signs and a new walkway halfway up its height.

The exit that the gang had used from the offices where the robbery took place was still there though, now a heavy metal door with a security lock, overlooked by CCTV, all of which would have probably prevented the crime back in the day had it existed.

Jack’s identity card swiped through the slot on the door pillar and the entry of an access code into the keypad granted him access, releasing the door lock accompanied by a loud buzzing noise whereupon he went inside, and the heavy metal door quickly closed and locked firmly behind him.

He knew from the story of what happened that Sturgeon had related to him the previous afternoon that the Cash Office which was the target for the robbery was located on the first floor, so Jack duly headed up the staircase but paused for a

moment when he noticed a secure door below him which seemed to be sealed with ominous danger warnings.

“Something lurking in the basement...” Jack wryly remarked to himself before resuming his ascent to the first floor.

Whilst the corridor that curved gently to the left ahead of him on the first floor was the same as back then, the use of the old offices there had long since changed as Jack found out as he walked along and noted various storerooms, electrical equipment locations and train crew offices and rest rooms.

There were still a few subtle hints as to some of the history of the building though, some flakes of Southern Region green paint peeking through where the wall’s had been knocked or rubbed against and when he arrived at the door of the former Cash Office, Jack could tell it was the right one simply by the extra thickness of the old door frame that had been reinforced for better security as a direct result of that robbery back in 1963.

Now it was the Station Managers office as denoted by the sign on the door and Jack politely knocked before entering.

“Hi” Jack called as he came in, “Sorry to intrude...”

“Quite all right Sir” the Duty Station Manager responded as he got up and welcomed Jack into the office, “What can I do for you?” he then asked.

“This is going to sound a bit odd...” Jack slightly reluctantly began.

“Welcome to the railways” the Duty Station Manager responded, “What seems like strange or just plain odd elsewhere, here is just company policy.”

“This used to be the old Cash Office I believe?” Jack then asked.

“Err I believe so, yes” the Duty Station Manager confirmed, “The original ticket office used to be directly below, but you are talking thirty or forty years ago now.”

“I am looking into an armed robbery that occurred in here back in 1963” Jack then explained, “Apparently there was a substantial sum taken.”

“Oh yes, I recall one of the old hands mentioning it when we moved in here a few years back” the Duty Station Supervisor confirmed “Quite a big noise about it at the time apparently.”

“I don't suppose the old hand who mentioned it is still around by any chance?” Jack then asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“No, he retired seven or eight years ago I think” the Duty Station Supervisor recalled, “He's still around though I think.”

“What's his name?” Jack then asked.

“Franks, Barry Franks” the Duty Station Supervisor confirmed, “I think he used to be a loco driver but got too many Form One's and wound up getting demoted.”

“Thanks” Jack responded as he made some notes, “You have been most helpful.”

“Transport Division, Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley” he answered the ringing telephone having hurried into his office when he heard the ring tone from halfway down the corridor.

“Mos?” Dent called from his office over at Thames House.

“Mr Dent, good morning” Eisley replied, “What can I do for you?” he then asked.

“I can't seem to get hold of your boss” Dent then explained, “Is he around?”

“Sit down for this one” Eisley responded, not entirely believing it himself, “It's his day off...”

“Someone in that illustrious family of over dedicated workaholics actually has a day off?” Dent was astounded, “Who gave him the orders, the King?”

“Actually, it was Megan” Eisley confirmed.

“That explains it” Dent readily agreed, “In which case I can give you the good news instead.”

“I am all ears...” Eisley prompted.

“As you all correctly surmised, we do indeed have a routine tap on that telephone box but erm; keep that bit to yourself, okay?” Dent asked.

“Not a problem” Eisley agreed.

“So, one telephone call made inside the window prescribed” Dent read the details from the printed report in front of him, “Two male callers, one in the telephone box obviously, the other using an unregistered pay as you go mobile that we are currently running a trace on for you.”

“That's very kind of you” Eisley complimented him.

“The person receiving the call was located somewhere just east of Waterloo Station at the time, we are trying to narrow it down as best as we can but that area has multiple overlapping cell areas so it is a bit tricky” Dent then admitted, “but I can tell you the call lasted less than a minute and the recording and accompanying transcript are on their way over to you by secure courier and should be with you shortly.”

“That's great, thanks” Eisley responded, “The Guv will be well pleased.”

“I just hope it is of use to you” Dent agreed, “I did consider doing voice recognition matching but I reckon the two men on the call are of such a generation that they probably don’t feature in the records anywhere.”

“Aye, you could be right” Easley had pretty much the same thought, “Thanks for your help.”

“My pleasure, I just hope it is of some use” Dent confirmed.

“Why is this not making any sense?” Jack remarked to himself as, driving south along the main Wandsworth Road, he paused at some traffic lights and whilst he was waiting, picked up the 1960’s edition of the London A to Z off the passenger seat and consulted it again.

No matter which way around he looked at the page, there was no denying that the streets leading off to the right, south of Pascal Street where the new Nine Elms Underground Station stood on the corner in no way matched the old map.

The fact was that so much of the area had been redeveloped since the late 1960's that very little remained, not only had row upon row of buildings gone, demolished, and redeveloped, but entire streets had completely disappeared.

With the traffic lights changing to green, Jack drove off but then noticed a turn off to the right ahead that actually was on the old map, prompting him to indicate right and then when a gap appeared in the traffic, quickly cross over and head down it.

The side street was mostly residential and driving down it, led to another street off to his left which still had older terraced houses, a rare survivor after the efforts of the wartime blitz and then the scourge of redevelopers had all but wiped the rest of the surrounding area off the map with even some streets completely eradicated from history, leaving no trace they were ever there.

Jack stopped when he recognised a familiar car parked by the side of the road ahead, the distinctive silver 1953 Daimler Conquest and stood nearby on the corner of the street and looking around with a confused expression was Sturgeon.

“I guess you had the same idea as my girl” Jack called from the car as he got out and joined him, “Revisit the scene of the crime.”

“First rule of the detective looking for a lead” Sturgeon agreed, “The problem is, I can't actually find it.”

“There seems to have been a few changes over the years” Jack admitted as he looked around.

“A few changes?” Sturgeon responded, “It's all gone!”

“Yeah...” Jack agreed.

“I mean look” Sturgeon then showed Jack some old photographs, “Brooklands Passage is still there running along the length of the shed boundary wall, even the left-hand brick pillar of the main entrance gate is still here” he then indicated behind them and then showed Jack the photograph of the gateway back in the 1960's with the shed and the coaling tower visible in the distance.

“Oh, the right-hand exit gate pillar is still there too” Jack pointed out, “Looks like they just shored up the old wall, filled in the gateways and the walking entrance.”

“Right here where we are standing” Sturgeon then continued “was Brooklands Road with the Brooklands Arms just over there, the prefabs houses, one of which being where George lived on the left there and Brooklands Street off to the right.”

“And now it is just a non-descript modern building site which has probably been redeveloped at least twice since then” Jack concluded.

“I just can't believe it” Sturgeon remarked, “They have effectively wiped it off the face of the planet, nothing left except memories.”

“Speaking of memories” Jack then broached a related subject, “I don't suppose you recall a wages snatch that took place near here a few weeks later, do you?”

“Railway staff wages snatch from a courier in Lower Marsh Street by any chance?” Sturgeon recalled from distant memory.

“That would be the one” Jack confirmed “Only for some reason, all evidence of its occurrence seems to have been all but erased from history.”

“Much like the streets around here” Sturgeon agreed, “Why do you want to know?” he then asked.

“Oh, it may be connected, then again maybe not” Jack explained.

“If it is the one that I am thinking of, and there were lot of wage snatches back then” Sturgeon recalled “it was the one where the area railway staff Christmas overtime pay got nicked, caused quite a stir if I recall.”

“That would have hacked off a fair few of the railway lads” Jack concluded.

“Robbery Squad were supposed to be all over it but then this special squad from some agency or other steamed in an hour later and took the case off them” Sturgeon recalled, “Because it was railway money that went walkies, we naturally had an interest but were frozen out too.”

“You and I are alike in some ways” Jack commented, “We never really give up, even when we are told to drop it, am I right?”

“You mean, did I maybe keep some notes from the investigations?” Sturgeon asked, “Sort of forget to hand certain bits over, an oversight you might say?”

“That is what I was thinking” Jack confirmed.

“Of course I did!” Sturgeon confirmed with a smile “and I also got the low down on the whole caper from a mate at the Robbery Squad.”

They both looked around at their surroundings before Sturgeon clapped his hands, “Come on young man” he then declared, “Let's find some breakfast and I will tell you what I know.”

“Talk to me” Brian Gaskill called on answering the telephone whereupon he proceeded to listen attentively to his instructions.

Because of the near total silence in that dark office, the whispers of the person calling could be made out around the room, intermixed with Gaskill's heavy breathing and the ominous ticking of an antique clock in the corner.

“Don't worry my old friend, I'll take care of it” Gaskill then confirmed before hanging up, the old-style telephone making a characteristic chime of its bells as the handset was returned to the cradle.

Opening the desk drawer revealed the Luger pistol nestling in there among old stationery items, yellowed with age notebooks, partially unbent rusty paperclips and old staplers with no staples in them.

Gaskill took the pistol and looked at it, carefully checking the mechanism and then the ammunition which he then replenished to full capacity from the little paper bag he had in the corner of the desk drawer before closing the drawer and then placing the gun inside his overcoat pocket.

Once he had secured the drawer, Gaskill placed the keys in his pocket and took his overcoat, putting it on before turning off the desk lamp and leaving the room.

The building that Gaskill's office was situated in had the air of having been largely abandoned and disused, just his office being the only part that was still tidy and in regular use, all be it with an old look to it from another era.

Making his way down the creaky wooden stairs, Gaskill reached the door which he unlocked and opened, letting in a bright shaft of sunlight from outside that momentarily illuminated the dusty interior of the building before he stepped outside, with the door closing firmly behind him.

Outside the distinctive building on Westminster Bridge Road, Gaskill looked up and down the street when an available black cab approached which he flagged down before getting in the back.

“Cannon Street Station” Gaskill then called to the driver, “And there is a handsome tip if you get me there quick.”

“Yeah, thanks Mos” Jack called over his mobile as he stood by his marked patrol car “I got it, cheers.”

“Good news?” Sturgeon asked as he came over, holding two takeaway coffees’, one of which he handed over to Jack.

“Thanks” Jack responded, “That was my Deputy, he has managed to persuade our friends at MI5 to dig out the file related to the wages snatch, he is sending me an electronic copy right now.”

“You can do that?” Sturgeon asked to which Jack nodded in confirmation “Wow, it was all paper shuffled back and forth across desks in my day.”

“Here we go” Jack then called as he took a laptop computer out of the boot of the car, opened it and started it up “Let's see what we have got.”

“All this high-tech stuff goes over my head mate” Sturgeon admitted, “What have we got?” he then asked.

“Well, this looks like the incident summary” Jack looked at the first scanned document on the laptop screen, “Friday the first of February 1963, three twenty-seven in the afternoon, report received via 999 Operator of three men attacking a person carrying a briefcase in Lower Marsh Street before leaving the scene in a green van, possibly a Ford Thames type.”

“That fits in with what I heard at the time” Sturgeon agreed.

“Lower Marsh Street, that’s down the east side of Waterloo Station I think” Jack then recalled.

“Yeah” Sturgeon agreed, “Are there any witness statements in there?”

“A couple of witnesses, one of whom called it in, the first two officers on the scene and the victim, a Simon Tyler, a wages clerk from Waterloo” Jack summarised.

“Time to do some reading” Sturgeon then remarked to which Jack nodded in agreement.

Each of the witness statements on their own only told part of the story but by reading them together, a full picture of the events of that afternoon, through the eyes and ears of those who were there began to come together.

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The bitter cold of the winter of 1962 and through into 1963 just got harsher the longer it went on and by the end of January, having brought much of the upper two thirds of the country to a standstill with ice and huge snowdrifts, its serious effects were now starting to be felt across Greater London and the south of England too.

Police Constable Archie Grant, Metropolitan Police Force officer number Whisky November 592, attached to Nine Elms Police Station located in Battersea Park Road was out on patrol that freezing cold February afternoon, on his own as a number of officers from the Station were in Court that day leaving the shift rather short.

As a result, Constable Grant's beat that he had been allocated for that late shift was significantly larger than usual, combining two beats and parts of a third giving him a lot of ground to cover.

Fortunately, with the bitterly cold weather, crime was noticeably reduced, even the criminal fraternity had decided that staying at home or in their local pub was a better option than being out there in the wintry conditions that had almost become normal thanks to the seemingly endless period of time it had gone on for.

Traffic was light, a few cars, black cab taxis and regular red London buses mingled with a few commercial vehicles and some private cars, all struggling with the slippery conditions and some sporting snow chains wrapped around some or all of their wheels which rattled as they moved along.

Loose flakes of snow whistled through the air as Constable Grant walked along Westminster Bridge Road, pausing when a green Ford Thames van pulled out of a gateway which he watched as it moved into the flow of the traffic and then headed off towards Lower Marsh Street.

There were few pedestrians around, those that were consisted mostly of market traders, a few school kids that had managed to skip class a little bit early and a couple of train crew heading home from an early shift.

One individual that did catch Constable Grant's eye however was a short gentleman in his mid-thirties, wearing a long overcoat of reasonable quality and a peaked cap and carrying a large brown leather attaché case which the long sleeve of the coat was just hiding that it was handcuffed to his wrist.

Constable Grant watched from the opposite of the road as the man walked briskly from Westminster Bridge Road and then turned to his left to head down Lower Marsh Street before disappearing out of sight.

The man in the long coat was a British Railways Wages Clerk from the Southern Region, Western Division Offices at nearby Waterloo, Simon Tyler, a thirty-year veteran of the railway seeing out his last years of service in administrative functions since he was declared medically unfit for operations following a road accident a few years earlier.

As he progressed down Lower Marsh Street, Tyler kept a discreet look around, he was well aware that wages snatches were big business in recent years and the Cash Office

raid a couple of weeks earlier had put everyone on the railways just a little on edge with regards to security.

Tyler was right to be vigilant, the green Ford Thames van that Constable Grant had earlier stepped back to allow out of a gateway in Westminster Bridge Road had proceeded the full length of Lower Marsh Street and then turned around, returning the other way before parking on the opposite side of the road.

Inside the vehicle were five men, three in the back, unseen from the outside and two in the front including the driver.

Whilst nobody will ever know for certain what the conversation was between the men in the van, their intent would soon become clear.

As Tyler reached the halfway point of Lower Marsh Street, the van suddenly moved off, forcing an oncoming car to swerve out of the way and then slid to a halt right across his path.

Before the van had even stopped, the rear sliding doors were thrown open and the three men in the back, joined by the one from the front passenger seat deployed and immediately grabbed Taylor, bundling him to the ground.

“Frank!” the leader of the group called, holding Taylor's right arm up, exposing the handcuff chain between the handle on the attaché case and his wrist.

A pair of sturdy bolt cutters was duly produced and with no subtlety whatsoever, the chain was cut, and the attaché case taken.

“Thank you!” the leader then called, striking Taylor across the back of the head with a cosh, rendering him unconscious, sprawled face down on the pavement, “All right, let's go!” he then called to the others.

Amid screams and cries from people in the street who had witnessed the rapidly unfolding incident, the men piled back into the van and before they had even closed the doors, the driver accelerated away up Lower Marsh Street.

“STOP, POLICE!” Constable Grant called, waving his arms in the direction of the rapidly approaching green van.

“Back off COPPER!!!” came the call from the front seat passenger in the van as he produced a gun and fired it through the side window, forcing Constable Grant to duck out of the way as the bullet struck the side window of a parked car, shattering it but fortunately harming no one.

Scrambling back to his feet, Constable Grant took out his official whistle and sounded it loudly, summoning help whilst one witness to the grab was already in a telephone box, making a 999 call to the Police themselves.

Moments later two more Police officers arrived on the scene, British Transport Commission Police Constable Forbes appeared from the direction of Waterloo Road

at the far end of Lower Marsh Street having run from Waterloo Station on hearing the Police whistle being sounded whilst Metropolitan Police Constable Trent appeared at the other end and made straight for his colleague.

“You all right mate?” Forbes asked Grant whilst Trent attended to the injured Taylor who was still alive but unconscious on the ground.

“Did you see a green Thames van come out of here just now?” Grant asked.

“No, sorry” Forbes confirmed, “It certainly didn't pass me.”

Moments later the sound of emergency service vehicles, their Winkworth bells ringing loudly began to approach and soon the scene was busy as an ambulance and three Police patrol cars arrived along with further officers on foot.

Inspector Clark was the senior officer on site as he had run over from Waterloo Station himself and quickly took charge of the situation.

“Right, you two get this street sealed off both ends and start getting witness statements” Inspector Clark directed.

“Inspector!” a doctor called who was checking over Tyler, “He is coming around.”

“Err, you” Inspector Clark called over to a Woman Police Constable of the Metropolitan Force, “Can you go with the victim in the ambulance, get a statement.”

“Sir” another officer called over from the telephone box, “Robbery Squad have been notified and are rolling now from The Yard.”

“Good, they can have this whole mess to themselves when they get here” Inspector Clark confirmed.

While the scene was sealed off and witnesses were interviewed, Taylor was loaded into the waiting Ambulance and then joined in the back by the WPC before, with the chiming of the Winkworth bell, it departed.

It was not long before the powerful engine of a Rover P4 type saloon car was heard roaring around the corner and then screeching to halt.

“Eyes up” Inspector Clark remarked, “The Sweeney are here.”

“Detective Inspector Blake, this is Detective Sergeant Bobby Rowan” the tall lead man called as he emerged from the car, “Robbery Squad, who is in charge here?” he then asked.

“I am Sir” Inspector Clark called as he came over and the two men shook hands.

“Ah, Bill!” Blake called with a welcoming smile. “Twice in three weeks, this is getting to be a habit.”

“I just happened to be in the neighbourhood when one of your uniform boys blew their whistle” Inspector Clark explained, “and it looks like this may be railway related.”

“Bob!” Blake called to his Sergeant, “See how our friends are doing with the witnesses.”

“Guv!” Rowan confirmed and set off.

“I have got everyone looking for the getaway vehicle, a green Ford Thames van but no sign” Inspector Clark then explained, “Four or five men, hoods, coshes and very slick, made off with the cash for the area railway workers wage packets.”

“The victim?” Blake then asked.

“Wages Clerk from Waterloo, semi-conscious, probably got a cracked skull and on his way to hospital now” Inspector Clark confirmed.

“How much are we looking at?” Blake enquired, fearing the worst.

“Well, it will be the pay packet with the Christmas overtime in it, so I suspect quite a lot” Inspector Clark concluded.

“Interesting” Blake remarked, “Two major cash thefts from the railways in just over a fortnight.”

“You noticed that too, huh?” Inspector Clark agreed.

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“You know, Megan said something very interesting last night when she was helping me read through all the material on the Nine Elms case” Jack remarked as he closed the file he had been studying, “She said, who on the gang was the one who worked on the railways, either at the time or prior to the crime?”

“Both inside jobs you reckon?” Sturgeon asked.

“Someone knew exactly when to hit both times” Jack summarised, “The cash office had extra money in because of the takings coming in from the Christmas and New Year period, the gang knew when it would be there and what the best time to strike was.”

“That all fits so far” Sturgeon agreed.

“Then the wages snatch, again right place and right time for the biggest payroll of the year” Jack continued “and from what I have read from the statements for the Nine Elms case, at least one of them knew about railway procedures and operations, except for the AWS alarm which is what stopped them just south of Vauxhall.”

“So, we would be looking for someone in the gang who was well versed in railway operations but not necessarily fully up to date?” Sturgeon then suggested.

“Well,” Jack scratched his head in thought, “The AWS warning system was only fitted to steam locomotives on the Southern Region of British Railways from the early 1960’s onwards so the chances are, if whoever was the railwayman on the team...”

“Assuming there was just the one, there could have been more” Sturgeon pointed out.

“Agreed” Jack nodded, “...if whoever it was left the railways a few years earlier, then they may very well have been unaware of its operation.”

“There is no mention here of why the case got canned” Sturgeon then commented, “Just that it was transferred and the Metropolitan Police Force file on it was closed.”

“Any mention of the green van the wages snatch gang used?” Jack then asked.

“No, it vanished into thin air” Sturgeon recalled, “Trouble is, we were pretty certain it was a green Ford Thames type van but in 1963 they were very common, the Transit van of their day.”

“If it was the same gang, I wonder why they didn’t use a Jaguar again?” Jack then pondered.

“Perhaps they couldn’t find one” Sturgeon then suggested, “After all, the one they abandoned at Waterloo Station was still sitting in the Police Vehicle Pound at Streatham Hill at the time.”

“Where do the Gaskill Brothers fit into all this?” Jack then asked.

“With their record, they were easily favourites for the Waterloo job and quite frankly, the wages snatch too” Sturgeon explained, “There was a snout, an informant who tipped us off that there were some financial naughties going on, relating to the railways and at one point they did indicate the Gaskill’s and their merry band were involved.”

“I don’t suppose that snout is still around by any chance?” Jack asked but Sturgeon just laughed in response.

“Sorry my young friend” he then apologetically confirmed, “Archie the Grass met his grisly end in early 1964, someone tried to retrain him as a reinforcing rod in a concrete pillar.”

“Ouch...” Jack responded.

“That was the trouble in those days, eyes everywhere, whispers that got back to the local boozers and from there percolated through the criminal community” Sturgeon explained, “There is one thing though, George kept some details in his official notebook, I don’t suppose you have found it by any chance?”

“I don’t recall it among his effects” Jack tried to remember all the items that had been found.

“But George never let that notebook out of his sight” Sturgeon remarked, “If you found him, it should be with him or at least in the immediate vicinity.”

“Hold that thought” Jack responded as he took out his mobile and speed dialled a number.

“Hello Guv” Eisley called as he answered his mobile, “How is your day off?”

“Complicated” Jack admitted, “Listen Mos, can you just check the late Sergeant Roberts effects for an official notebook or whatever may be its remains?” he then asked.

“Yes, sure” Eisley confirmed, “Just a minute.”

Jack waited patiently on the line as Eisley proceeded through to the Major Investigation Room and then on to the Exhibits Desk where numerous carefully packaged and labelled items were laid out on display.

“No, sorry Guv” Eisley then called a minute later, “Nothing here that looks like a notebook.”

“Try inside the helmet” Sturgeon suggested.

“Mos, did you catch that?” Jack called.

“Wait one” Eisley replied and reached over to the far side of the Exhibits Desk where the British Transport Commission Police helmet was resting and picked it up.

“If it is not there then I don’t know where it could be” Jack admitted as he waited for news.

“Bingo!” Eisley was heard to call out over the phone.

“You got it?” Jack asked.

“Tucked between the lining and the case of the helmet” Eisley confirmed as he carefully took out the notebook and then proceeded to open it only to face a new problem, all the pages were blank.

“What have you got?” Jack anxiously called.

“There is nothing in it Guv” Eisley responded as he looked through the pages for a second time just to make sure, “It’s blank.”

“Blank?” Sturgeon remarked, a feeling equally shared by Jack.

“This is just an estimate, but I reckon about half the pages have been torn out” Eisley then explained as he noted the stubs of a significant number of pages in the depths of the binding.

“Mos” Jack then called, “Bag it and get it over to forensics, I want the works done on it and a report before the sun goes down” he requested.

“I’ll run it over to the lab myself” Eisley confirmed.

“Thanks Mos” Jack responded, “Stay in touch.”

“Curious...” Sturgeon commented at this latest revelation.

“Significant?” Jack asked.

“Quite probably” Sturgeon confirmed, “You see George was a local boy, born in Lavender Hill, lived in a prefab in Brooklands Road right near the Nine Elms Shed gates, the Brooklands Arms on the corner was his local boozier, he knew everybody around there and they knew him.”

“Which means there is the distinct possibility that when George met his killer that cold January night, he recognised him” Jack concluded.

“Or the killer was worried that George would recognise him and decided to make sure he would never speak again” Sturgeon regretfully admitted.

“So, the gang or at least one member of it was probably local” Jack remarked, “Either living or working locally, if not both.”

“I am willing to bet the old Brooklands Arms was his local boozier too” Sturgeon then added, “A pity they bulldozed it really.”

“There is a reunion of old railway workers taking place later today that I am going to try and sneak an invitation to” Jack explained.

“Well, I have an appointment with my fishing rods today” Sturgeon responded, “If you need me, I’ll be in my caravan in Hurst Green, this is the location” he handed over a piece of paper.

“Great, thanks” Jack responded.

“Okay, let’s hear it” Eisley prompted as Tarbett took the cassette out of the evidence bag and placed it in the machine and pressed play.

It’s me, have you heard? They found him.

Have you been drinking again Al? Who are you talking about?

What do you mean, who?"

At that point the caller coughed quite loudly before resuming.

You know damn well who! They found his skeleton yesterday afternoon, the plod are crawling all over this and it is only a matter of time before they stumble into our business.

There was a pause, punctuated only by breathing in the background.

Calm down you stupid sod, the filth are not going to find out anything, the whole thing is dead and buried, I have seen to that.

I don't care! We need to meet, now!

Okay, if you insist, Battersea Power Station Tube, platform far end, one hour.

All right, the new Battersea Tube Station, one hour and make sure you are alone, leave the flunkeys at home this time.

I'll be there, alone.

At that point the dial tone signified the end of the call and Tarbett and stopped the player.

"Thoughts?" Eisley then asked around the room.

"With friends like that..." Chambers remarked.

"Quite" Eisley agreed "because less than an hour later, the caller Albert Gaskill was gunned down inside Battersea Tube Station, almost certainly by the man whose voice we can hear on the recording there."

"What about voice recognition?" Baxter asked.

"Nothing doing" Eisley confirmed, "We are dealing with old school guys here, there won't be any voice record on file unless it is on a rotating vinyl disc with a dog staring down a gramophone horn printed on it."

"Any trace on the number that was called?" Chambers asked.

"No, that call was the last received by that SIM which was an unregistered pay as you go one" Eisley explained "and I reckon that chip is probably languishing at the bottom of the Thames by now."

"I have tried running the phone identity through the computer but prior to that call, it never strayed much beyond the borough boundary as far as I can tell" Baxter confirmed "and after that call the trail goes cold."

“We will just have to hope that the Guv finds something on his day off” Eisley remarked, “He seems to have become rather adept at hunting ghosts.”

Jack's next destination was located along country lanes in rural Sussex some twenty-five miles south of London and as he drove the marked patrol car along the narrow rural roads, he dialled a number on the hands free mobile and waited for the answer.

“Hello love” Megan called over the telephone when she answered.

“Hi” Jack responded, “How are you feeling now?” he asked.

“Doc says I can go home tonight all being well” Megan confirmed.

“Oh, that's great news” Jack responded, “Do you know what time they will let you go?” he then asked.

“Apparently there is a bit of a backlog on the paperwork so it won't be until about half seven tonight” Megan responded, “Do you think you can be back here by then?” she asked.

“Shouldn't be a problem” Jack confirmed, “I just have a couple of calls to make, then I should be back in London sometime this afternoon all being well.”

“Where are you now then?” Megan asked out of curiosity.

“Still chasing ghosts” Jack responded to a look of understandable mystification from Megan which he could feel over the telephone, “I am on my way to try and find some old railwaymen who hopefully can help me sort out this historical mess” he then explained.

“Let me guess, they are in a pub?” Megan remarked.

“Not far off” Jack admitted “Look love, my mobile signal seems to be weakening almost to nothing” he then called, looking at the signal strength indication which was dropping rapidly, “I'll see you later okay?”

“All right love, don't do anything silly will you?” Megan called.

“Me?” Jack responded, “Of course not...”

A few minutes later, Jack was arriving at his destination, a beautifully restored old railway station located in the middle of the Sussex countryside where the sound of a steam locomotive departing filled the air as he parked the patrol car over to one side before getting out and looking around.

The station was one of the stops on a preserved railway line that ran from the current end of the mainline railway network at East Grinstead through the leafy Sussex countryside for a distance of some eleven miles.

Walking through the station entrance for Jack was like stepping back in time as the Ticket Inspector, dressed in the original 1950's style British Railways uniform welcomed him.

“Good morning, Sir” the Ticket Inspector greeted him.

“Morning” Jack replied as he took out his warrant card even though his full uniform already identified who he was, “I am looking for a gathering of old railway men” he then explained.

“Then Sir, you have come to the right place” the Ticket Inspector confirmed, “You will find them gathered over in the bar on platform five, through the door, to the left.”

“Do I have to buy a platform ticket?” Jack then asked.

“Not necessary Sir” the Ticket Inspector confirmed, “Go through.”

“Thank you” Jack responded before heading through the opposite exit and out onto the platform where on the opposite track stood a restored rake of vintage Victorian era passenger carriages with a tender locomotive of similar vintage, simmering away awaiting time before departing northbound.

As instructed, Jack turned smartly on his feet to his left and strolled along the platform.

“Ah!” came a call from one of the elderly men who were gathered around outside the bar saloon entrance, “An Inspector calls...”

“Good morning gentlemen” Jack responded with a smile, “I am sorry to intrude but...”

“...you are here about poor George?” another of the men concluded.

“Err yes” Jack replied, with some surprise, “How did you know?” he then asked.

“We’re railwaymen young man” the first man confirmed, “Nothing escapes us, and besides we knew George very well before his disappearance, didn’t we Len?”

“Yes indeed” Len confirmed “But he is disappeared no more...” he then added with a solemn tone.

“Gentlemen, I need your help” Jack then admitted, “I want to find out who killed Sergeant George Roberts that night” he explained, “and I am hoping that some of you guys can maybe remember something the official investigation might have missed.”

“In which case, young man” Len responded with a welcoming smile, “What we need is some comfortable seats, a big table and another round.”

With another round of drinks arriving from the bar, Len, Fred and Dave, gathered around a table with Jack.

“Ah cheers Len” Fred called as his pint was passed across to him “Now, that night when George disappeared” he then continued after taking a sip from his glass and then carefully putting it down, “I remember it well because it was my birthday and a few of us off duty lads were having a drink that evening in the Brooklands Arms.”

“That’s the pub that was on the corner of Brooklands Street and Brooklands Road, near the main gate?” Jack checked his notes.

“That’s the one” Len nodded in confirmation, “Many a tale told in and about that place by generations of railway men over the decades, survived the blitz whilst most of the surrounding buildings were flattened.”

“Only to be demolished by a bunch of half arsed property developers years later” Dave added with a regretful tone.

“Anyway” Fred returned to the subject at hand, “The first thing we knew there was something going off was when we heard the Police bell as George and Ted arrived just outside.”

“You could hear those tyres really struggling as they came around the corner and headed into the yard” Len recalled.

“Must have been doing at least fifty-five I reckon” Dave agreed.

“A couple of us stepped outside and had a look to see if anything was happening but Ted and George had disappeared into the yard by then” Fred continued, “About five or ten minutes later Jim Smith popped his head around the door looking for that drunken sod.”

“Would that be the Duty Shed Supervisor?” Jack asked as he went through his notes, “Ah here it is, Barry Franks.”

“That was him” Len confirmed, “Acting Supervisor as our old Guvnor was on leave, permanently pickled if you know what I mean and about as much use as a chocolate fireguard.”

“Oh, I remember him” Dave agreed, “Drifted through the railway from job to job, not staying long in each one before moving on and only managing to avoid being fired because he knew people in high places.”

“I know the type” Jack remarked.

“Fortunately, Jim Smith and Bert Cooper were the Spare Men that night and were able to take control of the situation” Len confirmed, “and a few minutes later Frank

crawled back in through the door and clambered back into the bottle in the private saloon bar out the back.”

“Next thing we knew was when half the Old Bill showed up about ten or fifteen minutes later” Dave added, “We knew then something really serious had happened.”

“The gang who robbed the Waterloo Cash Office” Jack then continued, “They were forced to make their escape by hijacking a locomotive and its crew.”

“I remember that” Len confirmed, “In fact the loco is sitting over there” he then indicated behind him towards the nearby locomotive workshops where the gleaming Merchant Navy Class Pacific Express Loco number 35028 was standing in light steam, a far contrast from the grimy and work weary machine that had been at the centre of that night’s incident so many years earlier.

“I have the original statements made at the time by the two crew members that night” Jack continued, George Hughes was the driver, and the fireman was a man by the name of Timothy Baden.”

“I remember Hughey as we used to call him” Dave recalled, “Lovely old guy, taught me the main line when I moved up to the top driving link.”

“Didn’t he head off to the Western Region?” Len asked.

“Err, yes” Dave tried to remember, “After steam finished on the Southern Region in 1967, he drove the electro diesels and BRCW Type 3’s for a few years before transferring over to Old Oak Common shed, finished his days driving HST’s out of Paddington.”

“Gone a fair few years now though” Fred then remarked, raising his glass to his memory.

“Aye” Len confirmed with equal sadness.

“Now, Tim the fireman” Fred continued, “He got made up to driver in about 1965 I think, then went down the coast to Brighton driving those electric contraptions before retiring a couple of years ago.”

“Where is he now Fred?” Dave then asked.

“He’s over there” Fred motioned with his pint glass towards a group of railway veterans who were talking to some younger members of the gathering over near the foot bridge “Hey, Tim!” he then called over.

“Hi guys” Tim called as he came over and joined them.

“The officer of the law here wants you to help him with his enquires Tim” Len nodded towards Jack.

“Whatever it is, I didn’t do it” Tim jokingly replied as he sat down with the others.

“Our young friend here wants to talk to you about your little adventure with the robbers in January 1963” Len then explained.

“Oh, this is to do with that skeleton that turned up, is it?” Tim asked.

“I am afraid so” Jack confirmed, “According to the pathologists report, Sergeant Roberts was shot in the back of the head, he probably never felt a thing.”

“Poor sod” Dave remarked.

“Now, I understand you were the fireman on the loco that the Waterloo Cash Office raiders commandeered that evening” Jack consulted his notes, “I have a copy of your original witness statement from 1963 here.”

“Back when I was young, sprightly and a lot thinner” Tim admitted, patting his belly with a wry look.

“Is there anything not in here that occurs to you that you did not mention at the time by any chance?” Jack then asked, “impressions, something trivial perhaps?”

“You know, looking back on it” Tim remarked after considering it for a few moments, “There were four of them, the leader was cool, calm and collected, there was the nervous young guy, he didn’t say anything, then there was the loony, the one who was way too keen at pulling his gun out and waving it around, the leader had to keep him calmed down and finally there was the fourth man...”

“The inside man?” Dave suggested, “Old Hughey reckoned it had to be an inside job.”

“Whoever the fourth guy was, he knew how to drive a steam locomotive” Tim continued, “and not just any steam locomotive, he knew how to drive that type.”

“You see young man” Len began to explain, “Whilst the principles of operating a steam locomotive is basically the same from a Victorian era 0-6-0 tank loco through to Evening Star, each region’s locos, and even different types on the same shed operated differently, you can’t just jump in the cab and expect to drive away.”

“So, the fourth man in the gang could have been a former or current railwayman?” Jack asked.

“I would say former” Tim concluded, “Whilst that man knew the controls of a Merchant Navy loco, he was not aware of the AWS alarm, which was only a very recent installation, probably a year to eighteen months earlier.”

“So, all was well until the loco approached a restrictive aspect, the AWS alarm goes off, he fails to realise what it is and cancel it in time and boom, the brakes come on” Jack summarised.

“You know your stuff young man” Dave complimented Jack.

“I’ve dabbled...” Jack sheepishly admitted.

“So, when the brakes came on and they all looked confused as to what had happened, that was when they bailed out and headed off across the tracks towards Nine Elms” Tim then continued, “leaving us behind with our brakes jammed solidly on and poor old Hughey having to clamber down onto the track to use the Signal Post Telephone to let the Signaller know what had happened.”

“The thing I can’t fathom out is where did the gang go” Jack admitted as he got out his late 1950’s London A to Z map book and flicked to map page number ninety one, “I mean we know from the witnesses and officers at the time that the gang seemed to have gone across the Up and Down Main Slow lines and then must have passed the shed signal box before accessing Nine Elms Depot yard” he summarised, “Then they split up into two pairs and went different ways around where Sergeant Roberts and Constable Sturgeon saw them near the coaling stage.”

“By that time, the cavalry had arrived” Fred recalled, “Inspector erm...” he tried to remember the name. “Tip of my tongue, George’s Guvnor...”

“Clark, wasn’t it?” Len suggested.

“Yes, that was him” Fred confirmed, clicking his fingers in realisation.

“Now, according to the files” Jack then continued “Inspector Clark rolled a dozen officers from both the BTC and the Met into the Yard and found nothing, they vanished into thin air along with the loot.”

“Dark cold January night, the lighting was appalling, and it was one of the largest steam locomotive sheds in the country” Tim pointed out, “That was a hell of a lot of ground to cover, lots of dark corners, stored locos, pits, disused huts and dilapidated sheds, plenty of places to hide.”

“Especially if you have some inside knowledge” Len then added thoughtfully.

“Which brings us back to the inside man in the gang” Jack then continued “because apart from three gunshots ringing out across the yard, they were never seen or heard of ever again.”

“Where was George’s body found?” Fred then asked.

“In a hole which was under the old turntable well” Jack confirmed, “There were a couple of workmen digging a trench for some pipes to the market when their digger bucket fell into the void so naturally, they took a look and found the BTC helmet which was when I got called in and as they say, the rest was history.”

“That means it was probably the inside man who hid the body then” Len suggested, “Picked a place where it would not be easily found until they were well clear.”

“Did anything else strange happen that night?” Jack then asked.

“Flash Harry turned up in a cab, you remember Len, don’t you?” Fred remarked.

“Flash Harry in a cab?” Len responded incredulously.

“Who’s Flash Harry?” Jack asked.

“He was that idiot of an acting shed supervisor’s eldest son” Fred explained, “Harold Franks, a spiv in all but name, we all called him Flash Harry though, never did an honest day’s work in his life.”

“Oh, that creep” Len confirmed.

“Ah yes, I remember him” Tim added, “Posh clothes, always smoking Cuban cigars, flash motors, lot of cash to throw about, plenty of jewellery and a different young dolly bird on his arm every time you saw him.”

“I remember now, the reason he turned up in a cab that night was, and this still makes me laugh to this day, some oik had nicked his motor a few days earlier” Dave confirmed, barely suppressing a hearty laugh.

“So much for honour among thieves...” Len added, himself still highly amused.

“I guess he was bent then?” Jack remarked.

“As a nine bob note, young man” Len confirmed.

“What was the name of his younger brother?” Dave tried to recall.

“Bobby Franks” Tim replied, “He was what we used to call, in the iron and steel business...”

“Wife did the ironing, he did the stealing” Jack remarked, his experience immediately telling him where this line of recollection was going.

“Last I heard of him, he annoyed some east end gang when he trod on the wrong toes” Tim confirmed, “He moved to Northern Ireland in the mid 1970’s where he took up his old hobbies, unfortunately that was his eventual downfall.”

“How come?” Jack asked.

“Bobby, who let’s face it was never the brightest villain on the planet, stole a car one afternoon” Tim retold the story, “Unfortunately for him, the aforementioned car belonged to the local IRA Brigade Commander who was a tad miffed and sent a couple of his lads around to have a little chat...”

“Apparently that was the last anyone saw of him” Len confirmed, “Older brother Flash Harry got his collar felt a few years later and largely disappeared off the scene after that and their father, the eternally drunk Barry Franks was invalidated out of railway service with a trashed liver in about 1985 having drifted from job to job within the railways and being equally crap at all of them.”

“Barry Franks was the one who said that the Police could not search the turntable area for operational reasons when the search for Sergeant Roberts commenced at first light the following morning” Jack then pointed out.

“That night he was in the Brooklands Arms, he was drinking a lot, and I mean way more than usual” Len recalled, “We always reckoned he had hollow legs to accommodate how much he threw down his throat.”

“And he was in the private saloon bar at the back if I remember rightly” Dave added, “I reckon he was waiting for someone you know, all sorts of business got conducted in that particular smoke-filled room I can tell you.”

“Which reminds me Dave” Len then remarked, “You still owe me a drink for that rest day swap I did for you in 1965...”

“Every time, you have to remind me of that!” Dave responded with a hearty laugh.

“What time was Barry Franks there until?” Jack asked.

“Err, let’s see” Len tried to recall, “I remember Tim here and Hughey came in for a drink just before last orders after they had finished giving their statements to the Police.”

“In just before the bell” Tim confirmed, “Fortunately Jim and Bert very kindly disposed of the loco to the shed for us as we were well into overtime by the time the Old Bill had finished with us.”

“Flash Harry showed up in his cab with the latest dolly bird and some dodgy looking associates about ten, half ten I think” Len then continued, “They went through to the private saloon bar too if I recall.”

“Yeah, I think you are right about that” Dave agreed, “Doris had to take the drinks through on a tray, she didn’t like that.”

“Doris?” Jack asked.

“The bar maid” Tim replied, “Ran that bar like a school headmistress, no messing, no naughties and definitely no fights.”

“You had the Lamb and Flag for that sort of carry on” Len confirmed, “Rough old joint that was, full of Stewarts Lane Shed crew mostly.”

“Did a decent pie and mash though” Tim added to which the others nodded in agreement.

“I wonder...” Jack pondered for a few moments, tapping his pen on his notebook.

“I can see the cogs whirring from here” Len remarked, “Last time I saw thinking like that it involved the intricacies of a twelve-way duty swap with accompanying fiddle.”

“I was wondering if it was possible that Barry Franks was somehow involved in the robbery” Jack then explained, “That he was waiting for them to arrive in the private saloon bar to divvy up the loot?”

“Given how bent his two sons were and some other rumours that were floating about him, you know the railway industry bush telegraph” Dave summarised, “I wouldn't be in the least bit surprised.”

“I think I will follow that line of inquiry up” Jack responded, “Does anyone know what happened to the Franks by any chance?” he then asked.

“Old man Franks disappeared out of sight as soon as head office finally managed to get rid of him” Tim recalled, “Barry the younger son is probably in an unmarked grave somewhere in the rural countryside of Northern Ireland I would wager and old Flash Harry, he is supposedly still around.”

“Really?” Jack looked up with some surprise.

“That was the rumour” Len agreed.

“I don't suppose any of you know about a wages snatch that took place a couple of weeks later by any chance?” Jack then asked on the off chance.

“Damm right we knew about it” Dave confirmed with the others nodding in agreement, “Those thieving bastards made off with the cash for our Christmas period pay packets, best overtime earning period of the year.”

“There was concern that the theft would cause a morale issue and possibly even industrial action” Len added, “so the Government used some sort of special power, had the investigation closed down and made sure that an emergency cash fund was made available to pay us our wages on time with a ten shilling bonus for each of us paid on top, on condition that we never mentioned what had happened.”

“I think we can safely say we can talk about it now though” Tim confirmed.

“You see, I was wondering if it was the same firm involved” Jack then went on to explain, “Railway cash, specifically a larger amount than average and someone knew exactly when and where to strike.”

“Flash Harry's dolly bird!” Dave exclaimed, “The one on his arm that night poor George bought it.”

“What about her?” Len asked.

“When Harry came in with her that night, I recall thinking I had seen her somewhere before” Dave explained, “She was a looker, blonde, frizzy hair, really nice big...”

“Oh yeah, I remember” Len then recalled.

“She was a clerk in the wages office at Waterloo” Dave then continued, “I remember seeing her in there just before Christmas when I popped into the wages office to get some missing overtime payment sorted out, she made an impression.”

“You always were one with the eye for the young ladies, weren't you Dave?” Tim remarked with a knowing smile.

“Definitely worth following up” Jack then added some more notes, “I don't suppose you know what her name was by any chance?”

“No, escapes me, sorry” Dave responded after a few moments trying to recall.

“Not to worry” Jack then remarked, “Oh, one other thing, Flash Harry, you said he came in a cab that night because someone had nicked his motor.”

“Yes, that's right” Fred agreed.

“I don't suppose it was a silver Jaguar by any chance?” Jack then asked.

“You know what, I think it was” Fred confirmed, “One of those Inspector Morse type Jag's, like they always used for getaway cars in *The Sweeney*.”

“A silver Mk II” Jack responded, “I think I am developing a particular interest in the mysterious Flash Harry Franks...”

“Hi” Eisley called as he arrived in the entrance of the Forensic Service Laboratory building, “Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley, I am looking for Neil Adams.”

“He will be in the main laboratory Sir” the officer at the front desk confirmed, “Follow the signs, down the corridor on the right.”

“Thank you” Eisley responded before heading off down the corridor, soon reaching a set of double doors through the glass of which was visible the large laboratory room with numerous white cloak wearing analysts working at desks using various different types of scientific equipment to analyse samples of materials relating to hundreds of criminal investigations from across the country.

Neil Adams, the head of the Forensic Service Branch was over towards the window, looking into a microscope and adjusting the focus by way of the knob on the side when Eisley approached.

“Ah, I was just about to call your Guvnor” Adams remarked as he saw Eisley arrive.

“It's his day off” Eisley explained, “If you can actually believe that...”

“Just like his father” Adams knowingly agreed, “Well in which case I will give you the good news” he then declared, “Cross referencing of the fingerprints with the

Criminal Records Archive confirms that your shooting victim at Battersea Tube Station was indeed Alfred Gaskill.”

“That matches the items we found on him so that is a relief” Eisley responded.

“I was talking to Gary Prowse over at the Criminal Records Office earlier” Adams then continued, “Apparently this Alfred Gaskill has a file several inches thick” he explained, “In old fashioned terms, criminally speaking he was well at it.”

“Apparently he had a brother who was also in the same line of work back in the day” Eisley then remarked.

“Would that be one Brian Gaskill by any chance?” Adams asked.

“That's the fella” Eisley confirmed, “No idea if he is still around though.”

“Well, he certainly was around when Alfred was shot” Adams responded, “We found a partial print on one of the shell casings and on a hunch, I asked our Fingerprint Jedi over there to try it for size and we got a match, Brian Gaskill most likely shot dead his own brother.”

“Or at the very least handled the weapon and or the ammunition used” Eisley concluded.

“Now all you have to do is find him” Adams then remarked with a wry smile, “That's your job by the way, I just look at tiny things with big microscopes.”

“In which case, I have something for you to look at then” Eisley produced a plastic evidence bag and passed it over whereupon Adams put on some fresh latex gloves and proceeded to open the bag and extract the contents.

“Interesting” Adams then remarked, “Looks like an old-style police officers notebook.”

“It is” Eisley confirmed, “It belonged to Sergeant George Roberts, we only just found it because for some reason it was hidden inside the lining of his helmet.”

“Gemma should take a look at this; she is our paper expert” Adams then remarked before leading Eisley across the room to a desk over on the opposite side where a young woman in a scientific white cloak was sat at a desk working on an old scrap of newspaper.

“Hello boss” Gemma called, “Got something for me?”

“This is Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley of the Transport Division, and he has brought us this which I thought would be just up your street” Adams explained, handing over the notebook.

“Ah, paper, my favourite subject” Gemma remarked as she carefully moved the working tray aside and got a fresh examination tray onto which she placed the notebook and then began to use tweezers to carefully examine it.

“Watch carefully, she's good” Adams prompted as she got to work.

“Okay gentlemen” Gemma then declared “What we have here is a standard issue police officer's notebook from about erm...”

“1963” Easley confirmed.

“...1963” Gemma then continued, “British Transport Commission Police, issued November 1962 to officer number W1812, Sergeant George Roberts.”

“Found beneath the remains of the timetable well of the old Nine Elms Locomotive Depot where he was sadly dumped by person or persons unknown in January of 1963” Easley confirmed.

“Now, there seems to be numerous pages torn out, quite roughly and by someone in a hurry” Gemma continued her examination, “Judging by the yellowing of the tears where the pages have been removed, this took place at the time, 1963 rather than recently.”

“From what we could see the remaining pages are all blank” Easley commented.

“Not entirely” Gemma remarked as she used a strong magnifying glass to look closer, there are a few pen marks on the margins of the torn-out pages, whoever did this was desperate, in a hurry.”

“Probably stuffed them into a pocket never to be seen again” Adams confirmed.

“There is what looks like a couple of letters on this piece and another on this last part” Gemma pulled apart the torn page margins with her tweezers, showing the others the slightly blurred blue pen markings.

“Looks like a seven, an H and an R” Easley made a note himself, “and I reckon those three letters on that other page are probably a registration number, HYT.”

“There are no further recognisable marks that I can find” Gemma then confirmed but then paused and looked on thoughtfully, “I wonder...”she then remarked.

“What's on your mind?” Adams asked.

“I was wondering about the first complete page of the notebook” Gemma went on to explain.

“But it's blank?” Easley responded, clearly and understandably confused.

“I think I know what is on your mind” Adams remarked, “You see not all blank paper is blank...” he then explained to Easley.

“Let me show you some magic, Deputy Divisional Commander” Gemma called as she put down her tools and then picked up the examination tray with the notebook on it and went over to another part of the laboratory.

Eisley watched on as Gemma placed the notebook on a specialised piece of equipment and then switched it on.

“The thing about paper is that when you write something on it, you press hard down and the impression made by the pen, pencil, whatever passes through to any paper that is immediately beneath” Adams explained, “the fibres of the paper get compressed, not quite as much as the original sheet on top but enough for this box of tricks to recognise where the impressions are and read what was written.”

“Sort of like old fashioned carbon paper?” Eisley suggested.

“Just without the printed marks:” Adams agreed.

“Here we go” Gemma then declared as she completed her analysis with the machine, “What looks like a registration number, ELT 357 and a single word, double underlined.”

“Nec...” Eisley began to read the work but struggled to see it clearly.

“Hang on, let me adjust the scanner a little” Gemma responded, showing it on the screen.

“Necropolis” Adams then confirmed as the word became clearer on the screen.

“What the hell is that?” Eisley asked as he wrote it down in his own notebook, “Greek restaurant?”

“In 1963?” Adams responded, “Unlikely I would have thought.”

“Well, it means something” Eisley commented, “Maybe the Guvnor knows?”

“Where is he?” Adams then asked.

“Chasing ghosts again” Eisley then confirmed.

As he was there, Jack took the opportunity to indulge himself and look around the preserved railway, even managing a ride on one of the trains down to the southern end of the line and back before deciding it was time to go back to London.

Returning to the front of the station, Jack climbed into the driver’s seat of his patrol car and placed the files and his notebook on the passenger seat alongside him.

It was as he went to close the door that Jack did a double take upon seeing something reflected in his wing mirror which caused him to pause and then look back over his shoulder.

After thinking for a moment, Jack duly got out of the car again and proceeded to walk over to the car park nearby where, just poking out from behind a modern-day Land Rover was the very distinctive nose of a vintage car.

“Well, I’ll be damned...” Jack remarked to himself as he looked at the car, a metallic silver Mk II Jaguar saloon of the late 1950’s.

Jack discreetly looked around but saw nobody about, before running his hand over the bonnet of the car and discovering it was still warm, indicating that it had not been parked there for long.

Checking his mobile phone revealed that there was little if any signal, so Jack returned to the station in search of a landline.

“It’s me again” Jack called as he returned to the ticket office where the Clerk was surprised to see him back, “Can I use a landline by any chance? Need to call the office.” he explained.

“Of course, Sir” the Clerk confirmed, “Come through here, you can use the one in the office.”

Jack followed the Clerk through a door and up a staircase to the office accommodation in what was once the Station Master’s home on the first floor.

“Now that is what I call a telephone” Jack remarked as he was shown into the office and saw the vintage 1930’s Bakelite telephone on the desk and then picked up the handset before using the rotary dial to input the number.

The lengthy number took some time to input on the old rotary dial but soon Jack was connected and waiting for his call to be answered.

“Mos?” Jack then called as soon as Easley answered, “Blimey, this old thing actually works connecting to a modern day mobile...”

“Guv?” Easley responded, understandably a little confused.

“Never mind” Jack dismissed that train of thought, “When you get a chance, can you run a check on a registration number for me please?”

“Yeah, sure Guv” Easley confirmed as he found a pen and prepared to take down the details.

“Now, assuming there have been no naughties going on” Jack then continued, “registration number Seven Four Two Tango Lima Hotel should be a rather tasty metallic silver Mk II Jaguar with any luck.”

“Right Sir” Eislely confirmed, “I will get it run through the computer when I get back to the office.”

“Where are you now?” Jack then asked.

“Just spent a fascinating hour in the Forensic Science Section laboratory” Eislely explained, “You remember Sergeant Roberts' notebook?”

“Ah yes” Jack confirmed.

“Well, it turns out it wasn't quite as blank as we first thought” Eislely then continued, “There are some fragments of writing on the margin edges and the ESDA scan showed up the impression of whatever was on the last page that had been torn out.”

“Anything interesting?” Jack asked.

“What looks like an old-style registration number, ELT 357, that is Echo Lima Tango Three Five Seven plus a word, Necropolis” Eislely confirmed from his notes.

“Necropolis?” Jack responded, “What the hell is that?” he asked.

“Not a clue Sir” Eislely admitted, “The registration number I can wash through the computer when I get back to see if it still exists, but I doubt it.”

“Do that” Jack advised “and if anything pops up, try and get hold of me, only I seem to be mostly in an area where the mobile signal is somewhat patchy so you may have to be patient.”

At that point, Jack glanced through the window towards the car park in the distance and it was then that he noticed someone moving in the immediate vicinity of the silver Jaguar.

“Err, Mos” Jack then reluctantly called, “I got to go, something I just want to check on” he then explained, “I’ll be back in town by this evening as I am collecting Megan from the hospital tonight.”

“See you later Guv” Eislely responded before Jack hung up and went over to the window.

“Who the hell is that?” Jack then asked as he watched an elderly man approach the Jaguar, open the boot, and then look around carefully to ensure he was not being observed before taking something out, placing it in his inside coat pocket and then closing the boot again.

“I don’t recognise him” the Clerk confirmed as he too looked out of the window as the mysterious elderly man disappeared from view somewhere over on the far side of the station site.

“Could you do me a little favour and call the local Nick and get them to send a couple of their officers over this way as soon as?” Jack then requested, “I think I might need a little assistance.”

By the time that Jack had returned to the car park and was once again approaching the silver Jaguar, there was no sign of the person he had glimpsed from the office window.

Checking the door handles and the rear boot revealed that the car had been locked so there was nothing much more to be gained there, instead Jack headed off towards the woodlands at the far end of the car park towards which he had seen the mysterious individual disappear off to.

Climbing over a stile and into the wooded picnic area beyond, Jack was able to look down onto the railway tracks leading north from the station where over on the far side of the running line, a number of sidings with stored locomotives and items of rolling stock in various states of restoration were stabled.

Looking around, Jack’s attention was suddenly drawn by some sign of movement, some bushes clearly moving where someone had just pushed through them, leading off behind the sidings to the railway embankment on the other side.

“Where are you going?” Jack asked himself as he proceeded to clamber down the embankment to the track level and then used the wooden porter’s trolley crossing to reach the other side, checking carefully up and down the line for any approaching trains as he crossed.

Reaching the long lines of stored carriages and wagons, Jack looked up and down for any sign of movement when the sound of a door banging was heard from somewhere over to his left.

There was a gap between a brake van and the end of one of the stored carriages, just wide enough for Jack to pass through to the other side which he managed to squeeze through, ducking beneath the buffers, his hard soled boots crunching on the ballast between the sleepers.

On the other side was the former goods yard where more stock and unrestored old locomotives were stored in long rows, some of them covered in tarpaulins and sheeting.

It was then that Jack noticed a door on a carriage nearby had been left open, gently swinging in the breeze and he started to walk slowly towards it.

Jack approached the open door cautiously and climbed up to look inside but just as he peered through the opening, a gunshot rang out and the bullet fired ricocheted off the chassis frame of the carriage just inches away.

“Oh hell...” Jack exclaimed, scrambling into the carriage as another gun shot rang out, shattering a window and showering him in fragments of glass.

Thinking quickly, Jack shuffled across the corridor and into one of the First-Class compartments of the old carriage, ducking down and keeping below the window line, hopefully out of sight.

The compartment was musty and damp, having been withdrawn from service decades earlier and was still waiting for the process of restoration to its former glory to commence.

Footsteps crunching on the ballast outside forced Jack to retreat further out of sight, the old upholstery creaking.

As the steps faded into the distance, Jack reached for his firearm only to then realise it was not there, being technically his day off, he had left it locked in the secure glove box compartment in his car.

Cautiously, Jack got back on his feet and stepped out of the dusty compartment and back into the corridor, looking up and down before deciding to head towards the far end and then climb back down to track level through the open connecting door in the carriage end.

He looked around but there was no sign of anyone around in the immediate area, so Jack moved across the rusty railway sidings towards a partially covered old unrestored steam locomotive.

Walking slowly, cautiously, and as quietly as he could, Jack crept around the front of the old locomotive.

Suddenly another gunshot rang out and there was a loud clang as the bullet struck the buffer of the old locomotive with Jack quickly falling to the ground out of the way.

“Where the hell are you?” Jack remarked to himself, lying on the ground, and looking around beneath the various vehicles until he noticed a pair of feet moving some distance away.

Jack froze when he became acutely aware of someone now standing behind, a short distance away.

“Turn around copper!” called a hard gravelly voice, “Slowly...”

“Good morning...” Jack responded as, with his hands held up, he turned around slowly to face a tall man in his early to mid-seventies, standing firmly and brandishing a gun.

“You should have let the past stay in the past” the man angrily demanded “Drop the gun” he then called.

“Sorry to disappoint you” Jack responded “but, regrettably, I am unarmed.”

“Suits me copper!” the man quickly responded, “If you are so interested in digging up old ghosts, you can join them!”

“Erm...” Jack tried to point something out to the gunman.

“Best copper is a dead copper” the gunman then declared but just as he was about to shoot, he was knocked to the ground by a coal shovel being smacked across the back of his head.

“Thanks guys” Jack remarked as he stepped forward and picked up the firearm whilst Dave and Tim stood over the gunman, both still holding the coal shovels.

“We thought you needed some help” Dave then admitted.

“Let's have a look at you” Jack then remarked, “Give me a hand, will you?” he then asked whereupon between the three of them, they turned the still unconscious gunman onto his back.

“Well, I'll be dammed” Dave then remarked, “Flash Harry Franks!”

“Are you are kidding me?” Jack responded with amazement.

“Definitely him” Dave confirmed, “Older, still a dimwit but definitely him.”

“He's coming round” Tim commented.

“Harry Franks?” Jack then asked.

“Drop dead copper!” Harry responded.

“I'll take that as a yes...” Jack concluded, “Consider yourself nicked!”

“You can't touch me copper!” Harry defiantly responded, “You will all be ghosts, the past must stay buried!”

“He still likes the sound of his own voice, doesn't he?” Dave remarked with a smirk.

“Wrists, behind the back” Jack sternly instructed before handcuffing Harry and then with Dave and Tim's help, got him back on his feet.

“Hang about, we have met before” Tim then remarked.

“Of course you have, it's old Flash Harry, we saw him most nights in the pub, the flash git” Dave then reminded him as Jack proceeded to lead Harry away and the two veterans followed close behind.

“No Dave, I mean somewhere else...” Tim began to explain but was interrupted again.

“What's the charge copper!?!” Harry then demanded to know as Jack ushered him up the ramp and onto the station platform.

“Attempted murder, trespass, possession of an offensive weapon...” Jack began to list.

“Possession of an offensive gob...” Dave remarked.

“You can stick a sock in it and all, you old git!” Harry angrily retorted.

“You!” Tim then realised the connection, “Dave, you remember I told you about the night of the robbery and hijack?” he asked.

“What of it?” Dave replied.

“The mouthy one in the gang, the one who was always waving the gun about” Tim continued to explain before pointing directly at Harry, “It's him, the same voice, I would know it anywhere.”

“Well, well, well...” Jack responded, “In which case we can add armed robbery and theft of railway property to the list.”

The sound of a siren approaching heralded the arrival of backup and a few moments later two uniformed officers emerged from the subway that runs beneath and between the platforms.

“Welcome to the party gentlemen” Jack called as they met on the platform.

“Commander Peter Corbin, Sussex & Kent Division” the first officer confirmed, “This is Lieutenant Greg Haines, you had a problem?”

“Got this guy” Jack indicated Harry, “Just got nicked, brandishing this lovely bit of hardware” he then indicated the evidence bag with the firearm inside.

“Boss” Haines then called as he took a call on his mobile, “It's our Guvnor, he wants to speak to the Divisional Commander.”

“Here, hold him, will you?” Jack passed Harry over to Haines “and watch him, he is a slippery customer.”

“No problem, Sir, we have a Black Maria on the way for chummy here” Corbin confirmed as Haines handed over the telephone to Jack.

“Divisional Commander Regent” Jack then called over the mobile phone.

“Now why is it that whenever there is a firearms incident on my manor, I am not in the least bit surprised to find a member of your illustrious family involved in some way?” called Divisional Commander Al Longton from his office at Regional Headquarters in Haychester.

“Hello Al” Jack called, “How are you?” he then asked.

“Expecting the paperwork on my desk to quadruple in the next hour” Longton admitted, “So, what are you doing on my patch?”

“Arresting an old lag who decided to have a pop at me” Jack explained, “I don't suppose I can have a couple of your lads in a van take the prisoner back to London for me please?” he then asked.

“As long as the petrol bill and the overtime comes out of your budget and not mine” Longton agreed.

“I'll throw in a very large drink too” Jack added, “Thanks.”

“No worries” Longton confirmed.

A few minutes later, Jack was watching as the two Haychester based officers dragged Harry towards the back of the waiting Security Service van and despite having been handcuffed, he was still struggling.

“Do you want us to add resisting arrest to the list Guv?” Corbin called.

“I have powerful friends and we will see you and this whole thing dead and buried, you mark my words!!” Harry protested as he was shoved into the back of the van.

“Throw the book at him” Jack confirmed, “Stick him in a cell at West End Central and whilst you are there, could you drop this off” he handed across the evidence bag containing the gun, “I would like the Ballistics guys to give it the full works.”

“I'll let them know Guv” Haines confirmed as they finally managed to get Harry to sit down in the back of the van and get the doors shut and secured.

“Thanks” Jack responded but it was as he looked at the car keys that he had found on Harry that a thought occurred to him, “Look, tell them when you get there I'll be back as soon as I can, there is something I need to check on.”

“Right you are Guv” Corbin confirmed.

Jack watched as the Security Service van and patrol car departed back up the lane from the station forecourt before turning smartly on his heels and proceeding over towards the public car park, making directly for the silver Jaguar.

Taking the keys, Jack proceeded to try the driver's door lock and was pleasantly surprised to find the keys fitted and he was able to open it.

“Gotcha...” Jack remarked to himself as he proceeded to sit in the driver's seat and look around the interior.

There was nothing obvious of interest in the car that Jack could find as he checked the seats both front and back and the floor, instead he turned his attention to the glove compartment, opening the flap and then looking on with some surprise.

“Now we are getting somewhere” Jack then remarked as he found some items of potential interest, taking out a folder of documents which were tucked inside a vintage London A to Z which was probably as old as the car.

The folder was tucked into the page which happened to have the Nine Elms area on it and there were some old faint pencil marks on some bits of the pages while the folder itself was also of interest.

“Hang on a minute...” Jack then remarked with increasing concern as he opened the folder and saw a number of black and white photographs and some accompanying notes, the photos being of Jack, Sturgeon and also a number of buildings, one of which was rather out of focus having probably been taken from the side window of a moving vehicle but did seem familiar to him in some way.

His mind then went back to what Harry had said earlier; maybe his threats were not so empty after all.

There was still one thing on the car he had not yet checked, and Jack duly got out and went around to the back to look in the boot, unlocking it and opening it to reveal a tartan blanket lying across something laid in the there.

“Whoa...” Jack exclaimed as he carefully pulled back the blanket to reveal a significant number of firearms laid out before him, “That's a lot of shooters...”

Jack decided it was best to leave the weapons untouched and so carefully replaced the blanket and shut the boot lid firmly before locking it and then looking around again.

It was then that another thought occurred to him, and Jack quickly ran back to his patrol car, got in and started the engine before accelerating away at high speed.

Brian Gaskill lowered his newspaper when he heard the telephone ringing in the next room and let out a heavy sigh before lifting his aging body up out of the easy chair and shuffling through to where the old-style Bakelite telephone was located on the desk.

“Gaskill” he then formally answered on picking up the handset and taking the call.

He listened intently for a few moments, taking the opportunity to light a cigarette.

“Harry always was a fool” Gaskill then remarked, “Let him rot in jail for a bit, it will do that silly idle git good.”

Gaskill inhaled on the cigarette and then blew smoke across the room as the caller continued to talk to him.

“All right, carry on with the plan” he then instructed “You have your instructions and unless you want to die a poor man, I suggest you get on with it.”

It took Jack just fifteen minutes to drive at high speed across the Sussex countryside before reaching the small river where Sturgeon said he would be fishing that weekend.

Getting out of the car, Jack looked all around, up and down the river but could see nobody about, the nearest signs of life seemingly being a tractor working in a field in the distance and some cows mooing on the opposite side of the river as they grazed the grass.

There was something just visible a short distance down the riverbank that got Jack's attention though. and he walked briskly along the riverbank until he reached the point where there was a pair of fishing rods and associated equipment all set up but for some reason left unattended.

Checking the fisherman's bag revealed the initials TS scratched into the old leather and the same initials also scratched into the handles of the two fishing rods.

"Come on Ted, where the hell are you?" Jack then asked as he looked around once again before noticing a caravan parked in a field nearby and then remembered what Sturgeon had told him the previous day.

It took a few minutes to find the way into the field, using a stile to climb over the hedge and then through the long grass, just managing to avoid some cow dung that was waiting to catch him out.

The caravan was located over in the far corner of the field, and it took a couple more minutes to reach it.

"Ted?" Jack called as he approached the caravan but there seemed to be no response.

"Are you in there, mate?" he then called again as he noticed that the door was slightly ajar, seemingly indicating someone was inside at least.

It was only as he approached the door that Jack realised something was terribly wrong as a pungent smell became readily apparent, coming from inside.

"Gas!!" Jack then exclaimed, quickly throwing open the door and being confronted by a thick cloud of noxious gas that was filling the interior of the caravan.

Sturgeon was inside, lying face down on the floor and Jack struggled to reach him as he found it very difficult to breathe, already coughing severely.

There was no time to check if Sturgeon was still alive, only just enough to get a hold and drag him outside as fast as possible.

It was a struggle as Jack began to become severely affected by the gas himself, but he managed just about to get Sturgeon to the door where he coughed heavily indicating that, at least for now he was still alive.

“Come on” Jack called to him, using all his strength to haul Sturgeon's body out of the door and then drag him across the grass in an attempt to get as far away as possible from the gas and the caravan, still coughing severely.

Jack was only just in time as the caravan then exploded in a ball of flames sending burning debris in all directions and the sound of the explosion echoing all around the rolling country hillsides around them.

A combination of the effects of the gas and being hit by the explosion shockwave and the debris meant that Jack was only just conscious when he looked up from the ground, just being able to see through the heat, smoke and flames a distant figure that could be seen standing over the other side of the field watching them.

While he was unable to recognise the mysterious figure, Jack could see that he was dressed in a long overcoat and appeared to be smirking before he made a firing gun gesture with his hand and then disappeared off into the smoke.

At that point, his injuries saw Jack finally pass out.

Tracy was contemplating coffee when the telephone rang, and she reluctantly leaned across to answer it.

“Chief Super” Tracy called.

“Duty Control Room Supervisor Ma'am” came the response, “Sorry to bother you but there are reports of an explosion coming through from Sussex & Kent Division.”

“I'll be right there” Tracy confirmed before hanging up and heading out of the office and down the corridor to the Control Room.

“Ma'am” the Duty Supervisor called as she entered.

“What's going on?” Tracy asked.

“999 call from a farmer in a field near Hurst Green, reports an explosion has destroyed a caravan near the river” the Duty Supervisor responded.

“Some unhappy camper was probably careless with his Calor Gas canister I expect” Tracy commented.

“Normally I would agree but apparently there is a Transport Division patrol car parked about half a mile away from the explosion...” the Duty Supervisor then added.

“Fire brigade and ambulance on the way?” Tracy then asked with a renewed sense of urgency.

“ETA of about fifteen minutes Ma'am” one of the Control Room operators called over, “It's a pretty remote spot.”

“Haychester's finest are also on route” the Duty Supervisor added.

“Get me a chopper, I am going down there” Tracy then called as she picked up a telephone and made a call, “Get me Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley over at Holborn, urgent” she requested.

“Can you hear me?” a voice came through the fog that Jack's mind was enveloped in as he began to come around to find himself lying in the back of an ambulance with two paramedics attending to him, an oxygen mask on his face and the sound of sirens with the fire brigade busy dampening down the burning wreckage just outside.

“What...” Jack began but was struggling to get the words right as he was still somewhat fuzzy headed.

“Just relax, try to remain calm” the Paramedic then reassured him, reinforcing the oxygen mask on Jack's face.

“Where's Ted?” Jack then asked as he began to regain some realisation of reality and where he was.

“Still unconscious with a nasty bump on the back of his head” the other Paramedic present confirmed, “He is on his way to hospital now.”

At that point, the sound of a helicopter coming into land nearby could be heard.

The helicopter was a Metropolitan Division's Police & Security Service one, having flown directly to the scene from the roof of New Scotland Yard where it had picked up Tracy on the way.

“Cheers Mike” Tracy called across to the pilot as she took off the headset and proceeded to get out of the front of the helicopter, ducking down and then heading straight towards the scene where a number of local officers were on site, watching the Fire Brigade personnel finish dampening down the wreckage.

“Ah, Chief Superintendent!” Divisional Commander Al Longton called as Tracy approached, “Welcome to the party.”

“Al, been a long time” Tracy responded as they shook hands, “Where's Jack?” she then asked.

“In the back of the ambulance over there” Longton confirmed, “He's okay, a few bumps and bruises and he inhaled quite a bit of gas, so they are about to cart him off to St. Richard's to get him checked out.”

“What a mess” Tracy then exclaimed as she looked across the field where there were bits of caravan and debris spread out over quite a wide area radiating out from the burnt-out chassis and wheels of the caravan which itself was now resting inside a shallow crater in the ground.

“Yeah, you can usually tell where Jack’s been, can’t you?” Longton wryly remarked.

“What about the other guy, Sturgeon?” Tracy then asked.

“Already on his way to St. Richard’s Hospital now” Longton confirmed, “He inhaled a lot more gas and if it weren’t for Jack, he would be dead.”

“What do you reckon?” Tracy enquired as she stepped forward and surveyed the wreckage more closely, “Do we rule out a bomb?”

“I never rule out a bomb” Longton responded, “I was talking to the Fire Chief just before you arrived and he agrees with me that this is substantially bigger than your average caravan gas bottle accidentally going up, he reckons someone may have rigged it to make a good job of obliterating the place but try and make it look like a domestic camping accident.”

“I think they overdid it a bit” Tracy remarked.

“Just a tad” Longton agreed, “the explosion was heard up to ten miles away.”

“Right then, I’ll go and see how Jack is” Tracy then declared, “Can one of your guys see to his car?” she asked.

“No problem, Ma’am” Longton confirmed.

“Right, thanks” Tracy replied, “I’ll catch up with you later.”

As Longton moved off to secure the scene, Tracy headed over to the ambulance where Jack was still being treated in the back.

“So, Jack” Tracy called with a wry smile, “How’s your day off going?”

“Shot at, gassed, blown up” Jack remarked, “Just a normal day at the office really...” he sarcastically admitted.

“In among your usual chaos and mayhem, did you find out anything useful?” Tracy asked.

“I got one in custody on his way back to London and he had a very interesting firearm” Jack confirmed.

“Oh, yes?” Tracy remarked, clearly interested.

“Well, admittedly my knowledge of firearms is a little bit lacking” Jack explained but then had to pause as he had a coughing fit that sounded pretty bad and had to take the oxygen mask back to try and suppress it.

“Are you sure you are okay?” Tracy responded, becoming increasingly concerned.

“I’ll be fine...” Jack insisted, “Anyway, I think that gun may well be a Luger of the same type that we have been looking for.”

“Where is it now?” Tracy then asked.

“A couple of Al Longton’s lads are taking it to London along with Harry Franks, they are going to drop it off at the Ballistics Lab on the way” Jack confirmed.

“Well, in that case if all that is taken care of, it is time you went to hospital” Tracy declared.

“But...” Jack began to protest, however Tracy quickly cut him off.

“You are going and that is final” she insisted, “At the very least get yourself checked out, besides it is your day off, isn’t it?”

“Well, yes...” Jack was forced to admit.

“I’ll get Easley to drop in on Megan and tell her what has happened” Tracy then reassured him.

“She is supposed to be coming home this evening” Jack then remembered before coughing again.

“Here” Tracy handed him back the oxygen mask, “I will collect her, you need to rest.”

“We are ready to move” the paramedic then called across.

“Right then, I’ll leave you to it” Tracy responded as she stepped out of the ambulance, “I’ll talk to you later” she then called to which Jack raised a hand in weary acknowledgement before the doors were secured and with the siren sounding, it moved off, bumping across the rough surface of the field towards the gate at the far end.

“Tough little fella, isn’t he?” Longton remarked as he joined Tracy.

“He is that” Tracy admitted, “but don’t tell him though, I don’t want him thinking he is invincible and then go and do something *really* daft.”

The heart rate monitor began to bleep faster as Sturgeon started to regain consciousness, initially confused as to where he was as he looked around from the hospital bed, located in a secure ward at St Richard’s Hospital in Haychester.

“Doctor? He is coming round” came the call of a female voice as Sturgeon began to focus on where he was.

Quickly the Duty Consultant of the Accident & Emergency Department came across and looked into Sturgeons eyes.

“Just hold on a minute Sir” the Doctor called as he shone a pen torch into Sturgeon’s eyes, “You have had a lucky escape.”

“Where am I?” Sturgeon weakly asked, “What happened?”

“From what I can gather Sir, your caravan exploded” the Doctor confirmed, “If it weren’t for the young Security Service officer who dragged you out just in time, you would not have made it.”

“Who was that?” Sturgeon then asked, his senses now beginning to become more alert.

“It was me old boy” Jack called as he appeared in the doorway, smiled and then with a nod of approval from the Doctor, came in.

“Don’t you turn up in the strangest of places?” Sturgeon jokingly remarked.

“Runs in the family” Jack admitted.

“Actually, where is here?” Sturgeon looked around, not recognising his surroundings.

“The secure ward at St. Richards Hospital, Haychester” Jack explained, “I have a couple of the local lads on guard outside the door for your protection.”

“Am I in danger?” Sturgeon then asked, somewhat astounded.

“Well, so far today I have been shot at, gassed and nearly blown up” Jack admitted “and if Flash Harry was right about someone wanting the past to stay dead and buried then it stands to reason you are also on the list.”

“Marvellous...” Sturgeon responded, “Oh, my head...”

“Do you remember anything?” Jack asked.

“I was fishing, not catching anything though” Sturgeon tried to recall, “The next thing I remember was someone calling my name and then I woke up in here just now.”

“Well, in that case I will try and fill in some of the blanks” Jack responded as he gingerly lowered himself into the chair alongside the bed, “After being shot at and, with a little assistance, arresting Flash Harry” he went on to explain, “I rushed over to find you, that was when I discovered your fishing gear abandoned and then found you in your caravan, face down, unconscious and being enveloped in escaping gas.”

“Whereupon you dragged me out and erm, boom?” Sturgeon suggested.

“As you so beautifully and concisely put it, boom” Jack agreed.

“Flash Harry...” Sturgeon then thought for a few moments, “I am sure I know that name.”

“Also known as Harry Franks” Jack confirmed.

“That flash git?” Sturgeon exclaimed, “I thought he would have wound up six feet under, and not by natural causes decades ago.”

“Still very much alive” Jack confirmed, “Did you know he was the eldest son of Barry Franks, the pissed as a newt jack of all trades and master of none of the railway industry who that night just happened to be the Duty Shed Supervisor?”

“The inside man...” Sturgeon realised, “Well, at least the man with the inside knowledge at any rate, I can’t see how that old soak would have been fit to rob a charity box let alone a cash office.”

“Ah, did you know that Flash Harry who had a reputation for a different girl on his arm every time anyone saw him, just happened to show up at the Brooklands Arms that night with a bird who just happened to work in the Cash Office at Waterloo?” Jack then asked.

“Figures...” Sturgeon agreed, “Barry Franks was a useless sod but somehow managed to stay employed, just constantly moved from job to job as they simply could not get rid of him, but I do know he was a driver for a short while until he cocked that up as well and got shifted sideways.”

“So, he would have known how to drive a loco but not known about the AWS alarm system” Jack responded as a realisation set in and things began to fall into place in his mind, “Flash Harry hooks up with the girl from the Cash Office and you got yourself your inside information.”

“The thing is” Sturgeon then commented, “The Franks were a bunch of right wallys, old man Barry was an alcoholic, Harry was a spiv with a load of iffy black market businesses run behind his legitimate firm selling second hand moody motors and as for his younger brother Bobby, well he was in and out of the local nick so often for petty theft that the Metropolitan Police contemplated installing a revolving door to the Custody Suite.”

“Which means that someone must have put them up to it, used their connections and knowledge to plan the crimes” Jack concluded.

“It would have to have been a local gang, one with talent, muscle and no scruples whatsoever” Sturgeon agreed, “And I reckon I know exactly who fits the bill.”

“The Gaskill’s and their associates?” Jack asked.

“Congratulations, you win a gold star!” Sturgeon confirmed.

“But all this was decades ago” Jack then remarked, “Why would they be so desperate to run around trying to bury what is essentially ancient history?” he then asked, “I mean the cash they grabbed must have been spent long ago I would have thought.”

“You are forgetting something” Sturgeon then pointed out, “A serving police officer died, that makes one of the gang a cop killer and all the others complicit in the crime which means, even now after all this time, they could still face their day in court and even though dear old Albert and his noose have long since retired, a life sentence would still be the death of them at the age they are now.”

“There has to be more to it though” Jack remarked.

“In my years of experience, there often is” Sturgeon agreed, “The thing is you are drifting dangerously close into the murky underworld of old gangland London and even to this day, it is a hornet’s nest of secrets, lies, betrayal and vengeance.”

“Hence why Alfred Gaskill was probably shot” Jack summarised, “Someone was worried he was about to blab I reckon.”

“It fits...” Sturgeon agreed as he tried to sit up but found that his injuries meant he was largely unable to move too much.

“Relax Ted, you are not going anywhere, not in your condition” Jack warned.

“Oh...” Sturgeon groaned, “I think you are right, then again you don’t exactly look fresh as a daisy yourself” he then pointed out.

“Yeah...” Jack agreed as he looked down at the dusty and battered uniform tunic that he was wearing which, along with some minor scratches to his hands and wrists signified he too had had a pretty tough day.

“How did Flash Harry know where to find you?” Sturgeon then asked.

“I found a dossier of information in his car” Jack explained, “a 1950’s Mk II Jaguar in silver no less” he then pointed out.

“Now there is a coincidence” Sturgeon sarcastically remarked.

“It seems someone has been keeping tabs on you, me, practically anyone connected with the case” Jack continued as he produced the dossier he had found and passed it to Sturgeon to take a look at for himself, “Someone is very frightened that I may dig something up if you get my drift.”

“Even the criminal underworld has its spies and intelligence gathering systems” Sturgeon agreed as he started to look through the files although one photograph in there confused him, “What is this supposed to be?” he then asked.

“Oh, that” Jack responded as he took the photo, the one of the view of a building somewhere which was blurry as if it had been taken from the window of a moving vehicle, “I wondered about that but couldn’t place it.”

“So, what are your plans for the rest of the day?” Sturgeon jokingly asked.

“Get back to the office, try and work out who from the Gaskill Gang is still around and where I might be able to find them and then pick up my girl from the hospital...” Jack then tailed off when something occurred to him whereupon he quickly picked up the blurry photograph and looked at it again with a worried expression.

“Something wrong?” Sturgeon asked, sensing a serious problem.

“Oh hell!” Jack then exclaimed, “I think I know where this is” he indicated the photograph, “Got to go, see you later.”

“Bye...” Sturgeon called after Jack as he rushed out of the room.

“Hello Mos” Adams called as he met Eisley in the Reception area of the Holborn office, “I have got a present for you, courtesy of your Guvnor.”

“A box of chocolates?” Eisley hopefully asked.

“Err, no” Adams reluctantly replied as he reached into his briefcase and produced an evidence bag containing the firearm that had been recovered from Harry Franks earlier in the day, “This” he then confirmed, handing it across.

“Is this the one that Jack got from that Franks guy earlier?” Eisley asked as he looked at the gun in its evidence bag.

“That’s the one” Adams confirmed, “We just did a rush job on it, and I am happy to confirm that this is a 1938 made nine-millimetre Luger P08 semi-automatic pistol.”

“Any ballistics on it yet?” Eisley inquired as he took the paper copy of Adam’s report and began to look through it.

“Still working on that, but the odds are pretty good that this is the same gun used to shoot Sergeant George Roberts in 1963 and Alfred Gaskill yesterday along with countless other occurrences of armed robbery, murder and violence dating back decades” Adam confirmed, “although there are probably a fair few of these still in circulation even to this day so the chances are that whatever weapons stash this has been a member of since the mid 1940’s, there are more of them around.”

“We need to find this weapons stash and get them out of circulation” Eisley concluded.

“I would say so” Adams readily agreed, “They may be old but even today this old thing” he indicated the gun “is still very effective and regarded as one of the best handguns ever made.”

“Good old fashioned German technology, eh?” Eislely responded.

“Apparently, according to one of my firearms experts back at the lab, this was the first choice of handgun for your 1950’s armed blagger” Adam confirmed, “coming a close second overall to that old perennial favourite, the sawn off.”

“Right, thanks for this” Eislely called, “I’ll let the Guv know when he gets back, today is supposed to be his day off would you believe?”

“Sounds about right for a member of that particular family” Adams agreed with a smile, “Anyway, I had best be off” he then confirmed.

“Stay in touch” Eislely called after him as Adams headed for the exit.

“Will do!” he called back before leaving.

A couple of minutes later Eislely arrived in the Major Investigation Room and duly placed the gun in its evidence bag down in the centre of the large meeting table.

“There you go ladies and gentlemen” Eislely then declared, “One genuine wartime German nine-millimetre Luger P08 semi-automatic pistol.”

“Where did this come from Sir?” Baxter asked as he picked up the evidence bag and took a look at it for himself.

“A gentleman by the name of Harry Franks, also known as Flash Harry, fired this at our Guvnor earlier today” Eislely explained, “and before you ask, yes he is okay, and Mr Franks is currently enjoying the hospitality of our colleagues over at West End Central nick.”

“Harry Franks...” Chambers moved over to consult her extensive pile of note and files in front of her, “Any relation to one Barry Franks by any chance?” she then asked.

“What, the drunk as a skunk Duty Shed Supervisor when Sergeant Roberts was shot?” Baxter asked.

“It would appear that Harry is the elder son of Barry” Eislely summarised “and to make life even more interesting, not only does he seem to be the proud owner or hirer of this lovely little piece of history” he indicated the gun “but he also just happens to own a late 1950’s vintage metallic silver Mk II Jaguar of exactly the same type that was supposed to be the robbers getaway car back in January 1963.”

“What a small world we live in?” Tarbett remarked, semi-sarcastically.

“Now, the Guvnor has become a tad indisposed this afternoon” Eislely slightly reluctantly continued “and he wants us to run with this whilst he sorts out various other issues, being nearly blown up by a caravan apparently being one of them...”

“Huh?” Baxter responded.

“Err, long story...” Eislely then admitted, “We need to find everything we, the Metropolitan Division, MI5 and if you can access them, the old British Railways archives have on the entire Franks family, that is Barry, his two sons Harry and Bobby, known associates, employment records, current whereabouts even if they are six feet under, the works.”

“Sounds like my sort of challenge Sir” Chambers remarked with enthusiasm, “Let me make some phone calls and call in a few favours that are owed me.”

“Any luck tracing Brian Gaskill?” Eislely then asked.

“His last known address was a rather swish retirement apartment in Shoreditch” Baxter confirmed from his notes, “I got the Metropolitan Division to pop around earlier this afternoon, but nobody was home and there were signs that somebody had packed up and left in a hurry.”

“Figures...” Eislely responded, “What about known associates of Gaskill?”

“Robbery Squad came up with a few more old files on the Gaskill Gang” Chambers confirmed, “Most of it can be regarded as ancient history now but there are still a few known faces around, all be it most of them either retired or in jail.”

“Right, I want to get the faces of all the people we have identified as being involved in both robberies and associated incidents up on a big wall chart” Eislely instructed, “No matter how tenuous the connection.”

“I’ll get right on it Sir” Baxter confirmed, “Of course we may need a new set of pens for this one.”

“Raid the stationery cupboard” Eislely readily agreed, “and if the Guvnor asks, tell him to bill it to someone else.”

“Right you are Sir” Baxter agreed.

“Also, I think we should invite Harry Franks over here for a chat” Eislely then called.

“West End Central said they would be happy to bus him over to us whenever we want” Chambers confirmed.

“Thanks for the lift, Terry” Tracy called to Commander Kinderley, her official driver as he dropped her off outside the main entrance of St. Hugh’s Hospital, a specialist

medical facility located in South-east London, “You head off home, I won’t be needing you again tonight.”

“Right you are Ma’am” Kinderley confirmed before Tracy shut the passenger side door and he duly drove off into the early evening rush hour traffic.

As Tracy was arriving at the front of the large complex of hospital buildings, a plain blue Ford Transit van was pulling into the deliveries bay at the rear of the premises.

“Hello mate” the driver called in a broad cockney accent to the private security guard on duty at the rear of the hospital, “Got a load of boxes for you” he then nodded towards the rear of the van.

“I’ll have to take a look” the Security Guard confirmed as he looked over the exterior of the vehicle with a watchful eye.

“Sure mate” the driver happily confirmed, “Look for yourself, the door is unlocked.”

“Okay...” the Security Guard responded and proceeded to grab the handle of the side door before turning it and sliding it open.

Suddenly the Security Guard was overcome as two more men leapt out of the dark interior of the van, bundled him to the ground and before he knew what was happening, they had him bound and gagged with tape.

“Get rid of him!” a man called from inside the van whereupon the two assailants quickly lifted the Security Guard into the van.

“He’s going nowhere boss” one of the assailants confirmed as the man giving the orders moved forward from the interior of the van into the light, revealing it to be Brian Gaskill.

“Right lads, you know the target, you know what to do” Gaskill then instructed whereupon the two assailants, now joined by the driver proceeded to remove their boiler suits to reveal hospital support staff uniforms beneath, complete with authentic looking identifications on lanyards before heading inside the building.

Four floors up, Megan was relaxing in a hospital chair waiting to hear from the head of the surgery team that had operated on her that she could finally go home.

She had already received and not been entirely surprised by the message about Jack probably going to be late, but she knew it was important to him and understood. It was the thought of finally getting out of there and back home that was the most important thing to her right now.

Outside in the corridor, she could hear a trolley being wheeled past, one of the wheels squeaking as it clattered by before there was a knock at the door and her Surgical Consultant entered holding a clipboard.

“Well Megan” the Consultant called with a cheery smile, “I have checked over the reports and I am delighted to announce, you can leave anytime you like.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Megan responded, understandable elated with the news.

“Right, you will still need to visit the Day Surgery from time to time for checks and some physio to get you back on your feet but apart from that, you are back in action” the Consultant confirmed, “I’ll leave you to it” he then declared before turning to leave.

It was as he was about to go out of the door that he was suddenly bundled back inside again, struck over the head and knocked to the ground unconscious by three men in hospital porter’s uniforms.

“What the hell?” Megan responded as the three men approached her and she instinctively grabbed her handbag off the bedside table.

“Grab her!” one of the men called to the other two.

“Are you sure about that?” Megan called as she quickly whipped out a gun that was hidden inside her handbag and pointed it confidently at them.

“Oh, a girl with attitude...” one of the men almost complimented her, “but one gun against three of us?” he then pointed out, “Do you really have the bottle to pull that trigger?”

“You think I am bluffing?” Megan replied, doing her best to hide her fear, “Then call me...”

“Alternatively, gentlemen, you could see if I am bluffing as well” came another voice from behind them whereupon they looked back to see Tracy standing there, her gun drawn and pointed directly at them.

“I think we have a stand-off, don’t you?” Megan then added, now feeling somewhat better now that help had arrived.

“Drop your weapons, hands on head; I am sure you three lads know the drill by now” Tracy called, “I suspect you have been nicked before, call it instinct.”

It was then that Jack arrived as well and joined Tracy just outside in the corridor.

“Three each” Jack then remarked, his gun also drawn.

“Come on fellas, the game is up” Tracy then declared, “Come quietly, no fuss and we will take that into consideration when you go up before the Judge in the morning.”

It was then that Jack became aware of something not quite right off to his left but was unable to properly look as it would have meant that he would have to have taken his eyes off the three attackers which could have given them a chance.

What Jack had seen at the very peripheral edge of his vision was an elderly but fit looking man standing a short distance away; it was then that he heard something rolling along the floor, heading towards them.

“Err...” Jack remarked with increasing concern but that was as far as he got when the object came closer and both he and Tracy realised what it was.

“Grenade!!” Tracy called out just a split second before it detonated, emitting a flash and a big cloud of smoke that rapidly filled the corridor, the shock of the bang being felt throughout that floor of the building and even immediately above and below too.

In the immediate confusion generated with many of them disorientated, Megan lashed out at one of the attackers with a crutch, striking him across the face before using her handbag to smack a second one over the head.

Tracy managed to scramble back to her feet just in time for two of the attackers to then push past her, knocking her back to the floor again before, amid the smoke they made off down the corridor.

Jack lay dazed and confused on the floor as he was the closest to the smoke grenade when it went off whilst Tracy ran off after them.

“All units from Alpha One” Tracy called into her radio as amid shouts of confusion and screams, she pursued the two men down the hospital corridor, “Two suspects, one IC1 male, one IC2 male on fourth floor, dressed in porter’s uniforms.”

“Are you okay love?” Jack asked as he managed to regain his senses and came into the room.

“Not a problem” Megan confirmed as she and the Consultant who was still a bit groggy himself had successfully restrained the remaining attacker on the floor.

“Here” Jack tossed her his handcuffs, “Chain him to the radiator in the corridor and we will collect him later, got to go.”

“Be careful love!” Megan called after him as Jack left.

“Always!” Jack was heard to call back as he sped away.

“What floor did she say?” Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent called to her Metropolitan Division colleague as they raced up the emergency stairs.

“Fourth I think” Lieutenant Marcus Harris called as he followed her up.

“Here we go” Brent then declared as they reached the door for the fourth floor, the smell of grenade smoke which they both recognised instantly from their riot training back at the Academy percolating through the air.

Going through the doors, Brent immediately noticed one of the suspects running towards them, “Stop!” she then called which caused the man to shudder to a halt, “Where do you think you are going sunshine?” she then demanded to know.

Thinking quickly, the suspect looked to his left and saw an opportunity to escape down a side corridor. Taking the chance, he quickly pushed an empty hospital trolley across the corridor between him and the two officers before running off.

“Damm it!” Brent exclaimed, “Cut him off Marcus” she then directed her colleague before she effortlessly hurdled over the trolley and headed off in pursuit.

“Lima Charlie Seven Nine Two to Control” Harris called into his radio as he headed off down a parallel corridor, “Four Six One is in pursuit of the IC2 suspect in the North Wing on the Fourth Floor.”

“Alpha One” Tracy was then heard to call over the radio, the sound of quick heavy footsteps clearly audible in the background, “I got the second one, he is heading towards the South Wing like a ferret up a drainpipe!”

“Lima Tango One” Jack added, “The third suspect is unconscious and handcuffed to a radiator in Megan’s room if someone could kindly arrange some transport for him” he confirmed, “I am going after the old guy who rolled in the smoke grenade.”

“All units from Lima Charlie One Zero One” came the call from Commander Monroe, “We have got the building completely surrounded on all sides” he declared as from his vantage point outside the main entrance, he could see several Security & Police Service vehicles and dozens of officers all around the hospital grounds with more arriving every moment, “and India Nine Nine is coming over now” he then added as the sound of the Security Service helicopter approaching increased in volume.

“My one looks like he is heading for the roof!” Brent called as she reached the far staircase just moments after the suspect she had been chasing.

“Seven Nine Two to Four Six One” Harris called, “I am right behind you.”

“Better warm up that chopper Guv” Brent announced as she raced after the suspect, up the stairs, “We are about to head outside.”

“Down there mate, down there!” one of the medical staff called to Jack as he followed the trail of people calling out, indicating where the old man had run off to.

“Cheers!” Jack called as he rushed past and through a set of double doors which took him down a dark flight of steps and into what appeared to be a very industrial area.

The noise from machinery and only a few random lights on in the vast maze of tunnels and equipment rooms down there told Jack where he was as he reached for his radio.

“Lima Tango One, anyone who can hear me, I am in the boiler room in the basement” he confirmed but the lack of any comprehensible response merely confirmed his suspicions that he was in an area where radio reception was patchy at best and non-existent at worst.

“Ah well...” Jack resigned himself to carrying on alone and proceeded off into the darkness.

Up on the roof, the situation was getting serious for Brent and Harris as they pursued their suspect across the rooftops, clambering over handrails, pipes and air conditioning units in a determined bid to capture him.

“Lima Charlie One Zero One to all Units” Monroe then called over the radio, “Give me an update please” he formally requested.

“India Nine Nine” the spotter in the helicopter responded as she scanned the roof of the hospital through binoculars, “I got two Metropolitan officers chasing an IC2 male across the roof of the North Wing approaching the river.”

“This is Four Six One” Brent called, “This guy really doesn’t want to give up” she confirmed.

“Alpha One” Tracy then called in, “I’ve lost my one somewhere in the X-Ray Department, second floor in the South Wing” she confirmed as she looked around everywhere, opening doors and peering inside wherever she could.

“Lima Charlie One Eight One” came a call from another officer, “We are on the Fourth Floor and have arrived at the attack location.”

“Situation report please” Monroe called.

“Smoke was from a grenade, the staff have opened the windows and it is clearing but they have evacuated the floor as best they can to be on the safe side” the officer confirmed, “The third suspect is here, unconscious due to a close encounter with a handbag and handcuffed to the radiator.”

“Not exactly standard procedure but it will do” Monroe remarked.

“Any word from Jack?” Tracy called over the radio as she paused her search for a moment.

“Nothing for the last few minutes” Monroe confirmed.

“Seven Nine Two, urgent assistance!!” Harris called which got everyone’s attention, in the background of the call could be heard Brent’s voice calling out to someone, “He’s going off the roof!”

“India Nine Nine” the helicopter spotter then added, “Better get around to the west side, quick.”

“Come on!” Monroe called to a number of his officers, and they proceeded to run around the perimeter of the hospital buildings where they then looked up and saw someone dangling over the edge of the roof, their legs waving wildly in the air.

“Give me your other hand you idiot!” Brent called to the suspect; her right arm outstretched whilst he was just hanging onto her left hand.

“Oh my God...” Monroe called.

Tracy meanwhile was unaware of the drama on the roof of the hospital as she had turned the volume of her radio set right down and was now creeping silently through empty corridors until she paused when the sound of something small and metallic falling to the ground was heard from somewhere behind her.

“Come out, come out, wherever you are...” she whispered to herself before realising a cupboard door that she was now passing appeared to be breathing heavily.

Very quietly, Tracy leaned towards the door and put her right ear to it, confirming her suspicions that someone was in there and as the signage on it stated it to be a store cupboard, there was no legitimate reason she could think of for why anyone would otherwise be inside.

Putting her hand slowly on the handle, Tracy readied herself and then with a sudden moment opened the door.

The suspect was taken by surprise, leaping to his feet, and trying to rush out only to be tackled to the ground by Tracy who managed to duck a punch thrown at her and then promptly landed one of her own before rolling him on to his front to secure his arms behind his back with handcuffs.

“Stop wriggling, will you?” Tracy called, “You’re nicked!”

Up on the roof, reinforcements had arrived and were attempting to help Brent as she desperately clung onto the suspect who was refusing to accept help.

“You are not taking me alive, bitch!” the suspect defiantly called, “You are coming with me!” he then declared as he started yanking at Brent’s hand, trying to pull her off the roof with him.

“I got you!” Harris called as he held on to Brent’s legs as tightly as he could and in turn two more officers held onto him as they were all being gradually pulled forwards by the suspects almost superhuman efforts and determination.

“There is just no helping some people!” Brent called out as she was in pain now with the edge of the roof digging into her midriff and the suspect now trying to wriggle free.

“Arrgghh!!” the Suspect then called out as he suddenly lunged up with his free hand, scratched Brent by digging his fingernails deep in her wrist and she lost her grip.

There was nothing anyone could do but watch as the Suspect fell, arms and legs waving the whole ninety-foot drop, his body first striking the hand rails that run along the edge of the river bank before splashing into the water.

“On three!” Harris called back to his colleagues, “One, two, THREE!!” which was the cue for all of them to put on a Herculean effort and haul Brent back over the edge of the roof to safety.

On the embankment, Commander Monroe looked over into the river where the lifeless body could be seen face down in the water, bobbing up and down from the wash of the approaching Thames River Division patrol boat that was moving in to pick it up.

“Silly boy...” Monroe dismissed.

“Alpha One to Control” Tracy was then heard to call over the radio, “I got one!”

“Lima Charlie One Zero One receiving” Monroe quickly responded, “Well done Ma’am.”

“Thanks” Tracy replied as she roughly escorted her handcuffed prisoner towards the lifts where two more Metropolitan Division officers had just arrived to assist, “Any word on the others?” she then asked.

“Lieutenant Commander Brent’s suspect just fell off the roof into the river” Monroe confirmed.

“Dead?” Tracy then asked.

“Well, if he isn’t” Monroe remarked as he watched the crew of the Thames River Division patrol boat haul the body out of the water with a couple of boat hook poles, “then he is very calm.”

“What about Jack?” Tracy then asked as the two other officers took charge of the prisoner and took him away.

“Last report was a few minutes ago” Monroe explained, “He was seen heading towards the boiler room in the basement, I am sending everyone I can spare down there now.”

Jack was indeed still in the basement, making his way through the darkness, past boilers, generators and seemingly endless miles of pipes and steel.

If there was anyone still hiding in there among the maze-like passageways and rooms, it was going to be near impossible to find them unless they made an error, a sound or a sudden movement, something that would give away their location.

It was then that Jack looked across when a door could be heard opening somewhere over on the fast side.

“Jack?” Tracy was heard to call, “Are you in here?”

“Over here!” Jack called back, “I got an elderly IC1 male in here somewhere and he is probably armed” he then warned.

Following Tracy through the door were half a dozen officers drawn from wherever she could find them on the way over with more on the way.

“You two over on the left, you two on the right, you stay here and guard the door, the rest with me” Tracy quickly and authoritatively instructed.

They duly deployed as instructed, spreading throughout the complex of rooms, corridors and annexes, all with guns drawn and moving cautiously.

“Come on out, whoever you are” Tracy then called out, her voice echoing all around. “Your three associates are out of the picture, two under arrest and the third err, under water” she announced.

“The whole place is surrounded my friend” Jack then added to the call, “You have got nowhere left to run so let’s do this the easy way, give yourself up and we all go home.”

“Copper!!” came the piercing shriek that echoed all around which was so encompassing that it was impossible for any of them to locate its source.

“Ah, so you are still here then” Tracy remarked.

“You should have let the past stay in the past copper!” the voice then called again, “You will pay the price for interfering in matters that do not concern you!”

“Yeah, whatever...” Jack dismissed this statement, “Are you going to give yourself up or are we going to do this the hard way?” he then called.

There was the sound of movement somewhere ahead and above Jack that caused him to look up and peer into the gloom, likewise Tracy also heard it and looked all around.

Silently, Tracy indicated to one of the officers with her to move around to the left whilst she went around to the right.

“Hey copper!” the daunting voice called once again, “Got a little bit of advice for you...”

“Oh yes? What’s that then?” Jack responded which was when a clattering sound began as something started falling through between the metal piping, coming towards him.

“This one isn’t a smoker...” the voice confirmed before commencing a hearty laugh.

Quickly, Jack realised the meaning and moved off quickly just as the object hit the hard concrete floor not far from where he had been hiding.

“Everybody out!” Tracy called out urgently whereupon the various officers dashed for the nearest exit in response.

The object was another grenade but this time, as per the warning it was not a smoke type but a conventional one that detonated a small but, in that confined space, quite effective explosion.

The force of the small explosion sent out a momentary ball of flame that quickly blew itself out and caused a significant amount of damage to the immediate area, sending bits of metal pipe and wiring flying about.

Tracy and the other officers had managed to get clear just in time but were still affected by the force of the blast and the deafening sound, so it took them a few moments to regain their composure and assess the situation.

“Jack!” Tracy then called in through the door.

“Heh!” he groggily called back whereupon she headed back inside and soon located him, buried under a pile of old wooden pallets and some pipes which with the help of other officers were soon lifted off him.

“Oh God...” Jack remarked as he was helped back to his feet, “Do you ever get the feeling someone doesn’t like you?” he then wryly asked.

“More often than you might think” Tracy admitted.

With Commander Monroe now on the scene as well, a thorough search with numerous officers was quickly underway throughout the entire section, powerful torches being brought in to make sure every last corner and potential hideaway was checked.

“Are you sure you are all right?” Tracy then asked again as she went with Jack out of the boiler room area and into the corridor outside.

“Ah, you know” Jack casually summarised, “I have been shot at, gassed and blown up so just a typical day at the office really.”

At that point Commander Monroe returned and joined them.

“He’s gone, vanished into thin air” Monroe announced with clear frustration, “All we found was this” he then handed Jack a small object, “Happy Christmas!”

“Grenade pin?” Jack asked as he looked at the metal split pin with a round loop at one end in his hand.

“Yeah, old wartime one I would wager which would explain why it was such a small explosion, a combination of old age and the relatively small size of the charge” Monroe explained, “Just enough to provide a sufficient diversion for chummy to make his escape.”

“He has got to be here somewhere” Tracy concluded, “Keep looking” she then instructed.

“Already am Ma’am” Monroe confirmed, “If you two will excuse me?” he then called before leaving them again.

“Whoever he was, he’s well away on his toes by now I reckon” Tracy then remarked.

“I reckon it was our missing Gaskill brother, Brian” Jack responded, “and I reckon he was also responsible for assaulting Sturgeon and blowing up his caravan earlier today too.”

“A busy chap” Tracy summarised, “Come on, let’s get you and Megan home, shall we?” she then suggested.

“Sounds like a good idea” Jack readily agreed.

“What’s going on over at St. Hugh’s Hospital?” Eislely asked as he stuck his head around the door pillar of the Holborn Control Room.

“I am not entirely sure Sir” the Duty Control Room Supervisor called, “Metropolitan Division have had the place surrounded for the last hour or so and apparently Thames River Division have hauled a body out of the water nearby.”

“Why does this sort of excitement never happen on our turf?” Eislely then remarked.

“I don’t know Sir” the Supervisor honestly replied.

“All right, see if you can get hold of the Guvnor will you, see if he is all right?” Eislely then requested.

“Will do Sir” the Supervisor agreed before taking to the radio headset, “Lima Tango Control to Lima Tango One, are you receiving, over?”

There was nothing but silence in response so the Supervisor tried again.

“Lima Tango One from Control, report my signal please” he called.

“I’ll try his mobile” Eislely then declared, picking up the telephone handset on the desk in front of him and quickly dialling the number he knew well.

“Evening Mos” Jack answered to Eislely’s relief, “How’s tricks?”

“Just checking in with you Guv” Easley confirmed, “Apparently there was some excitement over at the hospital where Megan is I understand?”

“That’s one way of putting it” Megan remarked which Easley heard over the phone line.

“We err, had some uninvited guests on the premises” Jack then explained, “The count at the moment is two nicked, one drowned and one escaped, the latter possibly being out old lag Brian Gaskill.”

“The plot thickens...” Easley remarked.

“Quite” Jack readily agreed, “Megan and I are in a cab on our way over to Holborn now” he then explained, “Has my patrol car turned up yet?” he then asked.

“One of Haychester’s specialist drivers delivered it about half an hour ago” Easley confirmed, “It’s safely tucked up downstairs for the night.”

“Good” Jack responded, “Listen, I want to gather the entire investigation team together from both the Nine Elms and Battersea cases as it seems clear to me now that this is all linked” he requested.

“Lieutenant Chambers is over at the National Records Office at Kew but should be on her way back shortly” Easley summarised, “I think everyone else who is on the case, bar yourself is already on site here.”

“Get plenty of food and drink in” Jack then instructed, “I think we may be in for a long night.”

“Will do Guv” Easley confirmed, “See you soon.”

“Would you mind if I tagged along?” Megan asked as their taxi made its way through the streets of Central London.

“You have been insightful on this case, and I would welcome the company” Jack admitted, “Join the party.”

“Here you are Lieutenant, British Rail Personnel Files, Waterloo Area, 1961 to 1966” the Archivist confirmed as he brought a large metal archive case over and placed it on the desk in front of Chambers who looked on with a surprised expression.

“That’s a very big box” Chambers admitted as she proceeded to open it, “How many people did the railways employ back then?”

“Tens of thousands in Greater London alone” the Archivist responded, “This is just the E to G surnames, if your man Mr Franks was employed by the railways during those years, his file should be in there.”

“Thank you” Chambers responded as she started to thumb her way through the files.

The files were old and musty, details handwritten in ink on the covers that had faded in the decades since the pen had been applied to the paper.

One file in particular got Chambers attention though, the name Barry James Franks handwritten in neat italic script across the top of the faded manila folder which had the heading ‘British Railways, Southern Region - Personnel File’.

“Gotcha...” Chambers declared with delight as she extracted the file and placed it on the desk in front of her.

It was a thick file, numerous bits of paper of various colours and condition crammed into the folder and an official photograph in black and white showing the face of the man in question.

“So, that is what you looked like Mr Franks” Chambers remarked to the photograph before replacing it back in the folder and then getting up and going over to the Archivists desk located over on the other side of the room.

“Any luck?” the Archivist asked as she came over with a look of success on her face.

“Got him!” Chambers confirmed, brandishing the folder up in her hand, “Is it okay to borrow this, I promise to bring it back.”

“You’ll need to sign for it” the Archivist agreed as he produced a clipboard with a form and placed it on the desk with a pen and pushed it across towards her.

“I am probably the only person to have looked at this file since it was stored here” Chambers casually remarked as she duly signed the form.

“Erm actually...” the Archivist began to remark as he checked the record sheet for the file, “Possibly not.”

“Come again?” Chambers asked.

“It looks like someone signed the file out about three years ago” the Archivist explained, indicating a previous signature and note on the record sheet.

“Who the heck is that?” Chambers asked as she tried to decipher the signature but was unsuccessful.

“Here, let me try” the Archivist responded, taking back the form and with the aid of a small pocket magnifying glass, taking a closer look, “The one thing about my job is that you encounter all sorts of writing from generations and centuries past, so I reckon what you have here is a Stephen or Stephan Grace I think” he then concluded.

“I’ve have heard that name before somewhere” Chambers admitted as she made a note, “Trouble is, I cannot recall exactly where” she then admitted.

“It's probably somewhere in this lot I expect” the Archivist indicated around the vast archives, “The trouble would be, finding it...”

“Okay, has everyone got coffee, tea, cocoa, Bovril or other beverage of choice?” Jack called around the Briefing Room to which he received a full round of confirmations, “and help yourselves to biscuits.”

Jack waited for everyone in the room to settle before he picked up a file on the desk and opened it.

“All right, before we begin” he then declared, “A couple of introductions, for those of you who do not know, this charming young lady on my left here is my girl, Megan whilst our senior friend still nursing a bit of a headache over there is retired Detective Inspector Ted Sturgeon.”

“Evening all” Sturgeon remarked, raising his mug of coffee in salute, “Sorry, a cliché I know, it is just that I have always wanted to say that!”

“Right, it's time to get to work” Jack then declared, “We have a series of connected incidents, spread over decades which have brought us all here tonight.”

The room paid close attention to what was going on as Jack began to write on the large white board at the front of the room.

“First incident, the evening of January fourteenth, 1963” Jack then announced, “Four men armed with sawn off shotguns and semi-automatic pistols raided the cash office on the second floor of the Southwestern offices at Waterloo Station” he then proceeded to put up a number of the original crime scene photographs from the time up on the board before putting a pin in to the appropriate point on the large map alongside.

“During the raid, a considerable quantity of cash was taken” Jack then looked across at Sturgeon.

“Somewhere in the region of fifteen grand, cash” Sturgeon confirmed, “and that is at 1963 prices, today that would be somewhere just shy of three hundred grand.”

“Wow...” Megan remarked.

“Quite” Jack agreed before turning to a plan of Waterloo Station posted nearby, “The gang left the cash office and proceeded across to the staircase at the east end of the office buildings, their intention being to make their getaway in a stolen metallic silver Mk 2 Jaguar that was parked over here” he indicated on the plan “in the taxi road immediately outside the eastern exit from the main concourse.”

“That was when the plan supposedly went a little pear shaped” Sturgeon remarked.

“Indeed it did” Jack confirmed, “Unfortunately for the gang, a British Transport Commission Police officer was investigating the car as it had been reported by the Duty Station Manager as being suspicious, which for once, it was” he then explained, “This meant a well prepared Plan B swung into action, the gang turned round and headed for the platforms where they forced their way onto a steam locomotive that was waiting to head back to Nine Elms Loco Shed.”

“Probably the most unusual getaway vehicle in the history of armed robbery?” Baxter suggested.

“I know someone used a bus on a bank job in Streatham once” Easley remarked “but I reckon that beats it.”

“Initially, the gang had the crew consisting of Driver George Hughes and Fireman Timothy Baden drive the locomotive down the slow lines until they approached Vauxhall Station where they were checked down by a red signal” Jack continued, tracing the route taken on the map, “There, the driver followed correct procedure, slowing the locomotive, ready to bring it to a stop at the end of the platform which was when the gang got nasty.”

“I was reading the original witness statements from the loco crew a little earlier this afternoon” Baxter commented, “It seems like at least one of the gang may have had railway operations knowledge to me?”

“I think you are right” Jack agreed, “Admittedly it was my good lady here who pointed it out to me first” he then proudly admitted, exchanging a smile with Megan.

“Just willing to contribute” Megan confirmed.

“When the crew refused to comply with the gang leader’s instructions to carry on regardless, they took the controls” Jack continued to explain, “At that point, the platform starter signal changed to a single yellow aspect ahead of them meaning that they could proceed anyway but that is where the gang came unstuck.”

“The AWS?” Tarbett suggested.

“Very good” Jack responded, clearly impressed, “Whoever these guys were, they had the experience and knowledge to drive that locomotive but were unaware of the AWS, that is the Automatic Warning System that had been installed progressively across the fleet over the preceding eighteen months.”

“So, the AWS horn alarm goes off for the single yellow aspect on the next signal ahead of them, they don’t know what that noise they can now hear is, therefore they fail to press and release the AWS cancel button in time and seven or so seconds later, the brakes come hard on?” Easley concluded.

“Spot on” Jack confirmed, “I can see your browsing of my railway history books in my office has not been an entirely fruitless exercise.”

“You know me Guv” Easley responded, “I like to read...”

“The gang duly jump ship, just narrowly avoid getting mown down by the local electric trains and make their way along the railway lines, still heading south” Jack continued to explain, pointing at the map, “at which point they reach here, Nine Elms Locomotive Shed.”

“Which, ironically was where the loco they hijacked was going” Sturgeon pointed out, “If they had stayed put on it and let the crew do their job, they could have ridden all the way home.”

“Luck was not all on their side that night” Jack remarked, “We know from contemporary reports at the time that the gang entered the Shed Yard somewhere around here, near the junction with the main line” he pointed out on a second map showing the layout of the former shed site, “and that they then split up into two pairs.”

“I can tell you because I was there, that it was dark as a coal mine, cold and damp as hell” Sturgeon remarked at that point, practically shivering at recalling the conditions that night all those years ago.”

“When the alarm was raised, BTCP Inspector William Clark scrambled every officer he could find, missing them at Vauxhall by inches” Jack continued, “He also managed to get hold of two officers who were at the time investigating a report of possible trespassers at the Goods Shed and Yard off Pascal Street a little to the north of Nine Elms Shed.”

“That was me and George” Sturgeon recalled, “That is Sergeant George Roberts, my colleague and friend of many years” he then explained, “As soon as we were aware of something going off and that the gang may have been heading towards Nine Elms shed, we got back in the old Riley Pathfinder and raced to the main gate which was located in Brooklands Road.”

“That was somewhere about here” Jack pointed the location on the map, “Only don’t bother looking for it now, Brooklands Road, along with Brooklands Street and most of the old housing, even the pub on the corner were all wiped out by the developers in the late 1960’s.”

“Being the first two officers on the scene, George and I proceeded to search the Shed site, trouble is, it was dark, the lighting was abysmal at best and non-existent at worst” Sturgeon continued, “Eventually however we did manage to track down two of them but that was when things went wrong.”

“The reports confirm that three gunshots rang out across the site at approximately nine forty” Jack continued, “Subsequently, no sign of any of the gang was ever seen again.”

“We never saw George again either” Sturgeon reminded everyone.

“Despite an extensive search which extended well into the following morning” Jack mournfully confirmed, “no trace was ever found of Sergeant George Roberts” he then proceeded to put up a photograph of Roberts on the board, “That was until a few days

ago when his skeletal remains were discovered by workmen, his body had been dumped in a void beneath the old turntable well that was located at the south eastern corner of the shed site, about here on the other side of the wall from Brooklands Passage, which by the way is still there, he had a bullet hole in the side of his skull, almost certainly from that night and those shots that were heard.”

“Why wasn’t his body found at the time if an extensive search of the area was undertaken?” Baxter asked.

“Simply because we were not allowed to search the turntable area due to ‘safety concerns’ by the Duty Shed Foreman that night” Sturgeon explained.

“This man” Jack held up another photograph and then passed it around the room, “Barry Franks, an inept alcoholic who had drifted from one position to another on the railways and was pretty universally described in very unflattering terms by anyone who met him as utterly useless.”

“Even to this day, the old railwaymen still bear that guy a grudge” Sturgeon added as the photograph made its way back to Jack and he put it up on the board before writing his name beneath it.

“We’ll come back to this guy a bit later in our story” Jack remarked, “Now, with no trace of the gang or the cash, the trail soon went cold, and the investigation wound up being filed in a fairly short space of time, there was simply not enough evidence to investigate.”

“The Robbery Squad raided their archives and forwarded us everything they had on the case” Easley summarised.

“Lots of nicotine stained pages, mostly witness statements, some forensic information or what passes for it in 1963” Jack confirmed, “and crucially a ballistics report.”

“Your little German gun by any chance?” Megan asked.

“Very good my love” Jack confirmed, “One of the firearms used in the robbery was a German made wartime Luger P08 nine millimetre semi-automatic, to be precise, this one” he then produced the evidence bag containing the pistol and placed it in the centre of the table.

“Interesting...” Baxter remarked as he and the others looked at it.

“The ballistics report on that reveals it has been used in over two dozen recorded incidents since 1951 including armed robberies, drive by shootings and murders” Jack confirmed “It’s almost certainly a pool gun.”

“A what?” Baxter asked, clearly not familiar with the term.

“Property of an armourer to the criminal fraternity” Sturgeon explained, “If you needed a gun for a bank job, you went to a man in a pub, a known face of course, not some random bloke, you told him what you had in mind, some expert advice was

given, cash changed hands under the table, either a deposit plus a percentage of the takings or a full cash payment and then on the morning of the job, the required weapons were supplied to be returned once the job was done.”

“So, this gun has almost certainly had numerous different users which makes it rather difficult to trace” Tarbett summarised.

“Indeed” Jack agreed, “The thing is, this gun was used in January 1963 to shoot Sergeant George Roberts, it was also used in another armed robbery a few weeks later which we also have an interest in, and it shot this man” he then put another photograph on the board “Alfred Gaskill, one of the infamous 1960's Gaskill Gang who was shot dead in Battersea Power Station Tube yesterday morning.”

“Couldn't have happened to a more deserving scumbag” Sturgeon remarked.

“And then finally it was fired at me this morning” Jack then added, “Fortunately for the gunman at the time” he put another photograph up, “This man, 'Flash' Harry Franks is a lousy shot.

“Any relation to this Barry Franks by any chance?” Megan asked, out of curiosity.

“His eldest son in fact” Jack confirmed, “This is quite a tangled web as it happens.”

“The interesting thing about Flash Harry here is his motor” Sturgeon then remarked.

“The getaway car for the Waterloo job was a metallic silver Mk 2 Jaguar” Jack produced a copy of the original file evidence photograph of the car from 1963 and put it on the board, “Earlier today I had a chat with a number of former railwaymen and one of them recalls that on the night in question, Flash Harry turned up at the Brooklands Arms public house near the main entrance of Nine Elms Shed in a cab as allegedly his car had been stolen a couple of days before.”

“Let me guess” Baxter remarked, “a Mk 2 Jaguar in metallic silver?” he suggested.

“Give the man a gold star” Jack responded.

“I would rather have a promotion” Baxter joked in response.

“I'll see what I can do” Jack responded, “Meantime, it seems that Flash Harry here still owns one, either the same car or another identical to it, as it was parked in the station car park where he tried to take a pot shot at me earlier.”

At that point, Lieutenant Chambers entered the room holding a large number of files.

“Welcome to the party Lieutenant” Jack called, “Take a seat” he then indicated.

“I found Barry Frank's employment file, it is certainly colourful” Chambers confirmed, handing it over.

“In which case, we will come to this a little later” Jack confirmed.

“You mentioned another robbery of interest Sir?” Tarbett remarked.

“Friday the first of February 1963” Jack declared, adding to the board with the date and some more photographs, “At fifteen twenty seven, five men conducted an armed robbery on a Wages Clerk, one Simon Tyler, in Lower Marsh Street near Waterloo Station, making off with his briefcase containing the cash for the pay packets for most of the railway employees, four attackers plus a getaway driver using a green Ford Thames van, registration number Echo Lima Tango Three Five Seven.”

“I tried the DVLA at Swansea to see if the plates were traceable but unfortunately their records don't go back that far beyond a note on their database that confirms that registration number was cancelled on scrapping of the vehicle sometime in 1967” Chambers confirmed, “I did find out one thing though, it seems that this Harry Franks had a number of business interests.”

“Most of them dodgy you will find” Sturgeon remarked, “The legitimate front, if that is what you can call it was a used car dealership in Southwark, moody motors at suspect prices but he also had links to drugs, protection rackets, prostitution, pornography, you name it.”

“Perhaps he provided the green van?” Megan suggested.

“After all this time it would be nigh on impossible to prove” Tarbett remarked.

“Alas I am inclined to agree” Jack confirmed.

“What was the take on this one?” Chambers asked.

“A lot” Jack confirmed, “Unfortunately we will never know how much because two hours after the wages snatch, two men from MI5 turned up, seized all the evidence and shut down the investigation, the Treasury made a special dispensation cash payment to replace the missing wages with a little bonus on top to keep everyone sweet.”

“Why?” Megan asked.

“I honestly have no idea” Jack admitted.

“I have” Sturgeon remarked, “I did a little nosing around whilst I was in the hospital, tapped up a few old contacts who were in the job and whilst I cannot say anything for certain, there is a hint in the air that one of the men on that wages snatch was a snout for MI5.”

“A grass?” Tarbett responded.

“Well, that is interesting” Jack agreed, “It is not unheard of for investigations to be subtly manipulated to get informants off the hook but to shut down the whole lot and bury it, that is quite something.”

“Whatever it was that the mystery informant was giving them the spiel on them must have been a right humdinger” Sturgeon remarked.

“Do people still use the word humdinger?” Megan asked.

“I do my dear” Sturgeon confirmed with a smile.

“The green van was seen leaving the scene by a young Metropolitan Police Officer, a Constable Archie Grant of Nine Elms Police Station who came upon the scene” Jack continued, “He recorded the van leaving the scene towards Westminster Bridge Road where the trail runs cold, it vanished into thin air and was never seen again.”

“There would have been plenty of that type of van about” Sturgeon added, “Blended into the background as it was so common, the Transit Van of its day.”

“And with the investigation wound up, there was no chance of it being pursued further” Jack agreed.

“So, they got away with it, again” Megan summarised.

“Now, whilst the gun here was used in a number of other incidents from 1965 to 1969 including two bank jobs and a shooting incident in March of 1969” Jack continued, “It appears that none of these subsequent recorded uses of it are relevant or connected to our inquiry until the shooting of Alfred Gaskill the other day which means whoever's gun library this was rented from is still in business.”

“That means there is a cache of arms out there somewhere” Chambers ominously pointed out.

“Indeed” Jack agreed, “Now, here are the principals in this” he then returned to the photographs on the board, adding a couple of others to them as well, “The Gaskill Brothers, Alfred and Brian, known villains with connections to organised gangland crime.”

“The younger brother Alfred was the muscle; Brian was the brains of the outfit” Sturgeon confirmed.

“Barry Franks” Jack then continued, “On the night of January fourteenth, 1963, he was the Acting Duty Shed Foreman at Nine Elms Shed, except he seems to have spent the majority of his late shift in the private saloon of the Brooklands Arms Public House.”

“A not uncommon occurrence Sir” Chambers remarked, “Barry Frank's employment record is a long story of shirking, lead swinging and being constantly moved from job to job, collecting up a potentially record-breaking number of Form One's along the way.”

“A drunk, a waste of space and known for bubbling colleagues whilst bending and breaking the rules, left, right and centre” Jack confirmed.

“From what I understand, he was finally chucked out of the job on medical grounds in about 1968” Chambers confirmed, “A note in his record added after Franks had been dismissed states that he may well have faked his medical conditions to get discharged from service with a nice fat medical compensation cheque in his back pocket.”

“He played everyone from start to finish” Sturgeon remarked, “What happened to him?” he then asked.

“No idea” Chambers confirmed, “All leads seem to fade out not long after he left the railways” she explained.

“He had two sons” Jack then continued, “Harry, a.k.a. Flash Harry we have already been introduced to, he was bright, resourceful but also quite a Jack the Lad, hands in many pies.”

“He was in the iron and steel business” Sturgeon remarked, “Wife did the ironing, he did the stealing.”

“He was married?” Jack asked.

“Apparently so” Chambers confirmed.

“He was quite the ladies’ man” Sturgeon remarked.

“A different girl on his arm every night?” Jack called over to which Sturgeon nodded in agreement, “Yes, that was the impression I got from the railway veterans earlier, in fact the bird on his arm that he waltzed into the pub with not an hour after the Waterloo robbery, I have a witness who swears blind that she worked in the wages office at Waterloo Station.”

“What a tangled web we weave...” Megan commented.

“The other member of the Franks family was the younger son, Robert Franks, better known as Bobby” Jack continued, indicating a black and white photograph of a man in the 1960's, there being no more modern shot available, “Whilst big brother Harry was the clever one, Bobby here was as thick as two short planks, dipping, theft, nicking cars, loads of form for petty crimes, he practically had a cell down the local nick permanently reserved for him.”

“I notice the photograph is somewhat old” Baxter commented, “Do we not have anything more recent?” he asked.

“Unfortunately, not” Jack responded, “According to rumour, he messed with the wrong people and legged it to Northern Ireland where he again messed with the wrong people who duly fitted him up for a concrete overcoat.”

“Nasty way to go” Baxter remarked.

“There is another possibility” Megan suggested whereupon everyone in the room turned to look at her, “Bobby could have been the MI5 informer and he was ‘vanished’ for his own protection.”

“It fits” Sturgeon agreed, “All that would be needed was for a rumour to be casually dropped into a conversation in the right pub and as if by magic, it would have filtered through the local criminal community and beyond in no time.”

“Sounds like I need to have a discrete drink with someone senior over at Thames House” Jack concluded, “Anyway, let us continue. Mos?” he looked across to Eisley.

“Jumping forward some considerable time to a few days ago” Eisley then continued the briefing, standing up and approaching the board, “we return to the Gaskill Brothers once more” he then indicated the photographs.

“Twenty-four carat crooks the pair of them, and their associates” Sturgeon confirmed.

“Alfred Gaskill” Eisley continued, indicating a number of photographs, a couple of black and white ones taken back in the early 1960's including a Metropolitan Police mug shot, a much more recent one in colour from his senior citizen bus pass and finally, one from the scene of his death, “the younger brother who had retired from a life of petty larceny made this telephone call from a call box in Battersea,”

At his instruction, Chambers leaned forward and pressed the play button on a tape recorder whereupon the recording of the telephone call began to play over the speakers in the room.

It's me, have you heard? They found him.

Have you been drinking again Al? Who are you talking about?

What do you mean, who?

Alfred Gaskill then coughed quite loudly before resuming.

You know damn well who! They found his skeleton yesterday afternoon, the plod are crawling all over this and it is only a matter of time before they stumble into our business.

There was a pause, punctuated only by breathing in the background.

Calm down you stupid sod, the filth are not going to find out anything, the whole thing is dead and buried, I have seen to that.

I don't care! We need to meet, now!

Okay, if you insist, Battersea Power Station Tube, platform far end, one hour.

All right, the new Battersea Tube Station, one hour and make sure you are alone, leave the flunkeys at home this time.

I'll be there, alone.

The dial tone duly signified the end of the call and Chambers stopped the tape.

“About an hour later, Alfred Gaskill entered the recently opened Battersea Power Station tube station and proceeded down to the platform level and then headed down to the far end” Easley explained as he played the CCTV footage from various cameras on the screen, “There he met with person or persons unknown and was shot dead.”

“For a bonus prize, guess what gun was used” Jack asked around the room.

“Erm, that one?” Megan pointed towards the gun sitting in the evidence bag on the table.

“Got it in one” Easley confirmed.

“I am getting good at this” Megan then remarked with a smirk.

“The identity of the gunman is unfortunately not known despite extensive analysis of the CCTV footage from the station and the surrounding area” Easley continued, “However at the moment the most likely suspect is his older brother Brian Gaskill” he indicated a couple more photographs on the board.

“Any sign of him?” Baxter asked.

“Seems to have disappeared, probably crawled back under his rock” Jack confirmed.

“So how did this gun wind up in the hands of Flash Harry this morning?” Chambers asked.

“A very good question” Jack agreed, “Perhaps our armourer has had a busy morning?” he then suggested.

“He will be well annoyed when he finds out where a piece of his inventory has wound up” Megan indicated the gun on the table.

“Plenty more where that came from” Jack remarked, “The Ballistics Lab came up with quite an elaborate chart of firearms usage across a period of sixty years where this gun and associated weapons crop up all over the place.”

“Quite the tangled web” Chambers commented.

“We are delving deep into a long-standing tradition of South London organised crime here” Jack admitted, “So, here are the principals involved across the decades as well as the key locations involved, some of which no longer exist.”

“That makes some things a bit tricky” Easley commented.

“Anyone have anything to add to our collection?” Jack then asked around the room, “What about the notebook?”

“Forensics did a thorough examination of Sergeant Roberts’ notebook” Chambers confirmed, “Whilst any pages that had been written upon had been torn out, probably at the time of his death, there were some traces on the fragments of margins and an Esda test was performed on the first remaining page which revealed this” she then put up an image on the screen.

“What the hell is that?” Tarbett asked as they all looked at the single word on the screen.

“Necropolis” Eisley read the word.

“Greek restaurant?” Megan suggested.

“I would not have thought so” Jack responded, “Not in 1963.”

“There is the registration number of the green van, ELT 357” Chambers pointed out.

“So, Sergeant Roberts managed to record the registration number of a van that was used as a getaway vehicle in a robbery that took place over two weeks after he died” Baxter remarked.

“Which lends weight to the theory that whoever shot the Sergeant was known to him and did not want to risk being identified” Jack agreed.

“What else was found in the notebook?” Baxter then asked.

“Just fragments” Chambers confirmed, “some letters and numbers, 7HR and HYT.”

“HYT sounds like part of another registration number” Jack commented “but what this 7HR is, I don't know.”

“One moment Guv” Eisley called, “Let me fire up Google.”

“Never had any of this fancy nonsense in my day” Sturgeon remarked.

“No, but you did have postcodes” Eisley pointed out, “Right then, according to the Royal Mail there are a lot of postcodes ending in 7HR across the country.”

“If it is a postcode, we need to narrow that down somewhat” Jack remarked, “Try the nearest location to where all this is happening.”

“Here we go” Eisley then declared, “Nearest match is SE1 7HR, which is here” he then pressed a button and a map appeared on the main screen with red dot indicating the location.

“Westminster Bridge Road” Chambers commented, “Now there is a coincidence...”

“I don't believe in coincidences” Jack quickly responded.

“The Lower Marsh Street wages snatch” Eisley commented as he returned to his copy of the old file and his notes that he had made on it, “The green van that was used as the getaway vehicle seemed to vanish ‘into thin air’ almost as soon as it had left, no other officers approaching or on the scene ever saw it.”

“Sounds about right so far” Sturgeon agreed.

“So, looking at the map again” Eisley returned to the board where the map was on display, “We know that it came into Lower Marsh Street from the Westminster Bridge Road end, turned around and after the wages snatch, departed back the way it had come.”

“Which suggests that its journey was a short one” Chambers agreed, “Either they had a place in Westminster Bridge Road to hunker down until the heat was off or a place to quickly change to a second getaway vehicle.”

“Assuming that the same gang were responsible for both raids” Sturgeon then suggested, “They would have a pre-planned rendezvous point somewhere in the hours or days after each job to divvy up the loot.”

“Well, here are all the principal locations on the map” Jack cast his hand across the board which now had numerous pins in the map in different places.

“Four on the first job, the Waterloo Cash Office” Chambers remarked, “Five on the second job which means if it was the same crew, who was left at home on the first job?”

“That is assuming they were left at home” Eisley remarked, “They could have been waiting at the rendezvous point for the gang to come in with the loot.”

“If I were a betting girl” Megan then remarked as she too analysed the boards, “I would bet that that the two Gaskill Brothers and the two Franks Brothers made up the four musketeers here.”

“That makes sense” Sturgeon agreed, “Harry had a number of businesses that could be used to launder the cash through, his old man had railway operations knowledge, Barry would have been a perfect thug, bright enough to follow orders and do as he was told but sufficiently dim enough to not cause trouble.”

“And the Gaskill Brothers have or rather had more form than the Racing Post” Sturgeon pointed out, “They had the experience, planning skills and access to the tools of the trade.”

“Like this one” Eisley indicated the gun.

“This railway guy, Barry Franks” Megan asked as she took a look at the file which Chambers had passed over to her at her indication, “Could he have been the source of the inside information regarding the best time and place to strike?” she pondered.

“Both cash snatches occurred on the biggest potential takes of the year” Sturgeon agreed, “The Cash Office was processing all the takings from ticket sales over the Christmas and New Year period whilst the wages snatch was the pay packets with all the extra overtime from the same period.”

“And having read his colourful and incident riddled file” Chambers added, “He seems to be just the sort of guy who would happily have betrayed his employer and his colleagues for cash.”

“Hang about” Jack then consulted his notes again, “Yes, here it is” he then declared, “On the night of the Waterloo Cash Office raid and Nine Elms shooting, Barry Franks was in the Private Saloon of the Brooklands Arms Public House pretty much all evening except for when one of the Nine Elms train crew had to drag him out back to work when Inspector Clark demanded to see him.”

“Yeah, the Guv was none too impressed with Barry Franks when he eventually graced him with his presence” Sturgeon fondly recalled.

“And according to the old Nine Elms lads, Flash Harry showed up around an hour after the robbery along with two other guys and a “bird” from the Wages Office at Waterloo and went through to the Private Saloon” Jack then added thoughtfully.

“Was Barry Franks the fifth man on the wages snatch job?” Eisley asked.

“I think it is starting to fit together” Jack agreed.

“I don’t know if this is relevant” Chambers then remarked “but Barry Franks’ personnel file had been signed out by another person some years earlier, a Steven Grace.”

“What?!?” Sturgeon responded with obvious surprise.

“You know the name?” Jack asked.

“That was the name we had for the guy that George and I found unconscious on the platform at Waterloo that time” Sturgeon explained, “He was supposedly a warehouseman there but then he disappeared from hospital, never to be seen again.”

“It has to be some sort of fake name being used by someone involved in all this” Jack concluded, indicating the various photographs of persons of interest on the board.

“I don’t remember any warehouses around Waterloo” Eisley remarked.

“In the cellars underneath the station” Sturgeon explained, “When we found this man, Grace or whoever he actually was, there were two railway vans that had been thoroughly ransacked and a significant number of crates opened or taken away.”

“What was in them?” Tarbett asked.

“We never found out” Sturgeon confirmed, “The manifests that our CID boys found were works of pure fiction, whatever was in those crates, somebody went to great lengths to hide them, but I reckon there has to be a connection somewhere” he then remarked, “It has taken me fifty years to work it out and I am still nowhere near the answer.”

“There is also evidence of collusion with regards to the shutting down of the wages snatch investigation” Chambers then continued, “The files and all gathered evidence material had to be released from the Metropolitan Police Robbery Squad with an official form which was completed and signed by a Chief Inspector Corner of Scotland Yard.”

“Corner of The Yard?” Jack responded with an amused smile to which Chambers looked on, somewhat puzzled at her superior officer’s reaction until she realised the significance.

“Oh, that’s a good one” Sturgeon added with a hearty laugh.

“Someone was protecting one of these guys, maybe more than one” Megan commented, indicating the photographs of the principals on the board, “Trouble is, after all this time you won’t have a cat in hell’s chance of finding out who or why now.”

“Reluctantly I must agree” Jack responded, “So, let’s concentrate on these five characters.”

“Harry Franks should be arriving in the back of a Metropolitan Division Black Maria shortly” Eisley confirmed, “Apparently his Brief is already on the way too.”

“That was quick...” Chambers remarked.

“Unless we can trace a body, I think we should assume that every one of these five is still alive somewhere” Jack summarised, “So, we need to check records, Births, Deaths & Marriages records should be a good place to start.”

“This time of night?” Baxter suggested, “They won’t like that.”

“Oh, diddum’s...” Jack responded unsympathetically.

“I’ll try and smooth the ruffled brows Guv” Baxter then confirmed as he reached across for the telephone.

“Now if I were a betting man, I reckon old man Barry Franks is probably long gone, he would be in his late nineties now if he were still around” Jack remarked, “Alfred Gaskill is on a marble slab, so we know he is now out of the picture, Harry is downstairs so that leaves Bobby Franks and Brian Gaskill to find.”

“You think the story about Bobby Franks meeting a grisly end in Northern Ireland is dubious?” Tarbett asked.

“The more I look at all this” Jack waved his hand across the boards, “The more I reckon the story about Bobby’s fate is a load of old paddy whack.”

As the conversation continued, Eisley reached across to answer the ringing telephone on the table in front of him.

“Right you are, cheers” Eisley then called before hanging up, “Harry Franks is being unloaded downstairs now Guv” he then announced.

“Right, let’s get him booked in and put in an interview room” Jack declared, “and I want an all-points bulletin put out, all divisions for Barry and Bobby Franks plus Brian Gaskill and any known associates past or present” he then instructed, “Make sure everyone is supplied with the most recent photos and descriptions we have.”

“You got it Guv” Eisley confirmed.

“Right then, if you will excuse me, it is time to get some answers out of old Flash Harry” Jack then declared before heading off out of the room, allowing Megan to go on ahead of him.

“I love seeing you all commanding at work” Megan remarked as she and Jack made their way down the corridor towards the lifts.

“Why, thank you my love” Jack responded, “How do you think I did in there?” he then asked as the lift doors opened and they proceeded inside.

“Like the consummate professional officer of the law” Megan confirmed with a smile, “I am proud of you.”

“Ow...” Jack almost blushed in reply.

“So, how are you going to conduct your interview?” Megan then asked as the lift doors closed and they began to descend.

“I have the distinctive feeling this will be one of those short, frustrating ‘no comment’ type interviews” Jack confirmed, “Apparently Commander Monroe’s people over at West End Central had pretty much the same from the two goons we nicked back at the hospital.”

“Closing ranks, you think?” Megan asked.

“It would appear so” Jack agreed, “We may be dealing with old school gangland villains here, but the traditional codes of conduct still apply even all these years later.”

Down in the basement level was situated the Custody Suite where two Metropolitan Division officers were escorting Harry Franks in handcuffs from the Prisoner Van

through the main doors and leading him up to the Duty Custody Officer who was sat behind the desk, his pen ready to take down the details.

“Prisoner transfer from West End Central Sir” one of the officers confirmed, “Harold Franks” he then handed across the accompanying paperwork including the custody record up until that point.

“Thank you” the Duty Custody Officer responded, taking the paperwork, and checking it thoroughly before nodding towards two Transport Division officers who duly stepped forward and took over the prisoner, changing the handcuffs over at the same time.

“You are wasting your time boys...” Harry Franks defiantly remarked with a swagger of confidence.

“We will be the judge of that Mr Franks” the Duty Custody Officer responded as he signed off the transfer paperwork and handed the Metropolitan Division officers their copy, “Thank you gents” he then called.

“Sir” the two Metropolitan Division officers confirmed before leaving.

“Right then Mr Franks” the Duty Custody Officer called, “As you have been transferred here from another station and force, the custody record continues as before as does the caution that was issued on your initial arrest.”

“Pfft...” Franks dismissively responded.

“You are reminded that you are still under caution” the Duty Custody Officer then formally continued, “You have the right to remain silent but be warned that anything you do say will be recorded and could be used in evidence, do you understand?”

“Just get me my Brief!” Franks demanded.

“I believe your solicitor is already on the way Mr Franks” the Duty Custody Officer confirmed.

“Good!” Franks replied, “because as soon as he gets here, we can deal with this fiasco and I can be on my way, leaving behind a wad of lawsuits for false arrest!!”

“Is that years of experience talking Mr Franks?” Jack asked as he arrived in the Custody Suite just in time to hear the protestations.

“You don’t impress me” Franks informed him, “You have got nothing, I will be out of here before you have even unwrapped the tape to record the interview.”

“Oh, you are behind the times” Jack responded smugly, “We don’t use cassettes anymore, it’s all digital these days so make sure you smile, because you will be on camera too...”

The rain was absolutely hammering down that evening across South London which meant that Sturgeon's car splashed through the puddles that were rapidly growing along the roadsides before he pulled into a side street and parked up.

Ahead of his car in the beam of the headlights was the back of a number of small buildings, some of the last old structures still standing in the area where rapid redevelopment had wiped out much of what would have been familiar to him decades earlier when he was still a young, uniformed officer.

The door of the elderly car groaned as Sturgeon opened it and the leather of the driver's seat creaked as he got out, pulling his long overcoat over him to ward off the cold squally rain.

Having locked his car, Sturgeon then walked slowly along the cobbled street towards a particular doorway that was only visible in the gloom thanks to a solitary dim lamp mounted above it.

Knocking on the door saw it opened from the inside whereupon a doorman, a broad shouldered and heavily built balding man in a black tuxedo looked out, pondered for a moment, and then nodded and stepped aside to allow Sturgeon to enter.

This was a private drinking club, one of the last old-style Shebeen's left in the city, located in a basement accessed down a flight of stairs from which the sound of conversation could be heard filtering up from below.

Passing through the door at the bottom of the stairs gained entry to a saloon bar, where there was a buzz of relaxed conversation whilst a haze of cigar and cigarette smoke hung in the air.

Sturgeon made directly for the bar where the tall thin greying barman immediately recognised him.

"Ted!" the Barman called, "Haven't seen you in here for a long time. What will it be? The usual?"

"Please Geoff" Sturgeon confirmed as he sat at the bar whereupon the Barman poured the drink and then passed it across, "Cheers."

"So, what brings you back here after all these years?" Geoff asked.

"I am looking for Roger Talbot" Sturgeon explained, "Does he still frequent this salubrious establishment?" he asked.

"He was in earlier" Geoff confirmed, "Try out the back" he then suggested.

"Thanks" Sturgeon responded, passing across a ten-pound note, "Keep the change."

Carrying his drink, Sturgeon made his way through the room towards the rear, looking around and recognising some of the faces around him until he found Talbot, sat in a corner booth.

“Well, well, well, look what the cat dragged in” Talbot remarked with a wry smile before standing up and then warmly shaking Sturgeon's hand “Good to see you, old friend, have a seat.”

“Bob” Sturgeon warmly responded, “I was hoping I would find you here.”

“Do you want another?” Talbot indicated Sturgeon's glass.

“No, its all-right thanks” Sturgeon replied, “I'm in need of a clear head and I am driving.”

“Very wise” Talbot responded.

“I wanted to pick your brains” Sturgeon then continued, rotating his glass in his hand on the table in thought, “I presume you heard about poor old George?” he then asked.

“Aye” Talbot confirmed, “Despite being retired for all these years, the old grapevine still works.”

“Half the coppers retired and active in South London must pass through this place” Sturgeon admitted, looking around.

“We all knew George was dead of course” Talbot continued with a note of sadness, “but still, his body turning up does finally bring it home, put a realisation on it.”

“Yeah...” Sturgeon agreed.

“To George” Talbot then raised his glass with Sturgeon joining in.

“To George and all our absent friends” Sturgeon then responded before they clinked their glasses together and drank.

“So, you mentioned something about picking my brains?” Talbot then remarked to which Sturgeon nodded in confirmation, “Well, if you can find it, blow off the cobwebs and wind it up, pick away.”

“Do you remember the Gaskill Brothers?” Sturgeon asked.

“Oh yes” Talbot confirmed with a scoff, “Pure twenty-four carat villains, the pair of them, plus their various cretinous associates. Did you know that the younger brother Alfred got blown away the other day?”

“Oh yes” Sturgeon confirmed, “I have been working with the Divisional Commander of the Transport Division on the investigation into George's death, digging out the background, rattling a few trees, kicking over some rocks and seeing what crawls out.”

“Jack Regent?” Talbot recalled.

“A very capable young man” Sturgeon confirmed, “dedicated, enthusiastic and determined.”

“Reminds me of a certain couple of young constables that I met many years ago” Talbot remarked to which Sturgeon almost blushed in slight embarrassment.

“Brian Gaskill” Sturgeon then returned to the subject of his original inquiry, “Where does he hang about these days?”

“Ah, the brains of the Gaskill Gang” Talbot recalled, “I haven't seen or heard anything of him in what, fifteen or twenty years now?”

“The whisper is that Brian Gaskill shot his brother” Sturgeon explained, “It appears that the discovery of George's mortal remains and Divisional Commander Regent's digging up of old memories has made a few old faces a bit nervous.”

“Can't say that I am surprised” Talbot admitted, “The reckoning was that the Gaskill Gang were responsible for hundreds of armed blags, snatches and burglaries across the decades but they were only banged up for what, one or two major jobs whilst their minions, a.k.a. the expendable cannon fodder, got sent down for anything that went wrong.”

“So, where does he drink?” Sturgeon then asked, “I know you still keep your ear to the ground on the old manor.”

“His favourite boozer these days would be one in South Norwood, if it still exists” Talbot recalled, “The Dog & Duck I think.”

“I think I know it” Sturgeon confirmed as he wrote down the details.

“Of course, that wasn't his old boozer” Talbot then added, “He used to be a big drinker in the private saloon bar of that pub near Nine Elms shed until they demolished it, err what was it called?”

“The Brooklands Arms” Sturgeon confirmed as in his mind, certain facts began to drop into place.

“Of course, you know the Gaskill's went legit?” Talbot then asked, “Well, on the outside anyway.”

“Bent as nine bob notes, the lot of them” Sturgeon responded.

“They invested in old warehouses, sections of docklands, run down housing, all across the east end of London in the 1970's and through into the 1980's” Talbot explained, “then went on to sell them for a vast profit to developers when the whole area was subsequently redeveloped.”

“And no prizes for guessing where their cash flow came from...” Sturgeon added.

“Did you ever meet their old man, Kenny Gaskill?” Talbot asked.

“I don’t think I ever had the pleasure” Sturgeon tried to recall without success.

“He had an impressive import/export business, formed as the War was coming to an end” Talbot explained, “Kenny Gaskill made a mint on army surplus gear, a lot of it imported from mainland Europe, seeming legit but when you have that many wooden crates passing through pretty much unchecked, there is no telling what else was snuck in alongside the jerry cans and spare engine parts for a Willys Jeep.”

“Packing crates...” Sturgeon began to ponder.

“I can see the cogs whirring from here” Talbot remarked with a knowing smirk.

“What did Kenny Gaskill use to transport his gear around?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Blimey, now you are asking mate” Talbot responded, “He had the use of some of the warehouses in the cellars beneath Waterloo Station” he then recalled, “I reckon he used the railways to import some of it, nice direct freight service from Dover docks straight to Waterloo.”

“A very convenient arrangement” Sturgeon agreed, “What about road transport?”

“Vans I expect, probably ex-Army Bedford’s and Thames Traders I would expect, plenty of them about at the time” Talbot remarked.

“Do you remember that guy George and I found on the parcel platform at Waterloo one night, unconscious alongside two empty ransacked vans?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Wasn’t that the guy with the moody I.D. who vanished from the hospital, never to be seen again?” Talbot recalled.

“That was the guy” Sturgeon confirmed, “We were told he worked for a firm based in the Waterloo Station under crofts, so I am wondering if that firm was Kenny Gaskill’s outfit?”

“As my old grandmother used to say, the shoe fits...” Talbot agreed, “Did we ever find out what was in those empty crates?” he then asked.

“No” Sturgeon recalled, “What paperwork we did find was deliberately vague, but I am willing to bet it was something a tad dodgier than a gearbox for a Jeep.”

“What was the weapon used to shoot Alfred Gaskill?” Talbot asked.

“Luger P08 nine millimetre semi-automatic with more history than the Tower of London” Sturgeon confirmed as he finished his drink, “The very same weapon that got poor old George.”

“Part of an armourers hire and fire collection then” Talbot concluded, “Some of those weapons have been in circulation since the war and still see service to this day.”

“I recall seeing a few of them in action on bank jobs when I was on the Robbery Squad” Sturgeon recalled, “The damage a sawn off can do has to be seen to be believed.”

“I wonder...” Talbot pondered, “Is it possible that the mystery armourers’ stock was brought in by Kenny Gaskill secreted amongst the army surplus gear?”

“Brings them into the country in unmarked crates, covered by moody paperwork and then the contents just happen to go missing just a stones throw away from where Kenny Gaskill has a warehouse facility” Sturgeon remarked, “It fits...”

“If I were you, I would get your friends in the Transport Department to give any of the Gaskill's old haunts and warehouses, if there are any still standing, a thorough spin in the morning” Talbot then suggested.

“Sounds like a good idea my old friend” Sturgeon readily agreed.

Jack looked though the papers on the table in front of him before nodding across towards Lieutenant Chambers sat alongside him who then reached across and pressed the record button on the tape recorder.

After a beep that lasted a few seconds, Jack then began the interview.

“This is a recorded interview with Harold John Franks” Jack announced, “The time is eight thirty p.m. on Thursday 12th October, this interview is taking place in Interview Room Three at the Holborn Office of the National Police Service, Transport Division.”

Franks looked on from the opposite side of the table from the two officers, staring into space intently.

“Present in the room are myself, Divisional Commander Jack Regent, Lieutenant Helen Chambers, the suspect, Harold Franks and his solicitor, Terrance Adams” Jack then confirmed.

“Before we begin” Adams formally called, “I would like it placed on record that my client strenuously denies any wrongdoing and is appalled at being implicated in being involved with any form of criminal activity now or in the past.”

“So noted” Jack responded but it was clear that he was unimpressed by these words, “Mr Franks, it is all right if I call you Mr Franks, isn't it?”

“Hmm, suit yourself...” Franks replied.

“Earlier today you were arrested following a firearms incident” Jack began to ask the questions, “and this was found at the scene” he then produced an evidence bag and placed it in the centre of the table, “For the benefit of the recording, I am showing the suspect exhibit JR1” he then announced, “Do you recognise this?” he then asked.

“Err, it's a gun” Franks sarcastically called.

“Very good” Jack responded, clearly unimpressed, “This firearm was found at the scene of an attempted shooting this morning, an attempted shooting that you perpetuated.”

“Err, my client was a passer-by at the scene and strenuously denies anything to do with any firearms incident” Adams intervened.

“Yeah, whatever” Jack continued, continuing to remain firmly unimpressed, “This gun has a fascinating history; it has been used in multiple firearms incidents over a lengthy period of time dating back to around about 1952.”

“So what?” Franks called.

“Prior to this morning's excitement” Jack continued, unperturbed “this gun was used to shoot dead one Alfred Gaskill in the platform level of Battersea Power Station Tube Station a couple of days ago.”

“Nothing to do with me” Franks confirmed.

“You get a free one on that” Jack reassured him, “We are well aware that someone else was responsible for that particular incident, but I do want to ask you something in relation to that.”

“Go on...” Franks prompted.

“Do you know the name Brian Gaskill?” Jack asked.

“Nope” Franks abruptly responded.

“Are you sure?” Jack asked again, “Because it seems awfully strange that we find you running around taking pot shots at yours truly with a gun that we are ninety nine percent certain was used by Brian Gaskill a couple of days earlier to shoot his own brother.”

“Nothing to do with me Copper...” Franks confirmed, crossing his arms and looking on decidedly unimpressed.

“All right, let's move on, or rather back a bit” Jack continued, referring to his notes, “Quite a lengthy bit actually.”

“This is a farce...” Franks casually dismissed.

“Where were you on the evening of January the 14th, 1963?” Jack then asked.

“What?” Franks responded, a mixture of bewilderment and confusion tinged with a slight sense of worry which he tried his best to hide.

“On the evening in question, four armed men broke into the cash office in the Southwestern offices at London Waterloo Station and made off with a significant amount of money” Jack stated before looking across to Chambers who consulted her notes.

“Fifteen thousand, two hundred and eight seven pounds, fourteen shillings and three pence” Chambers confirmed, “Works out at about three hundred grand plus change in today’s money.”

“You see, there are a number of fascinating facts about this case” Jack then continued, “This gun was one of those used in the robbery, including the shooting of a British Transport Commission Police officer that same evening.”

“Nothing to do with me Copper!!” Franks protested.

“Really?” Jack replied, “Now that is surprising given that approximately two hours after the cash office was raided, you were seen entering the private saloon bar of the Brooklands Arms public house not five hundred yards away from where the Police Officer was shot by one of the gang, and for a bonus, with a young lady who worked in that very same cash office, on your arm.”

“You have got nothing Copper!” Franks responded which indicated to Jack that he was starting to get close to pushing the right buttons.

“We’ve got you” Jack then pointed out, “and the interesting thing is there were four men in that gang on that cold wintry Friday evening and do you know what I think?”

“I am sorry?” Franks responded with fake astonishment, “You wooden top coppers can think?”

“I think, yes I am capable of thinking for your information” Jack calmly confirmed, “That the four men on that raid were you, your younger brother Bobby Franks, Alfred Gaskill and the man in charge, Brian Gaskill” he then declared.

“This is bollocks!!” Franks clearly stated which made it obvious to Jack that he was succeeding in getting him rattled.

“My client strenuously denies...” Evans began.

“...that he has any part in any criminal activity now or in the past, yada, yada, yada” Jack finished the sentence for him with a dismissive tone, “Yeah I got that.”

“I don’t think I like your tone, Divisional Commander” Evans commented.

“Well, that is between you and your psychiatrist, pal” Jack dismissed the comment with the contempt it so overwhelmingly deserved.

Evans' pen made loud scratching noises as he wrote furiously on his yellow paper pad.

"In addition to the armed robbery at the Waterloo Station Cash Office" Jack then continued, "There was a second related robbery incident in Lower Marsh Street near Waterloo Station on the afternoon of Friday February the 1st, 1963 during which a substantial sum of cash was stolen from a railway wages clerk by a gang of five men, four actual armed robbers and a getaway driver."

"Once again..." Evans began to intervene.

"Oh, shut it" Jack coarsely interrupted, "If you disrupt the interview again Mr Evans, I will have you removed from the room, by force, if necessary, is that clear?"

"Yes..." Evans, now somewhat subdued agreed, nodding.

"A modern relook at the evidence suggests that the four men who took part in the actual snatch of the wages" Jack then continued "were almost certainly the same four responsible for the Waterloo Cash Office raid a few weeks earlier whilst the fifth man involved this time was the getaway driver, using a green Ford Thames Trader van, registration number ELT 357."

"What of it?" Franks dismissively replied.

"I just wondered if any of these details rang any bells in your memory there" Jack casually replied, "You see, this particular case was conveniently buried only hours after it happened, and I am willing to bet some people would be very unhappy if they discovered that this particular skeleton had re-emerged from the proverbial closet."

Franks said nothing, just stared intently across the table but Jack was unmoved.

"Where is your brother, Bobby?" Jack then asked to which Franks merely shrugged his shoulders, "I understand you were the brains of the two whilst he was, how do I delicately put this, a bit thick?"

Looking across at Franks, Jack could tell just by the minute movements in his facial expression that he was getting through on some level at last.

"Let's be honest, shall we?" Jack continued, "We both know that brother Bobby is not somewhere in Northern Ireland modelling a concrete overcoat inside a bypass as local legend would have us believe, is he?"

"Hmmm..." was all Franks could respond with which made it clear he did know the truth, but he was not going to betray his own brother.

"Then there was the driver of the green van at the second heist" Jack looked down at his notes, "Assuming he managed to stay sober long enough, I am willing to bet that was your old man driving it, wasn't it?"

“Now, just a damm minute...” Franks began to protest.

“After all these years, finally the pieces are falling into place and at the centre of this puzzle is you, your younger brother, the Gaskill’s with your father and your fancy girl from the Wages Office giving you the gen on where you would find the cash and exactly when to strike at the busiest times of the year to ensure the biggest cash haul possible” Jack then stated.

The look of anger and subtle panic in Franks' face was beginning to bubble up beneath the surface and suddenly it erupted.

“Arrrrgggghhhh!!!” Franks shouted out as he suddenly leapt to his feet in a manner that his age should have made impossible, thrashing out which saw his solicitor smacked in the face and sent crashing to the ground, the table was overturned which landed on top of Jack whilst a swift right hook saw Chambers struck, hitting the back of her head on the wall.

In the ensuing fracas, Jack struggled to get out from under the upturned table as Franks tried to clamber over, smashing the recording machine to pieces before forcing his way out of the door.

Chambers managed to wrestle one of her arms free and strike the alarm strip on the wall just as Franks was pulling open the door.

The loud wailing of the emergency siren quickly brought significant numbers of personnel who came from throughout the building, into the custody suite.

Despite his best efforts, Franks was quickly overwhelmed, forced to the floor face down with his arms held firmly behind his back as restraints were applied.

“Get him out of here!” Eisley ordered on arriving in the interview room corridor and seeing that several officers had now managed to stop and restrain Franks successfully, no longer possessing a threat, “Straight in a cell and I want a full guard on the door!”

“Right, everyone got a piece?” the Custody Sergeant called to which he quickly received confirmation, “On three, one, two, three and lift!”

Eisley watched as Franks was unceremoniously taken away at speed before entering the wrecked interview room where Jack was now just back on his feet whilst the duty medical officer was examining the back of Chambers’ head.

“You really do have a way with people, don’t you Guv?” Eisley remarked.

“You noticed?” Jack responded with a wry smile, “Where is Franks now?” he then asked.

“He has been shown back to his room” Eisley confirmed, “and none to subtly either.”

“Well, Mr Evans” Jack then called across to the somewhat groggy looking solicitor who had now managed to sit up and was nursing quite a headache, “Would you like to converse with your client?”

“Ha, ha!” Evans mockingly responded.

“You all right Chambers?” Jack asked as the medical officer finished with her.

“I’ll live Guv” Chambers gleefully confirmed with a thumbs up before she and Easley put the table back on its feet, “Where did you learn your interview technique?”

“The Guvnor here is most definitely a fully paid-up member of the Frank Burnside school of suspect interrogation” Easley confirmed with a wry smile.

“Right, I suggest we take a break for an hour” Jack then suggested as he checked his watch, “Let the doc administer something to Mr Franks to get him to calm down and then we will try this again.”

Megan was perusing the various photographs and objects on the shelves behind Jack’s desk when he walked in.

“Blimey, what happened to you love?” Megan asked on seeing the slightly bedraggled looking state of him.

“I think Mr Franks took a bit of an exception to my interview technique” Jack admitted as he sat down alongside her and took off his clip-on tie which he casually chucked onto the desk in front of him, “Must have been something I said I guess.”

“So, what is the plan now?” Megan asked.

“Try again when he has had a chance to calm down” Jack confirmed “and maybe this time use an interview room where the table is very firmly bolted to the floor.”

“Very wise...” Megan agreed.

“Oh...” Jack then remarked as he slumped back in his chair and put his hands over his face, “What am I doing, chasing ghosts?”

“You are doing your duty” Megan reminded him, “Your duty to the Service and to the owner of that helmet over there” she then pointed towards Sergeant Roberts’ uniform helmet sitting on the table nearby.

“Tomorrow morning, that can go home” Jack confirmed to a slightly confused look from Megan for a moment, “Sergeant Roberts’ widow that is, not our place” he then reassured her.

“That’s a relief, I think we already have quite enough old tat of yours in our apartment already” Megan jokingly suggested, “Did you know you left that cast metal 70A plate

thing on the kitchen table for example?”

“Oh, that is where it is, thanks” Jack responded.

“Hey love, I wanted to show you something” Megan then declared, “Sit back, relax and watch this!”

“Err...” Jack responded, completely unaware of where this was leading.

“Here we go, I have been practising this” Megan then declared as she gripped the arms of her motorised wheelchair and began to lift herself up onto her feet to Jack’s amazement.

“What...” Jack began, looking on in astonishment.

“Hold on there” Megan stopped Jack from interrupting before taking a deep breath and then moving forward, unsteadily, one step at a time, making her way slowly across the office to the far wall before leaning one hand against the wall and then turning around.

“Well. I’ll be...” Jack remarked in amazement.

“Tada!” Megan called with a smile, “First time I have managed more than two steps since some clumsy klutz dropped a twenty-ton girder on my legs one afternoon, ironically in this very building.”

“That’s just fantastic!” Jack remarked but then quickly stepped forward as Megan stumbled and nearly fell to the floor where he caught her just in time.

“Whoa...” Megan responded, “I need to practice a bit more, but I thought I would try and impress you.”

“Believe me my love I am seriously impressed” Jack confirmed with a huge smile as he helped Megan back to her chair again, “Perhaps one step at a time though?”

“Yeah, perhaps you are right” Megan admitted as she sat back down, “I just thought you needed to see an example of how things can happen if you really want it.”

“There is a metaphor here, isn’t there?” Jack then ventured.

“Well, of course there is” Megan confirmed with a smile, “If you put your mind to it, anything is possible, now get down there, drag that scumbag back into an interview room and get him talking like a canary” she then instructed.

“Yes Ma’am!” Jack responded with a salute and a smile.

“I’ll head home” Megan then confirmed, “Mos is sorting out some transport for me and I will see you when you get home” she then called, “Now, go get em...”

The office had the look of having been abandoned for many years, the elderly Bakelite telephone on the desk, the thin layer of dust over everything and the manual typewriter over on the side all testament to this being of a completely different and, for many, a long forgotten era.

For Brian Gaskill, there was a lot of family history here and it was always to this building that he often returned whenever he was seeking refuge, a place to recuperate and plan or, as per that evening, locate some essential items.

A brass nameplate on the desk had a green section of old manually punched Dymo tape label peeling off it, the label read Brian Gaskill but beneath it was the name of his late father whose business empire was once run from that office many decades earlier.

Sitting at the old wooden desk with just the dim light of the lamp nearby and some filtered illumination from a streetlight outside the window, Brian instinctively reached for the bottom drawer to his left and took out a bottle of finest single malt whisky and a glass whereupon he poured himself a drink.

As he savoured the drink, Brian looked across at the photograph on the desk, showing him, his brother Alfred and their father, standing in front of a van sometime in the late 1950's judging by the clothing and the vehicle, some of which could just be seen showing the sign written name of the family firm and a Westminster prefixed four-digit telephone number down the side.

After giving the photograph some thought for a few moments, Brian then checked his watch before picking up the telephone and dialling a number.

"It's me" he gruffly declared as soon as the call was answered, the background sound of a busy public place of some kind clearly audible over the line, "Eleven o'clock tomorrow, usual place, we finish this" he then declared before hanging up again and then finishing his drink, raising his glass to the photograph for a moment.

"Let's keep it in the family, eh Dad?" he then called before commencing a hearty laugh that echoed throughout the empty building.

"All right" Jack called to the Duty Custody Officer as they stood outside the cell door, "Open it up" he instructed.

With a slight hesitation, the Duty Custody Officer duly produced the keys and proceeded to check through the flap before unlocking the door and opening it, allowing Jack to step inside.

"Good evening, Mr Franks" Jack casually called, "I understand you have consulted with your solicitor so, are you up for trying again?" he then asked.

Franks, lying on his back on the bed, rubbed his face with his hands for a few moments, let out a sigh and then sat up.

“All right” Franks confirmed, “Sorry about earlier” he then stated, “I’ll talk.”

“Right then” Jack declared, clapping his hands together, “Alec, have Mr Franks escorted to Interview Room Number Two, alert his Brief to join us and seem if you can rustle us up some decent coffee, not that machine muck” he then instructed.

“Aye Sir” Alec, the Duty Custody Officer confirmed before heading off to carry out his tasks.

A few moments later, Jack stepped aside as two officers arrived to escort Franks, still bound in handcuffs out of his cell and back through the Custody Suite towards the interview rooms.

Jack followed closely behind whilst waiting outside the Interview Room waiting for them was Frank’s solicitor Evans and Eisley who had replaced Lieutenant Chambers as the second officer for the interview.

Franks was led around to the far side of the table where at Jack’s silent instruction, the handcuffs were removed and he sat down, joined by Evans on his right.

The Duty Custody Officer duly appeared with a tray of coffee which he put on the table before leaving the room and then Jack and Eisley sat down as the door was closed.

“Mr Evans, before we begin” Jack formerly called, “Are you and your client in agreement that we consider the previous interview null and void and that we start this again from scratch?”

“On behalf of my client, I can confirm we are happy to co-operate and consider the previous interview to be invalid” Evans formally confirmed.

“So noted” Jack confirmed, “In which case, let us begin” he then nodded across to Eisley who reached over and started the recorder.

“This is a recorded interview” Eisley did the formal introduction this time around, “The time is nine forty-five p.m. on Thursday the twelfth of October, this interview is taking place in Interview Room Two at the Holborn Office of the National Police Service, Transport Division.”

Looking across the table at Evans and Franks, their posture and general attitude appeared far more relaxed and potentially co-operative compared with the first attempt at the interview over an hour earlier.

“Present in the room are Divisional Commander Jack Regent, myself, Deputy Divisional Commander Massimo Eisley, the suspect, Harold Franks and his solicitor Terrance Evans” Eisley then concluded the formal introduction.

“Mr Franks” Jack then called, “We are investigating a number of incidents that have taken place over the course of many years stretching back to January of 1963 and leading up to earlier this morning, quite a long stretch of time.”

“That it is” Franks admitted.

“Let me just summarise the events in question” Jack then continued, consulting his extensive notes, “The first incident is an armed robbery on the cash office in the South Western Offices of Waterloo Station, London on Friday the fourteenth of January 1963 in which four men made off with a considerable sum of cash.”

Franks merely listened whilst Evans resumed his note taking, starting afresh as his previous notes were destroyed in the fracas that abruptly terminated the previous interview.

“During the course of the events that evening, a locomotive crew were held at gunpoint by the gang, their locomotive hijacked as far as just south of Vauxhall Station and then subsequently a British Transport Commission Police officer, Sergeant George Roberts was shot dead in the grounds of Nine Elms Locomotive Depot, his body subsequently hidden where it remained undiscovered until a few days ago” Jack summarised.

The look on Franks’ face as the details were being read out, you could see he was replaying the events of that night from his point of view in his mind.

“Neither the four gang members or anyone associated with them were ever identified or arrested, and the money was never recovered” Jack then added before looking across at Easley who took over the summary statements.

“The next incident occurred a few weeks later on the afternoon of Friday the first of February 1963” Easley read from his notes, “at 15:27 p.m. a gang of five armed men held up a wages clerk from the British Railways South Western Division Wages Office at Waterloo in Lower Marsh Street, four attackers and a getaway driver in a green Ford Thames van, again none of the gang were ever identified or arrested and neither the getaway vehicle or any of the money was ever seen again.”

“Aside from the general descriptions from eyewitnesses of those involved, the comparatively short time between the two incidents and the fact both targets of the gang involved railway related cash in very significant amounts” Jack then carried on, “another connection is this” he then produced the evidence bag again containing the firearm and placed it on the table, “For the benefit of the recording, I am showing the suspect Exhibit JR1, a 1940’s vintage German made Luger P08 nine millimetre semi-automatic pistol.”

Franks leaned forward slightly to take another look at it before sitting back again in his seat and taking a gulp of coffee.

“This firearm has been positively identified by our Ballistics Service as having been used in dozens of recorded incidents since the mid 1950’s, including the two armed robberies we have just mentioned, the shooting of Sergeant George Roberts and,

bringing the story right up to date, the killing of one Alfred Gaskill in Battersea Power Station Underground Station a few days ago” Jack continued.

“It was recovered at the scene of an attempted shooting earlier this morning” Easley then added, “the same scene that the suspect seated here was arrested at.”

“This firearm” Jack picked up the evidence bag and looked at it for a moment before replacing it back on the table, “has so much history to it that the Museum of London could probably put it on display as a classic artefact of old South London criminality.”

“Okay...” Franks quietly responded before taking another gulp of coffee, letting out a sigh and then looking straight across at the two officers, “It’s a pool gun, from an armourer, supplied for a specific job and then returned. It used to happen all the time in the old days.”

“Who is the armourer?” Jack then asked.

Franks was silent for a few moments as he considered his options at this point before shaking his head.

“Ah, to hell with it” he then declared, “I am too old for all this now, if I talk and the past catches up with me, it will be a welcome end to my misery.”

“I am all ears Mr Franks” Jack then prompted.

“Originally, one of the most prominent go-to armourers in South London was a guy called Kenny Gaskill” Franks then admitted, “He had a legitimate import and export business running out of warehouses, old factories, that sort of place, but he also had a nice little side line in guns, explosives for safe crackers, clean getaway vehicles, tools, equipment, anything you needed for a job, no questions asked and strictly cash only.”

“Kenny Gaskill” Jack noted the name, “Any relation to Brian and Alfred Gaskill by any chance?” he then asked.

“Brian and Alfred were his two sons, apprentices of the family business you might say” Franks confirmed, “I went to school with them, Alfred was the quiet one who got the job done, Brian was the hard bastard, harder than his dad and that is saying something.”

“The January 1963 Waterloo Cash Office raid” Jack then continued, “Four men on the job, who were they?” he then asked.

“Brian and Alfred Gaskill, myself and my younger brother Bobby” Franks then admitted with some slight reluctance, “Brian was the leader, his brother was the brawn, Bobby and I were on the team to make up the numbers and return the favour for the gen on when and where the cash was going to be up for grabs, targeting when the haul would be at its largest.”

“Christmas and New Year overtime on the wages snatch and the holiday period revenue on the cash office robbery, neat” Easley summarised.

“So, who was the inside man?” Jack then asked, “Somebody had knowledge of the railways although there were a few gaps, as the sudden grinding halt you came to just south of Vauxhall duly demonstrated.”

“My dad, Barry Franks” Franks admitted, “He was a drunk, a lead swinger and a waste of space, bounced from position to position in the railways over a period of forty years as they could not get rid of him because he had enough dirt to disgrace certain high up people, at the same time he also got to know certain pieces of information which came in useful to anyone who needed to plan a nice easy cash robbery.”

“So, he would have known how to drive a steam locomotive, in particular a Southern Region one but not necessarily have known about the new-fangled AWS system that resulted in the emergency brake application” Jack summarised.

“I was the driver” Franks then admitted, “I had picked up certain things about handling them big steamy monsters over the years being around the railways with my father and he filled in the rest from what he knew.”

“The car was a decoy” Jack then concluded, “Your car, a silver Mk II Jaguar saloon which had been reported stolen a few days before, thereby providing you with an alibi because there is no way anyone would suspect a professional gang of armed robbers to use one of their members own motors.”

“It was always the plan to head towards the car but then double back into the station and take the light engine that was booked to be in the parcels bay” Franks explained, “The trouble was with the severe winter, the trains were delayed all over the place which is what saw us take that express loco instead, complete with its crew.”

“Then a couple of hours later you waltz into the Brooklands Arms with a pretty girl from the Waterloo Wages Office on your arm” Jack summarised, “In a taxi, which was noted by eyewitness as of course your car had been ‘stolen’ and then headed out the back into the private saloon where your father was waiting.”

“That was the agreed meeting point” Franks confirmed, “Two hours after the job, we all were to meet in the private bar and share out the loot, even shares between the five of us.”

“But something went wrong beyond the emergency brake application south of Vauxhall, didn’t it?” Jack then asked.

“We headed off across the tracks, being careful to not tread on that live rail which I warned them about” Franks continued, “It was obvious from the way all the signals reverted to red suddenly and every train came to an emergency stop in all directions that someone had phoned it in and got an emergency line block which meant that the Old Bill were probably onto us.”

“So, all was going to plan until the emergency brake application” Jack ventured.

“Yes...” Franks confirmed.

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“Still red mate” Tim, the fireman on the locomotive called whereupon, with the gang still looking on, weapons drawn, Geoff, the driver began to apply the brake and slow down.

At that point, Brian Gaskill looked out of the side of the cab at the station that was now coming into view as the tender reached the platform ramp and noticed something moving in the shadows.

“Filth!” his brother, Alfred Gaskill then called, waving his gun wildly outwards.

“Keep going!” Brian Gaskill ordered as he checked for himself and confirmed that there were indeed Police waiting on the platform for them to arrive.

“We have to stop; the signal is red!” Geoff protested, pointing ahead at the red light visible on top of the gantry at the far end of the platform which was when the warning horn for the Advanced Warning System sounded in the cab, the audio warning for the crew of the signal aspect ahead.

It did not matter what the gang did now, there was no way that either Geoff or Tim were going to let the locomotive pass that signal at danger, the result could be a catastrophic accident, a derailment or worst of all, a collision with another train ahead, better to be shot than to proceed and risk disaster.

The locomotive continued to slow to almost walking pace which was when the Police officers emerged and approached.

“GET BACK!” Alfred Gaskill warned, firing off a couple of warning shots in their general direction, forcing the Police officers to run for cover.

Brian Gaskill duly decided to act and with Geoff’s continued refusal to proceed, stuck him across the back of the head and pulled him away from the controls whilst Tim was also quickly restrained.

“Get up here and drive this bastard!” Brian Gaskill then ordered to Harry Franks who handed his weapon to his brother and then took the controls.

“Here we go!” Harry then called as he released the brake and the locomotive began to speed up, heading towards the signal that was still red, only for it to suddenly turn to green, just as the buffers of the tender reached it.

“Ah, that’s got it!” Brian Gaskill called with a sense of great achievement.

“Three, two, one...” Geoff quietly counted down, he knew what was about to happen.

Suddenly there was another warning horn sound from the Automatic Warning System in the cab, only this time with the crew away from the controls, Harry Franks had no

idea how to cancel it, looking all around the cab in search of where the sound was coming on which meant that a few seconds later, the emergency brake was applied and with much screeching and hissing of steam, the locomotive came to an abrupt stop some two hundred yards beyond the south end of Vauxhall Station.

Brian Gaskill scrambled to his feet, having been thrown about the cab by the sudden application of the brakes that even from that comparatively slow speed is enough to send anyone unprepared, tumbling.

“Come on gentlemen” he then called to the rest of the gang as he looked behind them towards Vauxhall Station in the distance where he could see Police officers with torches beginning to head towards them from the platforms, “Time to go.”

With that order, the four gang members quickly clambered down onto the ballast beside the track whilst the loco crew looked on.

“Watch the rails, WATCH THE RAILS!” Harry Franks warned the others just moments before Alfred Franks almost came into contact with the live third rail which if he had touched it would have sent seven hundred and fifty volts of electricity through him, probably resulting in instant death.

“All right, this is your turf young man” Brian Gaskill responded, “You take the lead, you know where you are going.”

“Follow me, watch out for any crap on the ground” Harry Franks confirmed.

With Harry leading, the gang made their way along the six-foot gap between the Up Main Slow and Down Mains Slow lines, which was when the sound of whistles and squealing brakes from several different trains in the area echoed through the cold dark night.

“We had better get a shift on” Harry then warned the others, “It looks like someone has phoned it into the signaller and got the lines blocked.”

“Come on then” Alfred Gaskill encouraged from the back of the group, clearly anxious.

“This way” Harry called, proceeding to lead the gang across the other lines until they reached the cess, the side of the lines up against the brick parapet of the lengthy raised viaduct section of that part of the main line.

Their hard soled boots crunched on the stones of the ballast before they reached the concrete covers of the cable trunking which they then followed along the line at a brisk pace until the misty lights of a signal box appeared in the distance.

“Hold it!” Harry then called to the others, raising his hand as he realised that, despite the dark and misty conditions, there was every chance that the signalmen in the box could possibly see them if they continued any further.

“What’s wrong?” Brian called to the front.

“That’s the signal box that controls the entry into the sheds” Harry explained before looking around him, considering his next move, “Over the wall!” he then called.

Helping each other, the four men clambered over the brick wall and down onto the other side which brought them into the sprawling goods yards just north of the entrance lines into Nine Elms Shed.

“This way and watch your step” Harry then called as he duly led the gang on towards the sheds in the distance.

A short distance ahead, bathed in a cloud of steam, a large express locomotive sat on one of the lines that led away from the shed onto the main line, waiting for the signal to change.

The locomotive crew knew that there was going to be a delay heading out onto the main line and so were resting on the footplate, having some tea from their flasks.

This distraction gave the gang the chance to quickly skip past the locomotive, ducking down as they passed the cab side where the driver briefly looked out but failed to notice the four men passing, the hissing sound of the stationary engine masking their footsteps.

“Over there” Harry then motioned ahead to the outline of the rear of the main loco sheds just visible in the distance, “Keep to the left and stay out of the floodlights” he then instructed.

The others nodded in understanding, but it was clear that whilst Brian Gaskill was keeping cool, calm and collected and Harry was happy being in charge, the other two were getting nervous and cold.

It was then that the distant sound of Winkworth bells could be heard echoing through the misty night, indicating that emergency services were approaching the area in numbers.

“It’s the filth!” Bobby Franks called, almost panicking at the thought of the Police catching up with them.

“Shut it!” Brian abruptly ordered.

“The Old Bill are a bit quick on the draw tonight” Harry then remarked, “Let’s head over towards the coaling tower” he then indicated the tall ghostly structure in the distance, “A little height may give us an advantage.”

“Well, you heard the man, let’s move!” Brian then strongly encouraged the other two and they reluctantly followed him and Harry across the sidings, passing a long line of stored dark silent locomotives, towards the massive coaling stage with its huge tower overhead.

“Climb!” Harry then quietly ushered the others up the ladder that led up one of the giant supporting legs of the structure.

Harry led them up the structure with Brian and Alfred Gaskill swiftly following but his younger brother Bobby was way behind, struggling with the height off the ground and the cold.

“Oh, for Christ’s sake!” Alfred called back behind him towards Bobby, “What the hell are you doing?”

“I, I, I can't...” Bobby stammered but Harry simply reached down, grabbed Bobby by the scruff of the neck and hauled him up.

“Shut it!” Brian then ordered as it became clear that there were two Police Officers approaching, the beams of their hand torches visible below them, getting closer.

Being the leader and with vast experience, Brian silently nodded over towards a large lump of coal lying nearby which Bobby picked up and was going to pass over when Brian duly nodded downwards.

Initially Bobby did not understand until Brian was forced to mouth his order whereupon he nodded in understanding and duly dropped the large lump of coal down towards the ground below.

It was difficult to see in the dark, they just heard the sound of someone shouting a warning just a moment before the large lump of coal smashed into the ground below.

“Split up and scarper” Brian then ordered, “As plan” he then confirmed before he and Alfred duly headed off in one direction with Harry dragging Bobby away in the other.

Harry had dragged his younger brother along the raised walkway and then down the rear flight of stairs back towards ground level before crossing across the yard, using the shadows to keep out of sight.

Looking back as they reached the main shed, Harry could see the two Police Officers in the far distance but there was no sign of either of the Gaskill Brothers anywhere.

“Ah hell, I think the Rozzers have split up” Harry then remarked as he could just make out that one officer was starting to head in their general direction whilst the other seemed to be making off the other way.

“What are we going to do Bruv?” Bobby then asked, clearly nervous about the possibility of being caught.

“Keep calm” Harry reassured him, “We stick to the plan and head around the back of the shed, come on” he then encouraged.

With Harry leading, the brothers snuck through the sheds, ducking between the lines of locomotives and soon reached the opposite side which was when the sound of at

least two gun shots, maybe three, it was hard to tell from the way the ominous noise echoed all around, pierced the air and they both stopped in their tracks.

“George!” came a shout from some distance away.

“Oh hell, what has that idiot done?” Harry then asked.

“What's going on Bruv?” Bobby asked.

“I dread to think” Harry confirmed, “Come on, let’s get the hell out of here before more coppers arrive” he then strongly suggested, “I have a bad feeling about this...”

They quickly skipped across the yard, noting as they glanced behind them that there was no sign of any Police following them now, but from the sounds of Whitworth bells and the lights visible in the far distance, there was considerable and increasing activity over on the east side of the yard.

A small gap in the perimeter wall provided a way out for the two brothers, squeezing through a break in the brickwork and exiting into a small unlit side street on the other side.

There waiting in the dark was a late 1940’s vintage FX3 type black taxi sitting there with its lights and engine off, seemingly parked. It was only as the two men approached it that the engine was started, and the headlights came on before it pulled slowly forward to meet them.

“You took your time darling!” came the sound of a young female voice from the back of the taxi as it drew to a halt alongside the two brothers and the door was opened from the inside.

“We ran into a bit of bother my love” Harry explained as he and Bobby clambered into the back of the cab, placing their bags with the guns, masks and loot on the floor.

The woman in the back of the cab was Julie, the Wages Clerk from Waterloo, dressed to the nines as they used to say in a classy dress that was way over the top for being in the back of a black cab in a South London side street on a cold January night.

“I thought there was something up” Julie confirmed, “Half the coppers in South London rolled up to the main gate in Brooklands Road about twenty minutes ago, so we reckoned you guys would be coming out the back way.”

“Good guess” Harry confirmed, “Drive on” he then called up to the driver whereupon the cab moved off.

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“Who was the cab driver?” Jack asked.

“Uncle Eric” Harry confirmed, “The only honest member of the family I reckon, drove that cab since he left the Royal Air Force in 1948 and kept driving it until he

popped his clogs in about 1967, I think” he then recalled, “He had no part in this, just picking us up and taking us back to Julie's place.”

“So, what happened next?” Jack then asked as he made some more notes.

“We went back to Julie's place, it was a little two bed terrace in Kennington” Harry then continued the story, “The plan being to change our clobber and keep our heads down for an hour or so until we could meet up with the others.”

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Those old Victorian terraced houses were not very soundproof and as Bobby sat downstairs in the living room, looking at the two big holdalls of cash on the floor in front of him, he could hear the giggling and creaking of the floorboards upstairs as Harry and Julie had sex in the bedroom immediately above him.

After a while, the noise died down and soon Harry returned downstairs, buttoning the cuffs of his expensive tailored silk shirt and smirking.

“Having fun brother?” Harry asked.

“Just admiring the money” Bobby admitted.

“Aye, a pretty nice haul” Harry agreed before looking over to the old carriage clock ticking on the mantelpiece nearby, “Get your glad rags on, it's time to go.”

The two men proceeded to push the cash back into the bags and then fasten them shut as Julie came back downstairs having only just got dressed in her finest again.

Waiting outside was their uncle's taxicab which they got into the back of before they drove off once again.

It took about twenty minutes to drive through the cold wet streets of South London before it turned off the Wandsworth Road into Brooklands Road and then left, pulling up outside the Brooklands Arms.

A couple of off duty Nine Elms Shed crew were standing outside the main entrance of the pub having a cigarette when the Franks' brothers and Julie got out of the cab and proceeded inside, looking on with some surprise at seeing Flash Harry, surprised to see him travelling without his posh car whilst the girl he was with appeared familiar to one of them for some reason.

The three proceeded through the public bar and then on into the Private Saloon out the back.

Whilst the usual smoky atmosphere was prevalent in the public bar, it was far more intense in the Private Saloon where Barry Franks and the Gaskill Brothers were sat around a large table that was strewn with empty beer and spirit glasses.

All of them were smoking heavily on cigars which was what made the room so smoky, almost overwhelming the Franks' brothers as they came in and joined them around the table.

“Julie, get the drinks in” Harry then instructed his girl, handing her a couple of ten shilling notes and sending her out, giving her a cheeky slap on the backside as she left, returning to the Public Bar.

As soon as the door was closed, Harry and Bobby put their bags on the table.

“Ah, the fruit of our labours” Brian Gaskill declared with a gleeful smile.

“We erm heard a gunshot or two” Harry then tentatively mentioned, “Something get out of hand?” he then asked.

“Just a little local misunderstanding” Brian casually dismissed the concerns, “One of the coppers we ran into was a local we have had some problems with in the past.”

“Bent copper?” Bobby asked.

“No, quite the opposite” Brian confirmed, “Felt my brother's collar on a couple of occasions, too good for his own good, still he isn't a problem now.”

At that point Julie returned with the drinks and was followed in by another older gentleman in a long fawn overcoat carrying a large attaché case.

“Good evening, everyone” the man called.

“Dad” Brian replied, revealing that the elderly gentleman was their father, Kenny Gaskill.

“Shall we conclude our business?” Kenny then suggested, putting his attaché case on the table and opening it.

At that point the members of the gang duly produced the firearms that they had used on the raid and placed them in the attaché case along with any spare ammunition plus five packs of banknotes from the haul.

“Any trouble?” Kenny then asked as he closed the attaché case again and removed it from the table.

“I, err popped a copper” Alfred then admitted, “Sorry Dad, it had to be done, he knew who I was.”

“You stupid boy” Kenny responded, giving his younger son a clip around the ear, “And as for you” he then looked across at Brian, “You are supposed to be the brains, you were responsible for him.”

“We had no choice Dad” Brian confirmed, “He just came out of nowhere and we had to put him down.”

“It's taken care of Kenny” Barry Franks slurred in response, “There will be no comeback.”

“Which weapon was used?” Kenny asked, not exactly reassured by the word of the habitual alcoholic.

“The Luger” Brian confirmed.

“Right, it may have to be limited on its circulation for a while” Kenny then concluded.

“It shouldn't be a problem; the body has been well hidden” Brian reassured him.

“All right...” Kenny reluctantly responded, “Until next time then, pleasure doing business” he then declared before turning smartly on his heels and leaving the room.

“He's not happy...” Harry remarked which was rather stating the obvious.

“He would have been even less happy if he knew it was really me who shot the copper” Brian then admitted, “Letting him think it was my idiot of a brother here serves a few purposes” he added thoughtfully.

“Time to divvy up” Harry then suggested, “The landlord will be calling last orders any minute.”

“Right, equal split five ways as agreed” Brian confirmed as he began to share out the cash “but nobody goes all spend happy, splashing a lot of cash about, we don't want to attract any unwelcome attention.”

“Have had enough of that for one night” Alfred admitted which earned him a glaring look from his brother and he returned to looking into the bottom of his glass, he knew his place.

“A little bonus for you my dear” Brian then took the last pack of banknotes and shoved it down Julie's ample cleavage with a smirk, “Thank you for being such a good naughty girl.”

“Anytime darling...” Julie responded with a very happy look.

“I'll meet you in the cab” Harry then ushered her away; “I need to talk to the boys for a few minutes, business you understand.”

“Gotcha...” Julie agreed with a wink before leaving them.

“All right, the next job” Brian then announced to the others, “A couple of weeks from now, nice simple wages snatch, biggest pay packets of the year. Who's in?”

“I'm up for some of that” Harry confirmed and then nudged Bobby who by now was somewhat drunk who merely nodded and raised his glass in confirmation.

Alfred Gaskill had no choice to be a part of it, so his agreement was not needed; it was just Barry Franks who was still needed to get on board.

“Railway job again?” Barry asked, the sight of that big wadge of cash now in his hands having the effect of sobering him up a bit and paying more attention.

“Aye” Brian confirmed.

“The lads won’t like it, having their Christmas and New Year overtime pay packets pinched but to hell with the lot of them” Barry then declared, “They have shafted me enough times over the years, but I am still here, so I say we shaft the bastards!”

“All right, but we need a driver” Brian then confirmed, “Dad will supply the gear and a vehicle, but we need a wheelman. Do you think you can stay off the booze long enough to see the job through.”

“For my usual percentage of course” Barry responded, “You know my terms.”

“Then it is agreed then” Brian looked around the table at the others, “The job is on.”

“LAST ORDERS PLEASE!” came the call of the Landlord, his loud voice coming through clearly from the Public Bar.

“Drink up everyone, time to go home and count our winnings!” Brian then called, “and if the law come calling, remember the alibis we all agreed and stick to them.”

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“So, it was Brian Gaskill who shot Sergeant Roberts” Jack concluded to which Harry nodded in agreement.

“Yes” Harry confirmed, “I found out from Alfred a few months later how it actually happened.”

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After splitting up and going their separate ways, the Gaskill brothers had headed towards the eastern side boundary wall, but Brian tripped on an abandoned piece of old rail and fallen whilst Alfred had gone on ahead a short distance before he realised on looking back that his brother was missing in the darkness.

Looking all around, Alfred could not see his brother anywhere but then heard something behind him which caused him to swivel quickly around. Expecting to see Brian, he was shocked to find a police officer approaching.

“Hold it right there mate!” George called, pointing directly at him, “Who are you and what are you doing here?” he then directly asked.

“Err, I am sorry officer” Alfred stammered in response, “I am one of the shed fitters; I was just going for a leak.”

“Have you got any identification on you?” George then asked as he approached and came into the light for the first time which was when he realised that the man stood before him seemed familiar, “I know you, don’t I?” he then remarked.

“Well, I work here so I suppose our paths may have crossed over the years” Alfred tried to act all innocent and thought he was pulling off his deception but to George’s experienced eyes, he was nervous and all over the place.

“Alfred...” George then began to recall as he came up really close to him, “That’s it, Alfred Gaskill, I nicked you for some petty little scam a couple of years ago, you and that brother of yours” he confirmed, “I never forget a face.”

“That’s a shame, copper!” came a voice in the darkness behind George who barely had time to look around before a gunshot rang out that struck the officer in the right-hand side of the head and saw him fall to the ground.

The first shot almost certainly killed George instantly but just for good measure as Brian emerged into the light, the Luger pistol pointed directly at him, he fired a second shot into his heart and a third to the lower torso just to make doubly sure.

In the distance, a voice was heard to shout ‘George!’ which echoed across the Yard.

“Oh hell Brian!” Alfred called out, “You’ve done it now!”

“Shut it!” Brian immediately ordered as he stowed the gun in his coat pocket and then bent down to pick up George’s body, lifting him by the arms and then proceeding to drag him away, “Get his stuff” he then indicated the uniform helmet lying alongside.

Between them, they managed to drag the body across the rough ground and over two rusty sidings to a row of condemned old coal wagons stored nearby.

One of the old four-wheel twelve-ton capacity coal wagons had its side unloading door open and it was through this that the two men managed just about to lift the body up to and then push it through into the wagon interior.

Quickly scrabbling inside the wagon, Brian moved the body into a corner and then proceeded to cover it with lumps of coal, old planks of wood and various bits of debris that had been dumped in the old wagon until it was completely hidden from view.

“Won’t they find it?” Alfred then asked as Brian clambered out of the wagon again and jumped down to the ground.

“It will do for now” Brian explained, “We’ll get Barry Franks to lead the Filth on a merry dance and then dispose of the body somewhere more permanent later on, they won’t find him in there in the dark.”

“If you say so” Alfred responded but he was clearly not so sure.

“Come on, we are nearly there” Brian then pushed Alfred along ahead of him, “Let’s get out of here.”

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“Brian Gaskill was right” Harry confirmed, “Despite an extensive search of the whole loco shed site and the adjacent goods yards and the various outbuildings, the Police never found the body, especially with the dark and bitter cold conditions.”

“So, how did his body wind up underneath the turntable well?” Jack then asked.

“The Old Bill knocked the search on the head about three in the morning to resume at first light” Harry continued to explain, “At about four in the morning, Barry got the Night Shunter Driver to move the wagon over to the turntable which he did, completely unaware of its extra cargo and then when nobody was looking, he tipped the body into the turntable well and stuffed him down a hole before covering it with debris.

“And the next morning when the search resumed” Jack summarised, “Barry Franks duly excised his obligations as the Duty Shed Foreman and managed to have the Police search diverted away from the turntable area just in case.”

“In all my years I would never have guessed he would have remained undiscovered for so long” Harry remarked, “Quite remarkable actually.”

“Given as he seems to be the one who liked a fight” Jack remarked, “Would I be right in thinking that Brian Gaskill did most of the GBH on the Wages Clerk in the other job?”

“Yeah, classic Brian that was” Harry admitted, “If he were to find out I was telling you all this, he would have me taken out in a flash” he then warned, clicking his fingers.

“What happened your brother, young Bobby?” Jack asked, more out of curiosity than anything else.

“He got caught on a botched robbery job, working for the Mannerie Brothers a few years later” Harry confirmed, “He took the Queen’s shilling, grassed on the rest of the gang and then, quite wisely got out of town pretty damm quick.”

“We heard he met a nasty end in a concrete overcoat” Jack remarked.

“A little story we put about to spare the family blushes” Harry confirmed, “Better to think he became a proverbial pillar of the community than a grass.”

“Is he still around?” Jack asked.

“No, supposedly he drank himself to death ten years ago” Harry explained, “It seems he picked up our father’s interest in the consumption of inappropriately large amounts of alcoholic spirits.”

“Ah...” Jack responded, “Where can I find Brian Gaskill?” he then asked, “It would be in your best interests to see him banged up as soon as possible” he suggested.

“He has a few haunts around town, mostly places that were part of his father’s business empire that he inherited on his death” Harry confirmed, “I couldn’t tell you exactly where though.”

“In which case I think we will leave it there for now” Jack gathered up his notes, “My colleague here will take you back to the Custody Suite and book you in for the night.”

“That could wind up being the first peaceful night’s sleep I have had since January 1963” Harry admitted, “I am almost looking forward to it.”

“Right then, Mos?” Jack called across to his Deputy.

“Interview terminated at ten thirty-eight p.m.” Easley confirmed before turning off the recorder.

“Come on then” Jack then encouraged Harry to his feet and escorted him to the door which Easley opened to allow them through.

“No chance of a decent cup of coffee is there?” Harry then asked.

“I’ll see what I can do” Jack agreed, “One thing, how did you know where to find me this morning?” he then asked.

“Gaskill” Harry admitted, “Called me at about six a.m., put the gun in a left luggage locker at Clapham Junction along with where you were going to be and instructions.”

“So, how did he know where I was?” Jack then asked.

“No idea” Harry confirmed, “but one thing is for sure, despite his advancing years, he has a lot of connections and...” he then tailed off as he realised something.

“He dropped you right in it” Jack remarked, “You were set up, lined up for being arrested and here you are.”

“I need a rest...” Harry admitted as they reached the Custody Suite desk.

“I can arrange that” Jack confirmed before turning to the Duty Custody Officer, “All right Alec, Mr Franks here will take a room for the night, make sure he gets a decent breakfast in the morning.”

Sturgeon returned home later that evening and initially choose to relax in his easy chair, idly watching the television with a scotch.

Looking across at the mantelpiece, Sturgeon observed the various silver photo framed images, one of him and his late wife, another of him with George Roberts and a few others of relatives and family all long since lost to history.

He had been on his own for over twenty years now, ever since his wife died but had made the best of it since.

It was as a Police drama was playing on the television, an old repeat of a 1980's series that something occurred to him which saw him put the glass down and get to his feet.

Moving through into the hall, Sturgeon headed up the stairs and then pulled down the attic access steps and headed up.

Pulling a dangling switch turned on the solitary dim bulb which illuminated the attic, revealing a large number of boxes and crates, many of them covered with years of dust and cobwebs.

“Now, where the hell are you?” Sturgeon remarked to himself as he scabbled about, initially finding a box of old Christmas decorations and half an artificial tree but he soon found the box he was looking for.

Lifting the lid off the box revealed the contents to be more of Sturgeon's old memories from his time as a Police Officer, these being files from when he served in the Robbery Squad in the late 1960's to the mid 1970's.

“Come on, where are you?” he then asked as he picked up various old notebooks and flicked through them until he found the one that he was looking for and then tucked it in his pocket before making his way back downstairs again.

Returning to his scotch, Sturgeon turned off the television and sat back down in his chair before taking out the notebook and flicking through it once again, looking for something specific.

“Ah, there you are” he then called before finishing the drink with a smile, “Gotcha...”

“Dear God, that was a long day...” Jack remarked as he collapsed onto his back on the bed alongside Megan who put her book down, looked across and smiled.

“How's Flash Harry?” Megan asked as she rolled over and gave Jack a much need hug.

“Sang like a canary, told me the whole story” Jack confirmed with a very satisfied smile “It was him, his younger brother Bobby and the Gaskill Brothers on the job where George got killed and he has named Brian as the brains and the man who did the shooting.”

“Now all you have to do is find him” Megan remarked to which Jack nodded in agreement.

“Yeah...” Jack confirmed who was so tired he was almost nodding off, still dressed in his uniform.

“So what happens now?” Megan then asked.

“Find Brian Gaskill” Jack replied as his eyelids grew heavier and he then fell asleep.

“Sleep tight my love” Megan remarked as she tucked the blanket up and over him before kissing him gently on the cheek.

As Jack slept, he found himself dreaming of a different time and place...

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Jack found himself driving through the snow-covered streets in a 1950's Riley Pathfinder Police patrol car, turning off the Wandsworth Road into Brooklands Road before pulling up outside the front door of a pub, the Brooklands Arms.

The atmosphere was ethereal with a close surrounding of fog and mist obscuring much of the broader detail of the scene.

Jack got out of the car and as he closed the door, he noticed in the reflection of the windows that he was wearing the contemporary period uniform of a Police Officer, the rank of Chief Inspector as he would have appeared in the early 1960's, complete with the medal ribbons and peaked cap.

Heading towards the door of the pub, he noticed the shadows of Police Officers in the distance outside the main gate of Nine Elms Shed before he went inside.

The public bar inside was busy, a few familiar faces in the form of the younger versions of the train men he had met at the veteran's reunion were at the bar and raised their glasses in acknowledgment.

Instinct saw Jack make his way through to the door into the Private Saloon which he opened and then looked inside.

“Evening officer!” came the call from the group of men in the saloon, the four gang members and Barry Franks sat behind a table with a huge quantity of cash and several firearms.

“Fellas...” Jack responded with a nod of acknowledgement before withdrawing back into the public area and then going over to the bar where two uniformed Police Officers could be seen, sat on bar stools, talking.

“Evening Guv, been busy?” Sturgeon called as Jack joined them.

“That is an understatement” Jack responded as a drink was passed to him which he gratefully accepted.

“So, how are you doing?” Sergeant Roberts asked.

“I got them” Jack confirmed, “The gang consisted of the two Gaskill Brothers and the two Franks Brothers assisted by Barry Franks and a Wages Office Clerk called Julie.”

“Oh, the one with the big...” Sturgeon began to recall.

“Yeah, that one” Jack confirmed.

“Now all I have to do is find Brian Gaskill” Jack concluded.

“He's through there in the Private Saloon” Sturgeon pointed out.

“Trouble is, this is a dream my love” Megan reminded him as she appeared alongside him “and at this very moment you are fast asleep, snoring like the foghorn on the Queen Mary back at our place.”

“Which ironically won't even be built for another thirty odd years” Sturgeon pointed out.

“Don't you just love dreams?” Jack responded.

“Looking good in that uniform by the way love” Megan then complimented Jack on his Police uniform.

“Why thank you my dear” Jack responded.

“It was Brian Gaskill who killed me, wasn't it?” Roberts then asked to which Jack nodded in agreement.

“And I need to find him before he does any more damage” Jack confirmed, “Still, that can wait until the morning, cheers” he raised his glass.

“Cheers” the others responded in kind.

Moments later Jack was in a completely different place, standing alone by the side of the railway line which, despite the thick fog in all directions, he recognised as being the multiple track section of line between Vauxhall Station and Waterloo.

In the background was the sound of trains moving, the whistles of the steam locomotives echoing through the air.

“Why can't I be somewhere warm?” Jack remarked to himself as he watched his breath in the cold air as he exhaled, drift away into the fog.

It was then that a train approached the line Jack was standing adjacent to whereupon he stood back in the correct manner.

There was something different about this train though as it appeared out of the fog, the oil lamps on the front buffer beam swaying as it chuffed towards him.

The locomotive at the front was far older than would have been expected for the 1960's, possibly even pre-war in design and in an ornate green livery outlined in gold leaf edging just visible to Jack as it passed him.

“What the...?” Jack remarked as the train silently glided past him and he noted no crew on the footplate, yet the locomotive was perfectly under control.

Also odd was the coaches that made up its train, they being from a different era, ornate carved wooden bodywork and gold sign writing which Jack was unable to read what it said.

In addition to the lack of any crew on the locomotive, there appeared to be nobody on board the train either, as the four carriages including a large van passed silently by, just a ghostly hissing sound before it disappeared into the distance, the two red tail lamps being the last thing visible, fading into the fog.

“Funny looking train” came a voice from behind Jack, causing him to turn and look back to see George Roberts standing there looking off into the distance where the train had disappeared towards.

“You can say that again...” Jack agreed.

“Maybe that's the key...” Roberts suggested before disappearing into the fog, leaving Jack alone again.

“What am I missing here?” Jack then wondered to himself before slowly walking up the side of the tracks towards Waterloo, heading into the fog.

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“Welcome back love” Megan called as Jack suddenly woke and nearly fell out of bed.

“Oh, I keep having weird dreams” Jack admitted as he sat up, realising he was still in his uniform and as a result feeling a bit embarrassed.

“I thought as much” Megan confirmed, “You were muttering and murmuring all sorts of strange things.”

“Oh, I think I had better get out of this clobber” Jack then admitted as he managed to get to his feet and removed his utility belt and holster and passed it to Megan.

“Fresh pyjamas in the bathroom for you love” Megan confirmed with a smile.

“Cheers love” Jack responded as he headed through to the bathroom.

Running the basin tap, Jack looked up at his reflection in the mirror and his mind wandered back to his dream, but it was all jumbled up in his mind through a combination of tiredness and so much that had happened over the last couple of days.

“Oh Jack, just go to bed” he then remarked to himself with a deep sigh of resignation.

“Is the Guvnor in yet?” Chambers asked as she came into the Major Investigation Room to find only Tarbett there, reading through the interview transcript from the Harry Franks interview the previous evening.

“I think he is probably having a lie in if he had got any sense” Tarbett admitted, “He didn’t leave here until gone eleven last night and after the day he had, I reckon he was probably well and truly cream crackered.”

“The Guvnor?” Eisley remarked as he came into the room, “A lie in? When he has got the game on, he is usually up with the larks as my old grandmother used to say.”

“I don’t even know what a lark looks like” Chambers admitted.

“Any updates?” Eisley then asked, taking a seat and looking though the daily reports on the desk in front of him.

“I did a bit of digging into some of the things Harry Franks talked about in his interview and thus far it all fits” Tarbett confirmed, “I managed to find a sketchy report that seems to corroborate the story that the younger brother Bobby Franks, died about ten years ago of alcohol related health problems, buried in Crawley.”

“That’s one out of the picture” Eisley agreed, “Assuming the report is accurate that is.”

“As far as I can tell, if we take it now as gospel that those five” Tarbett indicated the display board at the front of the room with the principal people involved displayed on it “were responsible for the Waterloo Cash Office raid and the Lower Marsh Street wages snatch, then only two are still alive.”

“Harry Franks who is safely locked up downstairs having his breakfast and the brains and muscle of the outfit, Brian Gaskill” Chambers concluded, “Still very much at large unfortunately.”

“What about those thugs from the hospital incident?” Eisley then asked.

“The dead one dragged out of the river has been positively identified as one Stephen Crowe” Chambers passed across a printed version of the information across, “Twenty one years old, strictly small time villain who, according to an old friend of mine at Bow Road nick, has a record as long as your arm of petty theft, burglary, taking and driving away, handling, etcetera dating back to when he was nine.”

“Starting them young...” Eisley remarked.

“Quite Sir” Chambers agreed, “Word was he was trying to get into a gang, play with the big boys but he was little more than a foot soldier in reality.”

“The other two who have been held at Spicer Street Nick since they were arrested are confirmed as being Wing Chow and Theo Pence, both strictly small-time petty criminals looking for a shot at the big league” Tarbett added, “Best guess is someone needed some muscle, splashed some cash about and hired these three bozos as the requisite cannon fodder.”

“So, they know pretty much nothing which means if they were nicked, Brian Gaskill had nothing to lose if it went pear shaped” Eisley concluded.

“Precisely” Chambers confirmed, “They are appearing in court later today on various assault charges plus a few other crimes that the Metropolitan Division Burglary Squad have been keen to feel their collars on for some time, so they won’t be going anywhere for a few years.”

“Now for the big question” Eisley then declared before taking a deep breath, “Any sign of Brian Gaskill?” he asked.

“He’s gone to ground by the looks of it Sir” Tarbett confirmed, “I have circulated his description in the morning bulletin to every nick and division in Greater London plus all ports and airports but so far, nothing.”

“He’ll pop up somewhere, I am sure of it” Eisley concluded, “And when he does, I want him nicked, alive.”

“Oh, thanks love” Jack responded as Megan handed him a very large mug of black coffee which he gratefully accepted.

“Sleep well?” Megan then asked as she sat down beside him and offered him some toast.

“Lots of dreams” Jack admitted as he proceeded to apply some marmalade to his toast, “Saw a weird train that I have been unable to identify, and it is bugging me.”

“Something to do with the case you are working on?” Megan asked.

“I can’t see how” Jack responded, still deep in thought about it, “It was very old, the formation and the loco don’t fit the early 1960’s, it was like something from before the war in fact.”

“I am sure you will work it out love” Megan then reassured him with a kiss on the cheek for good measure.

“Well, the guys back at the office are on the case, everyone is on the lookout for Brian Gaskill” Jack concluded, “I am sure we will find out which rock he is hiding under before too long.”

“From what I have seen and heard; this Brian Gaskill is a very nasty piece of work” Megan remarked.

“He has more form than the Racing Post” Jack admitted, “Handy with his fists, anyone who got in the way got dealt with somewhat abruptly which seems to have included poor old George Roberts.”

“And his own brother” Megan then reminded him to which Jack nodded in agreement.

“First things first however” Jack then declared as he gulped down the last bit of coffee and then grabbed another bit of toast, “Time to tell George’s widow that she can have him back now.”

“Bit of a grim job” Megan remarked.

“This may make it a little easier” Jack indicated the large box sitting over on the side table which he picked up, “You have anything planned for today?” he then asked.

“Physio appointment at eleven then pop into the office and see if the case papers I have been waiting on for the thick end of three months have finally turned up” Megan confirmed, “You are going to be home at a reasonable hour today, aren’t you?” she then asked, more out of hope than expectation.

“Oh indeed, I hope so” Jack agreed but within, he was not at all sure, “Perhaps it is enough to hope I can get through at least one day without being shot at, gassed, blown up or thrown under a flying table because, I managed all four yesterday.”

“I have to admit, that is a pretty impressive effort, even for a member of your illustrious family” Megan commented with a wry smirk.

“Good grief, that is a lot of locations” Eisley remarked as Chambers handed him a long list of addresses on a continuous print out.

“Every address we can find on the computer linked to the Gaskill family and their empire plus known associates going back fifty odd years” Chambers confirmed, “Compiled thanks to a trawl of local authority records, Land Registry archives and even a dip into MI5's files thanks to Commander Fuller's rather excellent search system.”

“We can't go through all this lot, surely?” Baxter confirmed, as he looked over Eisley's shoulder at the list.

“It is not as bad as it looks though” Chambers then tried to reassure the others, “A fair few of the sites on that list have long since been demolished and redeveloped, others rented out or sold on but that still leaves quite a few properties to check.”

“Time to call in some favours from our friends in the Met I think” Eisley confirmed as he went to reach for the telephone only for it to start ringing just as he put his hand on it.

“Oh...” he then responded, “Perhaps they are calling us?”

The others looked on as Eisley picked up the telephone and answered it.

“Transport Division, Major Investigation Room” Eisley called.

“Mos, it's your boss” Jack called from his car as he was driving through Southeast London.

“Morning Guv” Eisley responded.

“I am on my way to see George Roberts' widow” Jack explained, “Anything come in overnight?” he then asked.

“A very long list of locations connected with the Gaskill’s dating back to the War, probably the first one” Eisley confirmed as he looked at the lengthy printout he was holding up in his other hand, “The surviving goons from the hospital job are still keeping schtum but we have got identifications for them now, strictly small time villains looking to climb the proverbial ladder and well coached in how to say nowt in an official interview.”

“Figures...” Jack confirmed, “and I presume their lawyers were from the top drawer of defence briefs rather than the duty solicitor?” he then asked, somewhat sarcastically.

“Got it in one Guv” Eisley confirmed.

“This stinks, this whole thing stinks” Jack responded, “and I reckon Brian Gaskill is playing us all like a fiddle.”

“I was going to call in a few favours with the Met boys with checking the long list of premises we have come up with” Eisley then continued, “Fortunately quite a few of the places on the list have been wiped off the map decades ago so that shortens the list a bit.”

“Good idea” Jack agreed, “Gaskill must be hiding somewhere in the old family business empire somewhere so if anything comes up as a possibility, I want to know straight away.”

“You got it Guv” Eisley confirmed, “Are you coming into the office?” he then asked.

“Hopefully a bit later once I have finished with Roberts’ widow” Jack replied, “I’ll call you when I am on my way back” he then confirmed.

“Okay Guv, talk to you later” Easley responded before hanging up.

Jack negotiated his way through the early morning traffic around Carshalton and was soon pulling into the quiet little residential street, parking up outside the home of Sergeant Roberts's widow and daughter.

Despite not having to deliver bad news this time, Jack still felt almost as apprehensive as the last time he was there, this time it was because of the box sat on the front passenger seat alongside him.

“Here goes” Jack then remarked to himself as he got out of the car and went around to the other side to retrieve the box.

It was as Jack opened the passenger side door and took the box out that the sound of an old car approaching caused him to look up and smile at the sight of the vintage silver Daimler Conquest pulling to a stop in front of his own car.

“Good morning Divisional Chief Superintendent” Sturgeon called as he got out of the car.

“Ted” Jack responded, “Give me a hand with this will you?” he then asked.

“Yeah sure” Sturgeon agreed, taking the box where the curiosity got the better of him and he took a sneaky peek inside, “Ah...” he then responded as he realised the significance of the contents.

“Special delivery” Jack confirmed before taking the box back and then heading up the path to the front door, “If you wouldn't mind” he then gestured to the doorbell button.

“Of course” Sturgeon confirmed before pressing the bell.

A few moments later the door opened and Roberts' daughter, Janet greeted them.

“Oh, hello” she cheerfully called, “Do come in”.

“Thank you” Jack responded as he and Sturgeon dutifully wiped their feet before proceeding inside.

“Have a seat in the front room, I'll just fetch mother” Janet then called.

“You can tell who her father was” Sturgeon remarked as he and Jack sat down, “The kindness in the voice, that sort of reassurance that she constantly exudes.”

“Hello, you old rascal” Alice called as she came into the room whereupon the two men got up in respect.

“Hello, my dear” Sturgeon responded as he and Alice hugged each other in welcome, “It has been too long.”

“You have always been welcome to pop around for tea you know” Alice informed him “and that invitation extends to you too, young man” she then looked across at Jack.

“Thank you” Jack gratefully responded before bringing the box forward, “I came to bring you this actually, something for the gap on your mantelpiece.”

Alice looked on with a slightly quizzical look as she took the box and then placed it on the coffee table and opened it.

“Oh...” Alice looked into it with a mixture of surprise and delight as she then took out the Police helmet and smiled.

“My fiancée cleaned it up” Jack explained, “Bit of polish and some elbow grease.”

“She's done an excellent job” Alice responded, “Please pass on my compliments.”

“I will” Jack confirmed, “There is also this” he then produced Sergeant Roberts' warrant card and handed it over, “I got a new holder for it, seemed the least we could do.”

“Thank you for this, I really appreciate it” Alice then responded, clearly a little overwhelmed, “It's time for this to be put in its proper place” she then declared before, with Jack helping her, she proceeded to place the helmet and warrant card in their correct and proper place on the mantelpiece before stepping back, looking at it in place and smiling.

“I was wondering, when we have finished here, could I have a word?” Sturgeon discreetly asked Jack to which he nodded in agreement, “I may have something for you.”

“The coroner has released him to us now” Alice then confirmed as Janet returned from the kitchen and also looked at the helmet now taking pride of place on the mantelpiece, “Will we be expecting you two gentlemen at the funeral?”

“Oh yes” Jack confirmed, “Admittedly I feel I have been to a lot of funerals in my short life but this one is just a tad different.”

“It is that” Alice agreed.

Fifteen minutes later, Jack and Sturgeon were returning to their cars.

“Did you manage to get anything out of that old git, Harry Franks?” Sturgeon asked.

“It took a little doing” Jack admitted “but in the end, he told the whole story, Brian Gaskill shot poor old George with his little brother Alfred alongside him.”

“But the gang split up into two pairs when they arrived on site” Sturgeon recalled, “How did he know about it?”

“I get the impression that when old man Gaskill died, Brian took over the family firm and wanted to portray himself as the hardest man in town” Jack then summarised, “He shot his mouth off, probably whilst drunk I would not be surprised.”

“And he is still at large” Sturgeon concluded, “I had a chat with an old friend last night” he then continued, “Word on the street is that Brian Gaskill is still using what remains of his family empire to hide behind.”

“Well, that fits” Jack agreed, “Got any suggestions where we should start looking?” he then asked, “only the guys back at the office have come up with a list of locations as long as your arm.”

“How about we start at his local boozer?” Sturgeon suggested, opening the passenger door of his old car before tossing Jack the keys, “You drive, I think your car...” he looked across at the fully marked patrol car next to them, “...well it is a tad erm obvious.”

“You have a point” Jack agreed as he got in the driving seat.

“Erm, you can drive this, can’t you?” Sturgeon then asked, with a little apprehension at putting his pride and joy in another driver’s hands.

“Are you kidding?” Jack responded as he shut the door and turned the key, “I have every advanced driving qualification there is, besides I once drove a Land Rover across the Falkland Islands when I was nine.”

“Huh?” Sturgeon replied with a confused look.

“Err, long story...” Jack admitted before driving off, “I’ll tell you about it sometime.”

“You really are quite remarkable” Sturgeon commented.

“Thanks” Jack took the compliment, “Where to?” he then asked as they reached the junction onto the main road.

“Bermondsey” Sturgeon indicated to the left, “The dodgy end.”

“Okay Lieutenant” Eisley remarked to Chambers as they headed up the escalator from the Northern Line into the ticket hall, “What are we doing at Waterloo?” he asked.

“Following a hunch Sir” Chambers only partially explained as they passed through the ticket barriers and headed down the passageway leading to the Waterloo Road exit, proceeding down the steps and out through the lower entrance.

“Go on, I am listening” Eisley then prompted as they stood on the pavement in Waterloo Road with the busy London traffic passing them.

“We have pretty much every officer in the Service searching warehouses and office blocks across Greater London which left here still on the to do list” Chambers indicated around them, “This way Sir” she then led the way down the road before turning right into the service road that runs beneath the huge concourse of the main line part of Waterloo Station above them, the sound of modern electric multiple unit trains rumbling back and forth overhead.

“Where are we going?” Eisley asked as she led him to an old door, badly peeling blue paint and the remains of a sign mounted above it now so faded that it was unreadable.

“Walking in the shadow of ghosts” Chambers remarked as she produced a key and with a little difficulty, managed to get the lock open before proceeding inside.

“What is this place?” Eisley asked as he followed Chambers through a dark dusty corridor illuminated by a couple of old light bulbs.

“This part here is the old Waterloo offices of the British Transport Commission Police” Chambers explained as they headed past the derelict offices, many of the doors long since lost or reduced to rotten remains hanging off rusted hinges whilst a few bits of broken furniture, abandoned filing cabinets and patches of damp and decay now dominated what was once a busy and bustling office so many years earlier.

“It's like an abandoned old ship that has been left adrift on the high seas for decades” Eisley remarked as they made their way up the stairs to the next level.

“It is that Sir” Chambers agreed as she consulted some old plans she had brought with her, “This way Sir” she then produced a torch that she turned on and shone it up towards a large metal door ahead, decayed and stained with rust from years of water ingress.

“That's a big door Lieutenant” Eisley commented as he took a look at it.

“I took a look at the plans for the below station levels” Chambers explained as she grappled with the door with some help from Eisley, having to wrench it open as it clearly it had not been touched in years, possibly decades.

The groaning sound was almost deafening in the confining dark space as they managed between them to haul it open.

“Through here is the only accessible entrance I could find into the old storage tunnels and associated passageways, part of which was part of the Gaskill's little empire” Chambers confirmed as she shone a torch into the dark curved brick lined passageway ahead of them.

“I presume there must be more than one way in and out Lieutenant?” Eisley then asked as they both proceeded to walk along the passage, scanning their torches all

around the interior but revealing only decades of dust, debris and broken remains of wooden packing crates.

“There is at least two other entrances probably still accessible” Chambers confirmed as they ducked beneath a low hanging structural beam, “any others were blocked off over the years by construction work, the International Rail terminal, the Jubilee Line extension and various modifications to Waterloo above our heads in the 1980's.”

As if to emphasise her point, another train rumbled over their head, disturbing a fine amount of dust that caused them to cough a bit.

“It's your proverbial rabbit warren down here” Easley remarked as they moved on, reaching another old door which had a sign somewhat askew on it which Chambers brushed the dust off it to reveal the faded remnants of a couple of words.

“What does that say?” Chambers asked as she trained her torch light closely on the sign “Gas... err something.”

“Gaskill Enterprises” Easley then pieced the puzzle together.

“I guess this is the right place then Sir” Chambers confirmed as she forced the old wooden door in, “Probably a back way in I think.”

Unlike the corridor and passageways that they had just passed through, this area was full of stuff, old furniture, lengths of rail and timber, old barrels, and boxes, many of them covered in dust but there were some that showed signs of having been disturbed recently.

“Now we are getting somewhere” Easley confirmed as they made their way through the wreckage and then found some light switches which he tried.

Some of the old lights still worked and provided sufficient illumination for the two officers to dispense with the use of their torches.

“So, this is the hub of a business empire?” Easley dismissively joked on seeing the dusty and dilapidated state of the place.

“Once, long ago” Chambers agreed before looking over towards the side, “There, that looks like an office of some kind” she then indicated.

Moving past the clutter in the corridor brought them into an office which was in a large brick arch section, illuminated by a couple of strip lights, one of which was flickering badly.

“Check the drawers” Easley then indicated the old desk “I'll try the filing cabinets.”

Chambers quickly rifled through the desk drawers, finding little more than old papers and discarded cigar packets whilst Easley struggled with the rusty but still firmly locked filing cabinets.

“You got anything over there Lieutenant?” Eisley asked as his attempts to open the cabinet saw him cut his hand.

“Nothing here Guv” Chambers confirmed.

“In which case, give me a hand with this” Eisley then indicated the filing cabinets.

“There is a knack into getting in these you know” Chambers remarked as she came over, took one look at the first filing cabinet and then administered a hard and swift kick to the bottom drawer which was when it duly fell open just enough to get a metal bar inside and open it the rest of the way.

“..and bingo!” Eisley then remarked on getting the drawer opened and shining the torch inside revealed a large number of newspaper wrapped items, the handle of a gun protruding from one of them.

Chambers knelt and carefully used a pen to push away a section of paper to reveal two more weapons hidden below and then Eisley managed to wrench open another drawer which showed it too was full of firearms and ammunition.

“That's a lot of guns” Chambers remarked as she stood back and looked on.

“That is a bloody awful lot of guns” Eisley readily agreed.

It was almost with a trepidation that Chambers started to open another drawer of the first filing cabinet and tentatively shine her torch inside.

“Are those...?” she began to ask upon seeing the distinctive patterned egg-shaped objects nestling inside.

“Err, grenades” Eisley confirmed, “Yes, they are.”

“Oh hell, and this looks like good old-fashioned explosives to me Sir” Chambers then added as she opened a further drawer, “Perhaps we should get the Bomb Squad down here?” she then suggested.

“A very prudent idea Lieutenant” Eisley readily agreed, “Head upstairs and find some radio signal to call this in” he then ordered, “We better have the Bomb Squad, Ballistics and Armed Response for this little party.”

“Right Sir” Chambers confirmed.

“And see if you get hold of the Guvnor, he will want to see this” Eisley then added, “Meantime, I'll stay here, in case anyone comes calling.”

“Won't be long Sir” Chambers responded before heading off, leaving Eisley alone to look at the drawers which as the Lieutenant's footsteps faded into the distance, he realised that a number of items had been very recently removed judging by the disturbance to the dust and spaces left remaining.

This was worrying because it meant that there were weapons, maybe even explosives missing which in turn brought about the very real possibility that they were out in circulation.

With just the light of his torch, it was difficult for Eisley to judge his surroundings as he stepped back out into what he thought was the main passageway that he had used to come in, however as he looked around, he could tell that somehow, he had taken a wrong turn and was now in a different part of the complex of old abandoned passageways.

The sound of something metallic hitting the brick paved floor made Eisley turn around suddenly to see if anyone was there.

“Lieutenant?” he called out into the dark, his voice echoing all around.

Suddenly from out of the shadows, a figure appeared and struck Eisley across the back of the head, sending him crashing to the ground in amidst the abandoned wreckage of numerous old wooden packing crates.

Lieutenant Chambers was some considerable distance away by that point and like her superior officer, had also taken a wrong turn somewhere and was completely lost in the dark.

Her torch was running out of battery power as evidenced by the glow of its lamp becoming ever increasingly dim with each passing moment, rendering it almost next to useless.

“Come on...” Chambers called to the torch in frustration, shaking and banging it against her side in an attempt to make it shine better, however this had the opposite of her intended effect when it promptly flickered and then gave out altogether.

“Great...” she then remarked to herself in the dark and was about to toss the torch aside in frustration when she became aware of a source of light some distance ahead.

Moving forward carefully as there was plenty of clutter strewn throughout the area which she had to feel her way past, Chambers made her way towards the source of the light which was coming from somewhere up above.

As her eyes became adjusted to the dim conditions, Chambers noticed a set of iron hand holds set into the wall of an access shaft that, looking up she could see led up to a hatch of some kind with a grill set into it, this being the source of the light from, she hoped the outside world above.

The handrails were old and badly rusted but still sufficiently sturdy to support her as she started to climb up the twenty feet or so high brick and concrete lined shaft.

As Chambers approached the top, voices and passing footsteps could be heard above, indistinct but definitely a sign of life unlike the dead and abandoned state of the dark subterranean complex she was trying to find her way out of.

The hatch sealing the top of the shaft was jammed tightly shut and failed to budge as Chambers shoved her shoulder up against it.

“This just isn’t my day...” she remarked to herself but decided to give it one more try.

Passengers waiting on platform 14 of Waterloo Station were suddenly surprised when a hatch cover in the platform surface suddenly opened; slamming onto the platform surface with a loud clang and the head of a dusty uniformed Security Service officer appeared, looking up at them, squinting her eyes in the bright sunshine.

“Erm, where am I?” Chambers asked as she clambered out of the hole and dusted herself down as best as she could.

“Platform fourteen at Waterloo Station” the Southwestern Railway station dispatcher confirmed.

“Thank God for that” Chambers responded before her eyes became adjusted to the light and she had to do a double take at the train sat alongside, “Err, have I emerged in 1963?” she then asked, confused by the sight of the large green Merchant Navy Class express steam locomotive on the front end of a set of immaculately turned-out green carriages.

“You are an odd lot, you Transport coppers” the elderly driver of the locomotive remarked as he looked on from the cab. “No, this is a rail tour, if this were 1963, we would be up to armpits in snow, armed robbers with sawn offs and this old girl” he indicated the locomotive that was simmering away patiently “would be a lot grubbier than this.”

“Hold the thought on the armed robbery bit” Chambers then ominously remarked as she reached for her radio, “Lima Tango Eight Five Nine to Control, urgent message, over.”

“That sounds ominous Tim” the Fireman remarked to the Driver as he joined him alongside to see what was going on.

“You may be right Dave” Tim the Driver agreed.

“Lima Tango Control receiving” came the swift response, “Go ahead Eight Five Nine.”

“I need armed support, the Met’s Firearms boys and the Bomb Squad at Waterloo Station ASAP” Chambers then declared, “Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley and I have discovered a large arms cache hidden in the old chambers beneath the station concourse, possibly connected to a number of firearms incidents dating back to at least 1963.”

“Oh no, not again...” Tim the Driver wryly remarked as he recalled what happened when he was a Fireman back on that cold night in January 1963 just a short distance away from where he and his locomotive were now standing.

“You mean that...?” Dave began to ask.

“Yes, that” Tim confirmed.

“Can you please advise New Scotland Yard of the situation and I need anyone we can spare to clear Waterloo Road, the Underground Station and quite possibly Waterloo Main Line Station itself if this turns out to be anything unstable” Chambers explained.

“All on way” Control confirmed.

“I don’t care if your computer says, yes, no, up, down or do the bloody hokey cokey” Tracy firmly responded as she walked briskly down the corridor with the Home Secretary, “The fact remains we need a *minimum* fifteen percent budget increase across the board nationwide and we need it now!”

“But, but...” the Home Secretary began to stammer as he discovered that Tracy’s reputation for chewing up politicians, regardless of rank or reputation, and spitting them out was more than truly well earned.

“Look” Tracy then stopped abruptly and turned swiftly to look the Home Secretary directly in the eyes, “We never know from one day to the next what is going to metaphorically or indeed sometimes literally land up on our door mat” she tried to explain, “and we can’t have a situation where something big blows up in our faces and we can’t deal with it because one of those penny pinching, pencil pushing, clipboard waving, spreadsheet operating little twerp civil servants you keep locked in the basement over in Marsham Street whinges about their precious fiscal quarter methodologies or whatever buzzword crap they have come up with this week.”

“Well, I think...” the Home Secretary began to respond.

“There you go, you are trying to think” Tracy quickly pointed out, “That is usually the root of where it all starts to go wrong.”

“Maam!” came an urgent sounding call down the corridor which caused her to look up to see one of the Control Room operators heading towards her with a swift pace.

“What’s up?” Tracy asked with a renewed sense of interest.

“Transport Division just discovered a huge stash of arms and explosives hidden in the old chambers underneath Waterloo Station” the Control Room Officer confirmed.

“See what I mean?” Tracy then remarked to the Home Secretary, “You never know.”

“Uh huh...” the Home Secretary nodded in agreement.

“All right, give them whatever they need, make sure they are backed up to the fullest extent” Tracy then instructed, “Has their Divisional Chief been notified?”

“Divisional Commander Regent is apparently out on enquiries, Maam” the Control Room Officer explained, “Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley is on site though as he made the discovery.

“Tell them I am coming down there to have a look for myself” Tracy confirmed, “Have my car outside in two minutes.”

“Right away Maam” the Control Room Officer confirmed before heading off.

“Here” Tracy then handed the files in her hand to the Home Secretary, “See what you can do with this lot, and we will meet again tomorrow, and you had better have some better answers for me otherwise I might just start digging around in some dark corners if you know what I mean?”

“Yes Chief Superintendent” the Home Secretary agreed before heading off himself.

“Spare me...” Tracy remarked to herself with a wry smile as she watched the Home Secretary leave before heading off to the Control Room.

As she entered the Control Room, it definitely seemed busier to her than normal with much chatter over the radio channels being handled by the Control Room Operators and the Duty Supervisor.

“I am about to head down to Waterloo” Tracy declared, “Give me an update guys” she then requested.

“Transport Division have red flashed every available officer down to Waterloo” the Duty Supervisor confirmed “Admittedly that isn't a huge number, Bomb Squad and our own Armed Response Team have been notified and are also on their way to the scene.”

“Who is the officer in charge on site?” Tracy then asked.

“Lima Tango Eight Five Nine, a Lieutenant Chambers called it in, and Deputy Divisional Commander Eisley is reportedly remaining with the discovered arms cache but nobody has heard from him since.”

“Probably no signal in that rabbit warren down there” Tracy remarked, “All right, let Lieutenant Chambers know I am on the way and rustle up whatever we have available in support, I got a feeling about this one...”

“Yes Maam” the Duty Supervisor before Tracy duly turned and left whereupon he looked across at his colleague sat alongside, “The boss has got a feeling...”

“Oh dear...” the other officer wryly agreed.

“Well, there we are” Sturgeon remarked as he and Jack watched from a side street, the frontage of a pub just across the road, “The Four Chestnuts Public House, the last refuge of the scoundrel.”

“I remember when there were loads of pubs like that across London” Jack remarked, “Many of them with a fairly well documented regular clientele of villains.”

“According to my source, this is Brian Gaskill's preferred watering hole since his old one got demolished” Sturgeon confirmed.

Jack went around to the back of the car and opened the boot, taking out a long formal overcoat which he duly put on over his uniform.

“Thirsty?” Jack then asked before leading the way across the road, heading for the pub.

“Yeah, why not?” Sturgeon readily agreed.

Ducking around the passing traffic, they soon reached the pub, one of the few remaining in the city where the trends of the last thirty years had seen so many close their doors for the last time, a process that was accelerated when the pandemic hit a few years earlier.

Heading inside, the bar was busy with a collection of regulars and some curious tourists looking for a glimpse of old London.

“Get a table over there” Sturgeon then suggested, nodding over to near the front window “I'll get them in.”

“Affirmative” Jack agreed before moving over to a vacant table whilst Sturgeon went up to the bar and got a couple of drinks.

As Sturgeon got served at the bar, Jack looked around, subtly noting the various people coming and going all around, trying to casually focus on any interesting conversations that were drifting throughout the bar from amongst the customers.

A couple of minutes later, Sturgeon returned with two drinks which he placed on the table and sat down.

“Don't worry, I know you are on duty” Sturgeon reassured Jack, “There is no alcohol in that drink.”

“Shame...” Jack mockingly responded.

“A far cry from my day when a bottle of Scotch was routinely kept on hand in the desk drawer back at the nick” Sturgeon fondly recalled, “Strictly for medicinal purposes you understand” he then wryly added.

“Of course” Jack agreed, picking up his glass, “Cheers” he then called before taking a sip.

“Whilst I was at the bar, I had a word with an old snout of mine who regularly frequents this establishment” Sturgeon then remarked, “Fortunately because it is still morning, he was still sufficiently sober to be of some use.”

“Anything interesting?” Jack then asked.

“Brian Gaskill has been in a few times over the last week” Sturgeon confirmed, “Apparently he was heard by the barman saying he was due to come here this morning to meet a client.”

“I wonder what that is all about?” Jack remarked.

“Could be anything” Sturgeon admitted, “The thing is, he is due to be here at any time, this could be your best chance of getting him.”

“As good old Shaun Taylor used to say, Keep Em Peeled” Jack suggested.

Over the next fifteen minutes, the two men watched the various comings and goings from the bar, nothing terribly unusual although there were a few individuals that, had he not been incognito, Jack would have happily pulled in for questioning.

“This place is a right den of crooks, isn't it?” Jack remarked.

“Ah, you noticed that?” Sturgeon responded, “Yeah, there is a pretty broad spectrum of local pond life passing through here most of the time” he explained, “Was always a good place for a decent tip off though back in my Robbery Squad days.”

“Hang about...” Jack then quietly remarked, “Behind the bar, over on the right there.”

“Err...” Sturgeon looked towards where Jack had indicated, not far from the door to the toilets, “Oh yes, there's our boy.”

“Right, let's have you” Jack then determinedly remarked as he finished his drink and was about to stand up when Sturgeon restrained him by discreetly grabbing his right forearm.

“Hang on just a minute my young friend” Sturgeon politely warned, “Listen to an old hand at this sort of thing, you can't just go storming in and nicking him, this place would descend into a full-scale riotous punch up in a matter of seconds, he has supporters and friends here.”

“Err, right...” Jack agreed, “Perhaps I better call it in” he then suggested.

“A wise idea” Sturgeon confirmed.

Jack took out his mobile and speed dialled a number which was quickly answered.

“Hello, it’s your boss” Jack then called as soon as his call was answered, being careful to make it appear as if he was just another customer ringing the office in a casual manner, “What’s occurring?”

“Err, Sir?” the Duty Control Room Supervisor at Holborn responded, slightly confused by Jack’s tone and manner over the phone.

“I am in the pub, no it’s not what you think” Jack tried to explain jovially, “I am just having a quite drink with Ted here and erm, catching up with an old friend” he then remarked.

“Okay Sir, I *think* I understand” the Supervisor responded.

“So, what have I missed?” Jack then asked.

“There is a rapidly unfolding situation at Waterloo Station Sir” the Supervisor confirmed, “Lieutenant Chambers has discovered a significant cache of arms and explosives hidden in an old storage place underneath the Station concourse in among all the old tunnels and passageways, there is apparently a link between the location and the business empire of the Gaskill family.”

“I take it that wheels are in motion?” Jack then asked.

“Commander Eisley is on site but seems to be out of communication” the Supervisor explained, “In the meantime we have all the personnel we can muster heading down there right now along with the Bomb Squad and anyone we can borrow from the Metropolitan Division.”

“Sounds like I am missing out on all the fun” Jack concluded “I am seeing something on a related matter” he then continued, “Perhaps you could text me some of the details?”

“Will do Sir” the Supervisor agreed, “Shall I show you as off watch then?” he then asked.

“For the moment, yes” Jack agreed, “I hope not to be too long though, just a little business to take care of first” he only vaguely explained.

“Understood Sir” the Supervisor confirmed, “I will keep you posted.”

“Thanks” Jack responded before hanging up.

“Trouble at the office?” Sturgeon asked, sensing some of what had been said.

“Spot of bother at Waterloo which may need my attention when we are finished here” Jack explained only vaguely, “Don’t worry, they can handle it until I get there, first we need to deal with that” he nodded across the room towards where Gaskill could still be seen on the far side of the bar, smiling, and laughing with some associates.

“This looks promising” Sturgeon then remarked as he and Jack both then noticed Gaskill drink up and grab his coat, shaking the hands of his associates and then preparing to leave.

“Let’s see where he goes” Jack agreed as they both got up and made their way to the main exit whilst Gaskill could be seen heading for a side door.

Stepping out into the busy street, they both immediately turned to the right and headed towards the junction with the side street where the other door that Gaskill was heading for moments earlier was located.

“Looks like we are walking” Sturgeon then remarked as they saw Gaskill emerge, pull his long overcoat tighter around himself before lighting a cigarette and then crossing the street.

“Considering how much he drank just when we were in there, I would hope so” Jack commented, “He is in enough trouble already.”

They both followed Gaskill at a discreet distance as he walked briskly down the main road heading west.

“Do you think he will recognise either of us?” Jack then asked Sturgeon aside.

“I doubt it” Sturgeon reassured him, “The last time I confronted him face to face was forty years and at least five stone less in weight ago.”

“Unfortunately, I am not exactly unknown in this town” Jack then admitted, “As someone once said, my star is in the ascendancy or as Cheers put it...”

“...Everyone knows your name” Sturgeon finished the quote.

“Exactly” Jack agreed, “Hang about” he then cautioned as up ahead, Gaskill had stopped at a pedestrian crossing and was looking up and down at the traffic.

“Where is he going?” Sturgeon then asked.

“Westminster Bridge Road by the looks of it” Jack confirmed as they saw Gaskill proceed across the road via a gap that had opened up in the traffic and reach the other side with a swiftness that defied his advancing age.

“Based on past experience, he is probably armed” Sturgeon then ominously warned, “You carrying?”

“Right here” Jack confirmed, discreetly pulling his overcoat back just enough to let Sturgeon glimpse the six-shot revolver in its belt holster.

“What the hell is that antique?” Sturgeon remarked with a rather scornful look.

“Err, family heirloom” Jack tried to explain.

“We could really use some more eyes” Sturgeon then commented as they continued to follow Gaskill through the crowds along the street, their target strolling confidently and showing no signs of having been alerted to their presence.

“Would be risky getting any uniforms into the area, it might spook him” Jack remarked, “Besides it seems everything is tied up over at Waterloo at the moment.”

“Gaskill’s going to be spitting chips when he finds out his arms stash has been grabbed” Sturgeon then commented.

“Yeah...” Jack grinned in response, “I can’t wait to see the look on his face when he finds out...”

Tracy arrived on the scene at Waterloo Road at the same time as the armour-plated Land Rover of the Bomb Squad, adding to the dozen other Security Service and other emergency service vehicles now parked all up and down the street.

“Lima Tango Control” Lieutenant Chambers called into her radio “Has there been any word from Commander Eisley yet?” she asked as Tracy joined her on the pavement outside the main station entrance.

“No, nothing since you called in” the Control Room over at Holborn confirmed.

“Morning Lieutenant” Tracy called, “What’s the S.P.?”

“Old warehousing beneath the platforms, been abandoned for years or at least so we thought” Chambers explained “Part of it was once part of the business empire of a family called the Gaskill’s, well known villains in the area.”

“The guy your Guvnor is looking for in connection with the Nine Elms case?” Tracy then asked.

“The same Ma'am” Chambers confirmed, “There is all sorts of stuff down there, it seems to be connected with the reported business in wartime army surplus gear that Gaskill's family were into and the source of numerous guns for hire for half the armed blaggers in South London over the decades.”

“Sounds like a job for you” Tracy remarked to Commander Georgie Lewis, the Bomb Squad Chief.

“In which case, I think it is time to let the dog see the rabbit” Lewis agreed.

“Well, I think we have got the area pretty much sealed off so, lead on” Tracy prompted.

Tracy, Lewis and two other Bomb Squad officers duly followed Chambers as she took them to the old doorway that led into the abandoned former Police offices.

“Mind your heads and watch where you step” Chambers warned as she handed out torches to the others, “There is a lot of old debris and detritus in here.”

“Sounds like my apartment...” Lewis wryly responded.

“Guv?” Chambers then shouted ahead of her as they proceeded inside, her voice echoing throughout the maze of corridors and passageways ahead.

“Probably got lost in here somewhere” Tracy suggested as they made their way cautiously through the old Police offices and on to the large metal doorway which led further into the complex of tunnels.

“You could lose an elephant down here” one of the Bomb Squad officers remarked as they continued on, the combination of five torches providing a lot more illumination than just Chambers and Easley had earlier.

“I think all sorts of sins have been hidden down here over the years” Tracy then added.

“I think it is this way” Chambers then gestured ahead as she vaguely recognised where she was, “Guv!” she then called out again but there was still no response.

“Oh, here we go” Lewis then remarked as she noticed a couple of crates ahead of them, “They look like some kind of wartime surplus to me.”

Tracy went off to the left into the old office and was immediately drawn to the filing cabinets where even just a casual look by the light of her torch she could see the large number of firearms contained within.

“Guns, guns, guns...” Tracy remarked as the two Bomb Squad officers found another chamber leading off the office and proceeded ahead to take a closer look.

“Bloody hell!” Lewis responded on seeing the arms cache, “What is all this lot?” she then asked.

“The stock of an armourer to the criminal underworld” Chambers explained, “Guns for hire, literally.”

“Cash only and no questions asked of course” Tracy added from experience.

“Boss!” came a shout from one of the Bomb Squad officers in the next chamber over, “You had better take a look at this lot!”

“Sounds ominous...” Lewis remarked before heading through to the next chamber which by the light of her two officer’s torches she saw their discovery, “Holy crap...” she then uttered in disbelief.

“Bloody hell...” Tracy added, sharing the sentiment as she too came into the chamber and saw the discovery, stacks and stacks of old wooden crates, many of them with old military markings and explosives warnings.”

“German grenades, Swedish explosives, Chinese detonators, US rifles, Gerry cans full of Christ knows what” the Bomb Squad officer summarised, “Fun for the whole family.”

“And very unstable too, this stuff is more than half a century old and not exactly being stored in ideal conditions” Lewis agreed, “What exactly is around this place?” she then asked, her obvious concern growing by the second.

“Beneath our feet is the Northern, Bakerloo and Jubilee Lines” Chambers confirmed, “On the other side of that wall is the Waterloo & City Line and above our head is the platforms and concourse of Waterloo Main Line station.”

“It's lucky there was never a fire down here otherwise half of Southwark would have gone up” Tracy then remarked.

“Ma'am” Lewis turned to Tracy, “I strongly recommend that we put a two-mile exclusion zone around here, get everyone out and treat it the same way we would a wartime UXB site.”

“I'll get on it” Tracy confirmed and duly headed back out.

“Do we have a plan?” Chambers then asked, with some understandable nervousness.

“Yeah, get this lot to a place of safety well away from anyone and blow it all up” Lewis confirmed, “The explosives and the grenades at least.”

“The firearms will need to be checked by Ballistics for any previous history, but the ammunition can probably be disposed of too” Chambers agreed.

It was then that their attention was drawn to the sound of something metallic hitting the floor somewhere ahead of them, further into the deep dark tunnels.

“Guv?” Chambers called out, expecting it to be Eisley returning to them but there was no response.

“Perhaps it was mice?” Lewis suggested.

“Stay here, I'll go and check it out” Chambers then confirmed before heading off into the darkness.

Tracy soon arrived back outside having managed to successfully retrace her steps back to Waterloo Road and as soon as she emerged into the daylight, was on her radio.

“Alpha One to Control, Priority Code Red Urgent” Tracy called, “Advise the Transport guys we need the whole of Waterloo Station, Underground, over ground and wobbling free evacuated to a distance of two miles, all surrounding buildings evacuated, trains stopped, and roads closed, and I want it ninety seconds ago.”

“Guv?” Chambers called again, her voice echoing along the dusty dark corridors but there was still no answer which to her just did not make sense, Eisley had to be down there somewhere.

Suddenly there was a noise off behind and to her left whereupon she was about to turn around when someone emerged from the darkness and grabbed her, putting a hand across her mouth and the barrel of a gun to the side of the head.

“Quiet now copper...” the mystery man whispered, “Do exactly as I say, and you won't get hurt” he confirmed as he swiftly took Chambers' firearm from its holster before pushing her ahead of him, “Let's go.”

Not far away from Waterloo, Jack and Sturgeon were still pursuing Gaskill along Westminster Bridge Road when they suddenly realised that he had disappeared from sight.

“Oh no, where the hell is he?” Jack asked they both looked all around.

The sound of significant numbers of emergency service vehicle sirens filled the air in ever increasing numbers as nearby, the securing and evacuation of Waterloo Station was getting underway.

“He has got to be around here somewhere” Sturgeon remarked as they stood still, “Those sirens may have spooked him” he then suggested.

“The annoying thing is, something is staring me in the face, and I just cannot see it” Jack remarked as he looked around him and up at one of the more distinctive buildings in that road before turning around to see the junction up ahead.

“There's irony” Sturgeon nodded up ahead, “That's Lower Marsh Street up ahead where the second raid happened.”

“The getaway van on that snatch vanished almost as soon as it left the scene” Jack recalled, “In fact probably disappeared right around here somewhere, which just happens to be the point where Gaskill vanished just a few moments ago.”

“Coincidence?” Sturgeon asked.

“One thing I learnt from my stepfather, there is no such thing as coincidence in this job” Jack responded to which Sturgeon nodded in agreement as more emergency service vehicles came screaming down the road, heading for Waterloo, “Come on, Gaskill can wait for now, let's go and see what the excitement is all about.”

“I need everyone to move in an orderly fashion towards the exits, remain calm and follow the instructions of the officers outside, thank you!” Commander Baxter called through a loud hailer as he and a dozen other Transport Division officers ushered the public off the main concourse of Waterloo Station just as Tracy came up the escalators from the Waterloo Road level.

“Come on, come on, let's be having you!” Tracy called, gesturing everyone past her towards the exits.

“Lieutenant Fraser, take a couple of lads and recheck the offices above the concourse, make sure everyone is out” Baxter then ordered as Tracy joined him.

“What's the S.P.?” Tracy asked as she looked around.

“I think we have got pretty much everyone out Ma'am” Baxter confirmed, “All trains are being spun around at Clapham Junction until further notice and the ones stuck in between are being emptied out at Vauxhall, we just need to do a final sweep of the platforms.”

“I'll do that” Tracy confirmed before looking along the concourse and then heading off towards the platforms where the steam hauled charter train was still standing, now empty of its passengers but with its locomotive crew still on board.

At that point Jack emerged from the subway access on the platform and joined her.

“Welcome to the party” Tracy remarked, “Where have you been?” she asked.

“Chasing Gaskill down the road” Jack explained, “Unfortunately I lost him somewhere near Lower Marsh Street” he then admitted.

“Well, whilst you were chasing ghosts, Lieutenant Chambers found enough explosives and ordnance stashed downstairs to send this entire station into orbit” Tracy explained, “It seems your friend Mr Gaskill and the rest of his illustrious family stockpiled quite a bit of army surplus gear in the years after World War Two.”

“Hence why you are kicking everyone out of here” Jack concluded as they walked along the platform and approached the locomotive where the crew were still on the footplate.

“Why are you guys still here?” Tracy asked as she stepped up to the locomotive's cab where the driver and fireman were looking thoroughly relaxed, enjoying a fresh cup of tea.

“Can't leave her here, the boiler would go dry” Tim the driver explained, “Control were going to get us to shunt into the Necropolis siding over there, but they couldn't find the correct instructions in the rulebook apparently.”

“Sorry, what did you say?” Jack asked as he recognised something that Tim had just said.

“Apparently the guys in Control have spent the last half hour sifting through the Sectional Appendix trying to find some place to put us” Tim explained, “Seems some idiot closed down the only steam loco shed around here in 1967...”

“No, the name of the siding” Jack responded.

“Oh, that” Tim replied, “Yes, they were going to shunt us over to the old Necropolis siding over there...”

“Necropolis!!” Jack clicked his fingers in immediate realisation, “That is where I have heard of it!”

“I am sorry, I have not got a clue what you are on about” Tracy had to admit.

“Bear with me” Jack responded as he reached for his radio “Lima Tango One to Lima Tango One Three One, are you there Bill?” he called.

“Receiving you loud and clear Guv” Commander Tarbett confirmed from the Major Investigation Room back at Holborn.

“Sergeant Roberts’ notebook” Jack responded, “Can you confirm that one of the last words written in it was Necropolis?” he asked and then spelt it out phonetically just to make sure.

“That’s correct Sir” Tarbett confirmed, checking the notes on his desk in order to be absolutely certain.

“I need you to look up the Necropolis Railway Company” Jack then requested, “They used to run a funeral train service from Waterloo to Brookwood I think in Surrey up until about 1941 or 1942 when their rolling stock was wrecked by a wartime air raid.”

“Here we go” Tarbett responded as he looked up the details on the computer workstation in front of him, “The London Necropolis Railway Company, 1854 to 1941, operated from a dedicated siding and platform at Waterloo and their offices were located in a building in Westminster Bridge Road.”

“Damm it!” Jack exclaimed, “Ted Sturgeon and I were standing outside that very same building not fifteen minutes ago!”

“I think we have got this sorted” Tracy admitted, “You take a couple of officers and go and get him.”

“With pleasure” Jack confirmed before heading off.

“Determined little chap, isn’t he?” Tim remarked as he looked on from the footplate.

“Isn’t he just” Tracy readily agreed.

“Mike!” Lewis called across the chamber they were checking over to her officer on the other side, “How many do you count?”

“I reckon between fifty and sixty cases of ammunition, twenty cases of explosives and another ten cases of grenades” Mike responded, “Enough to start a small war...”

“We are going to need a bigger van...” Lewis remarked as she took in the enormity of the task facing them.

“NOBODY MOVE!!” came a sudden call which caused Lewis and her team to look around whereupon Chambers returned with a mystery man right behind her, holding her tightly and with a semi-automatic pistol held to the side of her head.

“Okay, take it easy mate” Lewis responded, holding her hands up, “Let’s not do anything rash now.”

“Rash!?!” the man responded in an almost manic manner as he let Chambers go and shoved her sharply forwards before pointing the gun wildly at all of them, “You are trespassing and I want you all out of here, right now.”

“We can’t leave this lot here” Lewis warned as she and Mike helped Chambers back to her feet, “Do you know just how dangerous this little arms dump is?”

“This is the legal property of my employer, and you will leave” the man demanded before waving the gun around, “Now!”

“Be careful mate” Lewis cautioned him, “Fire that thing off in here with all this lot and we all go up.”

“Look, let’s all just calm down, shall we?” Chambers then suggested, “There is no need to do anything rash.”

“Why not?!?” the man manically demanded to know, still waving the gun around indiscriminately, “I am a hard man, a cop killer, I know what I am about!” he declared, almost with a sense of pride.

“In which case, erm...” Chambers responded thoughtfully, “Err Guv, do you want to help us out here?” she then remarked.

“Sure” Eisley called as he emerged from the shadows behind the man and quickly struck him in the back of the legs with the extendable baton he produced with its characteristic sound, the next sound being the impact and then the collapsing to the ground of the mystery man.

“What happened to you Guv?” Chambers then asked as she and Eisley quickly restrained the man on the floor and handcuffed him.

“Got knocked out by this comedian” Eisley explained, “Who the hell are you?” he then asked.

“Allow me” Lewis responded as she knelt down and searched the prisoner who was still grimacing in pain and making all sorts of groaning and complaining, “Ah, here we go!” she then declared on finding a wallet and passing it over.

“Bus pass” Chambers confirmed, “Well, I’ll be damned” she then exclaimed, “Bobby Franks, the missing brother no less.”

“In which case my friend, you are most definitely nicked” Eisley declared.

The Metropolitan Division patrol car screeched to a halt as its driver Lieutenant Commander Esme Brent stopped sharply outside a specific building in Westminster Bridge Road.

“Is this the place Sir?” she then asked as Jack got out of the front passenger side door with two other Metropolitan Division officers joining him from the back of the car.

“Yes, indeed it is” Jack confirmed, “The former head office and main station entrance of the defunct London Necropolis Railway Company and it just happens to be part of the Gaskill property empire to boot.”

“What's the plan Sir?” Brent then asked, “Unfortunately this is all the bodies we can spare” she then admitted.

“You two stay here and watch out for anyone making a run for it” Jack instructed, “Brian Gaskill is a heavily built man in his late seventies.”

“Run?” the other officer responded.

“Don't be fooled” Jack then warned “This guy is very fit for his age and probably armed.”

“Understood Sir” Brent confirmed as she checked her firearm, “So what is your plan?”

“Kick the front door in” Jack then admitted before drawing his own firearm and then unceremoniously striking the door with his boot.

Two strikes of his steel toe capped safety boots and the old wooden door gave way, allowing him inside.

“Good luck Sir” Brent called after him.

“Thanks!” Jack called back before disappearing out of sight inside.

“Right, thank you” Eisley responded over his radio as he walked across the near deserted concourse before reaching Tracy and a number of other officers standing near the west entrance.

“How are we doing?” Tracy asked as he approached.

“Evacuation complete Ma'am” Eisley confirmed, “All Underground lines are suspended through the area and Bomb Disposal are starting work downstairs now.”

“What about those two old comedians on that steam loco down there?” Tracy then indicated down the length of platform where the charter train was still standing, the wisps of steam from the locomotive at the far end just visible in the distance.

“Network Rail Control says they can move off down the line as soon as they get the road” Eisley confirmed.

“All right then, you take charge of things down here” Tracy then commanded, “I am going to get them moving” she then called before heading off towards the platform gate.

Waterloo Station, normally such a busy and bustling place was so unusually quiet that Tracy's footsteps echoed all around the interior of the huge glass overall roof as she strode down the platform until the hissing steam of the locomotive drowned them out as she approached.

“All right guys, apparently you can proceed as soon as you get the road” Tracy called as she came up to the cab side.

“Just as we were about to start up a fresh brew...” Tim the driver wryly responded, “Ah well, better get her ready to go.”

“Where are we going Tim” Alan the fireman asked as he proceeded to shovel coal across to the firebox.

“Can we give you a lift somewhere my dear?” Tim then asked Tracy.

“It all rather depends on where you are going” Tracy responded.

“That's a point, where are we going?” Tim then asked across the footplate.

Jack crept as quietly as he could through the darkened building, listening intently for any signs of life.

Wind whistled through old, cracked windows creating an eerie atmosphere and some of the dusty wooden floorboards creaked beneath his feet.

After a few minutes of effectively tip toeing through the building and finding nothing, Jack was starting to have doubts that there was anyone there at all when a clang of something metallic falling suddenly pierced the air, causing him to swing around.

“Heads up, copper!!!” came a shout from somewhere above which caused Jack to look up just in time to see a large wooden crate falling towards him.

“Whoa!” Jack exclaimed, managing to duck out of the way just in time as the crate crashed into the ground, smashing into pieces.

“I’ll get you next time copper!” Gaskill declared with a maniacal laugh which echoed through the building, “Try this?”

Jack looked up towards the upper balcony above him and caught a glimpse of Gaskill smirking in the shadows as something that he dropped came clattering down through the balcony railings towards him.

“Oh hell...” Jack realised what it was that Gaskill had dropped and quickly ran off into an old side office just as the object, a stun grenade exploded, shattering the windows and showering him with glass, dust and debris.

“It’s just not my day...” Jack remarked to himself as he got up from the floor a few moments later, a pile of broken bits of packing crate, dust and shattered glass sliding off the back of his uniform tunic and landing on the floor.

“Guv?” Brent called from the main entrance on hearing the disturbance inside, “Are you okay?”

“It’s all right!” Jack called back, “He’s in here somewhere, we need backup!”

“Whoa!” Brent was then heard to scream as a number of rapid gunshots pierced the air, forcing her to duck out of the way, landing on the pavement outside as the bullets impacted above her in the building’s masonry.

“Mistake...” Jack remarked to himself as he was able to work out where the shots had come from and proceeded to move quickly and quietly through the building towards the source.

Sure enough, there was Gaskill, skulking behind a pillar on an upper floor, looking down towards the main entrance and smirking.

“Don’t move!” Jack called, training his own firearm on Gaskill who calmly looked to his right and smirked.

“Determined little bastard, aren’t you?” Gaskill responded.

“Drop the gun, put your hands up and we can end this nice and quiet like” Jack determinedly called, “its over.”

“Do you really think you can take me copper?” Gaskill replied, still clearly very confident, “Many have tried, few have succeeded, some died.”

“Come on, you can’t run anymore” Jack urged,

“You think?” Gaskill suddenly opened fire with a second weapon he had hidden in his other hand down in the shadows forcing Jack to dive out of the way.

By the time Jack had got back up again, Gaskill was gone.

“Catch me if you can copper!!” came the taunting call from somewhere in the distance.

“Damm it!” Jack responded, “Lima Tango One to Lima Charlie Four Six One, you still with us lass?” he called into his radio.

“Get the hell back!” Brent’s voice could be heard calling loudly over the radio as she was busy ushering passers-by away from the area as best as she could when Jack called, “Yes Sir, receiving” she then responded, exasperated at the lax attitude of some members of the public who were either blissfully unaware or just totally indifferent to the potential danger of the situation.

“Any word on that backup I asked for?” Jack enquired.

“I have got a team of Armed Support on their way over here now, but the traffic is utter hell at the moment with Waterloo shut off, so they have got out of their van and are now running down Westminster Bridge Road towards me right now” Brent confirmed as she looked to her left and saw Divisional Commander ‘Big Bob’ Thompson and his team of firearms specialists coming towards her.

“I need both the front and side exits of the building sealed off and then a full sweep of the building from basement to roof” Jack then called, “He is in here somewhere and I reckon he is going to be a right bastard to get out!”

“Lima Tango One from Lima Zulu One” Bob called as he indicated to his team of specialist firearms officers to deploy as required “I got all that, moving into position now” he confirmed.

“All right guys, be careful” Jack warned.

“Roger that” Bob formally replied before turning to Brent, “See what you can do about clearing the sightseers and rubber necks away” he then suggested “If this turns into a full-on fire fight, there is no telling where any stray rounds could wind up.”

“You got it” Brent confidently responded.

“Dave. Richard and Ahmed, you take the side entrance” Bob then instructed his team, “Zoe, Gary, you two with me.”

At the main entrance, Bob activated his head piece radio set up so that he could speak leaving his hands free to hold his MP5 semi-automatic firearm.

“Lima Tango One from Lima Zulu One” Bob then called, “Situation please?” he then requested.

“Target is somewhere on the third floor or above” Jack whispered in response, “Only one staircase and a disused lift between floors, I am on the second floor, and I think I can hear movement somewhere above me” he confirmed, “Of course that could just be mice” he then added thoughtfully.

“All received” Bob confirmed, “Stay where you are Lima Tango One, we are rolling to you.”

With a professional and swift movement, Bob led his team in through the door, weapons pointed directly ahead, checking all sides, above and below.

It took them only a minute to swiftly check the rooms on the ground floor and reach the stairs whereupon they headed up.

The first floor was searched as methodically and comprehensively as the ground and again nothing was found so Bob duly led his team up the stairs one more flight to the second floor where they found Jack waiting for them.

“Welcome to the party” Jack responded as Bob and his team joined him.

“What’s the S.P. then?” Bob asked, maintaining a constant watch all around them.

“He is up there somewhere” Jack confirmed, nodding upwards, “At the very least he has a semi-automatic pistol, possibly more and he lobbed a smoke grenade at me about five minutes ago too.”

“Not bad for an old man...” Bob remarked,

“Who?” Jack wryly responded, “Me or him?”

“Good point...” Bob agreed with a smirk, “You got any armour on?” he then asked.

“Of course not” Jack confirmed, “Just old faithful here” he indicated the six shot revolver in his hand.

“In which case, if you don’t mind” Bob then suggested, “Perhaps we should go first?”

“Be my guest” Jack readily agreed.

“Lima Zulu Seven from One” Bob then called into his hands-free radio headpiece, “You still there buddy?” he asked.

“Receiving boss” came the response from one of his team who was positioned downstairs at the other exit from the building.

“Anything happening down there Ricky?” Bob asked.

“More reinforcements have arrived to secure the area Sir” the response came over the radio, “It seems that the Waterloo evacuation is complete, so we are next on the list of problems this afternoon.”

“Lima Zulu One from Lima Charlie Four Six One” Brent then called over the radio.

“Go ahead” Bob responded.

“We have got the place buttoned up tight as a drum down here Sir” Brent confirmed as she waved another van load of arriving officers over to the left so that they were out of harm’s way, “India Nine Nine is also on her way over and should be overhead any minute now” she added, referring to the official call sign for the Metropolitan Division’s helicopter unit.

“Roger that” Bob confirmed before turning to Jack and his team, “Okay, let’s do this” he then declared before leading them up the stairs to the next floor.

Jack followed Bob and his team as they made their way methodically through the building, floor by floor until they reached the top floor whereupon, because of the more complex nature of the layout, Bob split his team up and they proceeded off in opposite directions whilst Jack remained at the top of the stairs, looking around with an understandable sense of frustration.

“Report” Bob called into his radio as he returned to Jack.

“Negative here Sir” the response quickly came.

“He can't have just vanished” Jack exclaimed, clearly frustrated.

“Canny old lag this one” Bob remarked.

“India Nine Nine from Lima Tango One” Jack then called.

“India Nine Nine” the observer in the Metropolitan Division helicopter, hovering above the scene responded, “Go ahead Lima Tango One.”

“We are drawing a blank in here” Jack explained, “Is there any sign of any activity on the roof?” he asked.

“That's a negative Lima Tango One” the Observer confirmed, rechecking the scene below through both the screens showing the live feeds from the cameras mounted beneath the helicopter plus a good old-fashioned pair of manual binoculars, “Not so much as a pigeon stirring down there.”

“All right, we will sweep the building again from the top back down to the bottom” Bob then declared.

“Check the lift shafts” Jack then advised, “He may be a pensioner, but he is still surprisingly agile.”

“Roger that” Bob confirmed, “Okay team, let's try this again.”

Jack watched as Bob led his team off on another search of the premises and as they disappeared from view, the interior of the old building falling silent once more.

In the near silence he now found himself in, Jack looked around with a mixture of frustration and resignation when, somewhere off to his left, he heard a creak like an old wooden door.

The sound was only for the briefest of moments, but it was enough to attract his attention, swinging his head around before turning fully towards the direction he thought it came from.

“Lima Zulu One from Lima Tango One” Jack quietly called into the radio, “Any of you guys still on the top floor?” he tentatively asked.

“Negative, we are on the second floor now” Bob confirmed.

“Okay, it was probably nothing” Jack concluded “you keep going; I'll be down in a minute.”

Jack initially relaxed and was about to turn to leave when he heard the creaking noise again.

“This had better not be mice...” Jack remarked to himself as he decided to investigate further after all and moved off, cautiously down a dark passageway.

As he went along the dusty and seemingly forgotten passageway, it got darker and darker until he could barely see anything at all.

Unlike Bob and his team who had their body mounted lights, Jack had nothing to illuminate his way.

The creak, far louder this time occurred again, and Jack was finally able to close in on the source, some sort of old room off to his left that had long since lost its originally intended purpose and become an old storeroom where he could just about make out stacks of old wooden office furniture, long since abandoned and forgotten about.

There was some light in the room from an ornate window set into the wall over on the left but as Jack squinted his eyes, looking around, there was still nothing obvious to him to indicate where the creaking sound had come from.

It was only then that he noticed as his eyes became more accustomed to the light that the decades of dust and debris had been very recently disturbed in the far corner.

Pulling aside an old curtain revealed a door, particularly obscured by the furniture in front of it and as he reached out to touch it, Jack jumped suddenly when it moved, pushed by a gust of wind on the other side and creaked.

“Now we are getting somewhere” Jack remarked to himself as he proceeded to wrench the door open wide, letting in the sunlight which almost dazzled him.

Stepping out into the light, Jack was suddenly forced to duck for cover when a gunshot rang out, the round striking the ornate carved stone pillar only inches away.

By this time, Bob and his team had reached the ground floor and had just exited the building into the street when they all heard the gunshot from somewhere above and behind them.

“India Nine Nine from Lima Zulu one” Bob urgently called “Where the hell did that come from?”

“All units from India Nine Nine” the Observer on board the helicopter called, “I got an elderly IC1 male in a long fawn coat on the railway siding to the rear of the target premises, looks to be carrying a semi-automatic pistol, Lima Tango One is in pursuit.”

“India Nine Nine from Lima Tango Two” Eisley then joined in the conversation, standing on platform 13 at the deserted station as he consulted a map, “Would that be the siding that curves away from the main lines into and out of Waterloo?” he asked.

“That's affirmative Lima Tango Two” the helicopter observer confirmed.

“The Necropolis Siding?” Tracy asked as she came over to join him, having to raise her voice over the sound of the helicopter hovering low overhead.

“That's the one Ma'am” Eisley confirmed.

More gunshots pierced the air which prompted Tracy to draw her own weapon and check it.

“Come on” she then prompted before swiftly heading off towards the platform end ramp.

The Necropolis siding still bore the name of the old funeral train service it once served despite it having ceased to operate back in 1941 and had remained as an active section of track for engineering and rolling stock purposes ever since.

With the reverberation of the helicopter's rotors filling the air, Jack climbed down from the surviving fragmentary remnants of the old platform onto the track bed and looked up to see Gaskill making a run for it towards the main line in the distance.

“STOP!” Jack called, as loudly as he could but was unconvinced Gaskill had heard him until he waved his gun wildly behind him and opened fire, forcing Jack to instinctively duck down even though the shots were way off target, impacting harmlessly in the stone track ballast some metres away.

“I’ll take that as a no then...” Jack then responded as he resumed the pursuit.

Ahead, Gaskill was making his way around the left-hand curve of the Necropolis Siding towards an empty passenger train that was stabled between duties in one of the adjacent electrified sidings.

“Lima Tango One” Jack called over his radio, “Chasing armed suspect along the old Necropolis Siding towards the down slow lines south of Waterloo” he confirmed, “What’s the status of the trains?” he then asked.

“Lima Tango One from Lima Tango Two” Eisley urgently responded as he and Tracy were making their way carefully along the main line tracks beyond the end of Waterloo’s platforms “All traffic stopped due to the weapons cache evacuation, only movement in area is the steam loco running light engine from the special charter train to get it clear but the third rail is still on” he then warned.

“Dam it, I’ve lost him!” Jack then called.

“We are heading across towards you now” Tracy then confirmed.

“Watch your backs” Jack responded as he reached the stabled passenger train, an eight-carriage formation of Class 450 electric multiple unit stock in two tone grey livery, “This guy is armed, trigger happy and very determined.”

“Understood” Tracy replied.

As Jack looked up and down the length of the train, he saw nobody anywhere but then looking up from ground level, he noticed that one of the body side indicator lights located near the top middle of the body side was lit, indicating a door on that carriage was open.

Nothing seemed wrong on that side though, so Jack carefully crossed the track in front of the driving cab to the other side where he discovered the cab access door was open.

“Gotcha...” Jack quietly remarked to himself before holstering his weapon so that his hands were free to hold the vertical handrails and climb up into the cab.

Jack cautiously opened the connecting door in the middle of the cab bulkhead back wall which was already ajar and looked through into the passenger saloon beyond.

The train had been stabled there for some time as the saloon lightning had shut off, leaving only a couple of lights per carriage on, resulting in a gloomy atmosphere within.

Passing through the small First Class section to the first set of passenger doors, Jack looked on ahead down the length of that carriage and as best as he could through into the next.

There was no sign of movement, no sound except for his own breathing and the hum of various electrical systems and heating/ventilation equipment on board the train.

With his firearm trained ahead, Jack proceeded cautiously through the first carriage, stopping when he reached the glass sliding doors that separated that carriage from the flexible connection between the coaches and another identical set of doors beyond.

The sensors above the doors registered his presence and both sets automatically opened.

“The one time you actually don't want those doors to be working properly and they do...” Jack quietly remarked to himself as he stepped through into the second carriage.

Much like the first, the second coach seemed equally dark and deserted.

It was also impossible to see beyond the far end as the large universal toilet cubicle occupied over two thirds of the width of the carriage.

Jack knew there was a risk here as he cautiously walked ahead down the centre aisle, well aware of the cover that the area at the far end of the carriage provided.

Reaching the universal toilet, Jack stood back to one side of the large sliding door before pressing the open button.

With a clank and a hiss of air, the toilet cubicle door slid open, and Jack quickly swung round and pointed his gun inside, only to find it empty.

Turning back to the aisle, Jack was suddenly forced to jump back inside again when a short burst of automatic gunfire rang out, rounds striking the seats and walls.

“You're dead copper!” Gaskill's distinctive voice called from somewhere further back down the carriage, “You just don't know it yet.”

“Well, the day is still young...” Jack quietly remarked to himself as he stayed down just inside the toilet door.

“Come out and show yourself copper!” Gaskill then demanded “I'll make it quick.”

“No thanks” Jack then called back before aiming around the edge of the door, down the interior of the carriage and firing off three shots in quick succession.

“Is that the best you got copper?!?” Gaskill responded.

“I don't know” Jack casually replied, “Why don't you step out here and we could discuss this like gentlemen?” he then suggested.

“Filth!” Gaskill tersely replied.

“Charming...” Jack remarked to himself as he contemplated his next move.

Peering around the corner, Jack saw an opportunity and went for it, diving across to the draught screen on the opposite side of the carriage adjacent to one of the passenger doors.

Gaskill however saw him move and opened fire once more from his position in the vestibule area of the other set of passenger doors towards the other end of the carriage.

The distinctive rat-a-tat-tat sound of the wartime issue Sten gun echoed through the carriage as a barrage of rounds was unleashed, shattering windows, shredding seats and destroying fittings, showering Jack in crumbs of glass as he took cover in the corner, covering his head with his hands as best as he could.

The last few clicks from Gaskill's gun as he repeatedly depressed the trigger saw no rounds fired as his ammunition magazine was empty.

“Finished damaging railway property, have we?” a stern female voice, very familiar to Jack called from behind Gaskill, causing him to swing around to see Tracy and Eisley stood there, weapons drawn and aimed directly at him.

“Hmm...” Gaskill smirked as he looked at his empty weapon and then casually tossed it away.

“All right, you have had your fun” Jack called as he approached from the opposite end of the carriage, his footsteps as he stepped on the thick layer of shattered glass and other debris echoing throughout.

“I have only just begun!” Gaskill then announced, suddenly turning, pulling the emergency egress handle, and quickly barging the door open.

In the blink of an eye and in deference to his age, Gaskill jumped out of the train, down onto the track.

By the time Jack, Tracy and Eisley had scrambled through to the door, Gaskill was already making off along the adjacent siding where ahead of him, and to his understandable surprise, a simmering steam locomotive was stabled.

On the footplate of the steam locomotive, Tim the driver had been in the process of pouring a fresh cup of tea from his flask for himself and Alan his fireman when they heard some noises in the distance.

“What was that?” Tim asked, going over to the mainline side of the cab and looking out across the tracks leading to and from Waterloo Station.

“Detonators?” Alan suggested, referring to the small circular explosive charges used on the railways to signal a hazard, a failed train awaiting recovery or fog.

“Unlikely I would have thought” Tim concluded, “No trains running north of Clapham at the moment.”

“That’s a good point” Alan conceded, “Maybe the boys from the Bomb Squad are making some progress downstairs?” he then suggested as Tim strolled across the cab to the other side to look out there instead.

“Bloody hell!” Tim suddenly exclaimed as he saw in the distance, the numerous shattered windows on the stabled train and a figure making his way along the sidings in their general direction, “Alan, quick, pass me the shovel...”

Jack had no other option other than to continue the pursuit and so he quickly got down, sat on the open door ledge and jumped safely down onto the ballast before giving chase.

“Stop!” Jack called after Gaskill as he ran up the siding after him with Tracy helping Eisley down from the train behind him, “The power is still on, you’ll get yourself killed!”

“Back off copper!” Gaskill called back, waving his handgun vaguely behind him in Jack’s direction but not opening fire.

Instead, he carried on down the siding, coming up alongside the stationary steam locomotive.

“Hey!” a voice suddenly called which caused Gaskill to turn around, “Remember me?”

“What...?” Gaskill began but was suddenly struck down when Tim the Driver emerged from the shadow of the locomotive and smashed the coal shovel across the back of his head.

Gaskill collapsed to the ground, slumped over the rails and fell into unconsciousness just as Jack reached the scene.

“Well, that’s one way to do it” Jack commented as he checked Gaskill and then put the handcuffs on.

“That’s him...” Tim then confirmed as he tossed the coal shovel back up to Alan the fireman, “The gang leader who hijacked our loco back in ’63.”

“Well, well, well...” Jack remarked as he and Eisley hauled the still unconscious Gaskill back up onto his feet as Tracy checked and made safe his weapons, “I think the charge sheet for this old lag is going to make for very interesting reading.”

“All units from Lima Tango Eight Five Nine” Lieutenant Chambers then called over the radio, “Bomb Squad just cleared anything potentially prone to going bang, we can reopen Waterloo topside anytime we like, give it another half hour for the Underground though.”

“Lima Tango Eight Five Nine from Lima Tango One” Jack responded, “We’ve got Gaskill in custody, tell Bob and his lads to stand down and get a company Black

Maria around to the Taxi Road entrance of Waterloo Station” he then requested, looking at Gaskill, “I think it is time to get the gang back together.”

“Control just been on the dog and bone” Tim called down from the footplate of the locomotive, “We can return back to the station as soon as we like so if anyone wants a lift?”

“Sounds like a good idea” Tracy agreed as she clambered up the cab steps before turning around and helping Jack and Eisley to lift Gaskill up onto the footplate whereupon he was unceremoniously dumped in the corner on a pile of coal.

“All aboard!” Jack then declared as he checked around to make sure they had not left anything behind before following Eisley up the cab steps.

“Full house in here” Tim remarked as he returned to the driving controls as the shunt signal ahead changed to show the authorisation to proceed aspect of two white diagonal lights, “All right everyone, anybody not handy with a coal shovel had better stand back out of the way.”

“Oi!” Lieutenant Chambers called, sounding the horn as she tried to drive along the Taxi Road that runs down the east side of Waterloo Station, “Move it will you?”

Despite driving a fully marked Security Service prisoner transport van with the sirens and blue flashing lights in full cry, the traffic that had descended on the Waterloo area had brought near gridlock to the roads.

Finally, the vehicles ahead slowly parted, and Chambers was able to weave her way through before screeching to a stop outside the east entrance to the concourse.

No sooner had the van stopped than Chambers got out and was joined by Bob Thompson and his second in command who had been riding in the back of the vehicle.

“Lieutenant Long” Bob then called to his colleague, “Stay here and make sure laughing boy in there doesn’t go walkies.”

“Yes Sir” Long agreed and duly took up position, guarding the rear doors of the van.

“Let’s do this” Chambers then declared as, with the tall figure of Bob standing well over her in armed escort, she led the way through the entrance and into the station.

There was still a significant presence of Security Service personnel on site among the first members of the public to be allowed back in now that the exclusion zone had been lifted and the first trains had been allowed to proceed beyond Clapham Junction and on into Waterloo as booked.

“Can you see them anywhere Bob?” Chambers asked as they stood in the middle of the main concourse and looked all around.

“Erm, try over there” Bob nodded ahead towards Platform 11 where in the distance; some sort of cloud could be seen rising above the track and venting into the huge overall glass roof of the station.

“Ah...” Chambers responded as they set off and arrived on the platform just in time to witness the Merchant Navy class express passenger steam locomotive coming towards them, tender first amid a cloud of steam before slowing as it approached the buffer stops.

“Yeah, all right Tim, stop her there” Alan, the Fireman called across the cab whereupon the brakes came on and with a mass of hissing, the mighty locomotive came to a stop.

“End of the line, all change!” Tim declared.

“Thanks mate” Jack responded before he, Easley and Tracy duly proceeded to haul Gaskill back to his feet and drag him across the cab footplate towards the door.

“I’ll say this for you Guv, you certainly have a way of doing things in style” Chambers remarked from the platform as she helped with taking Gaskill off the locomotive and onto the platform.

“Urrgh...” Gaskill then groggily murmured as he began to come around.

“Welcome back” Jack sarcastically called, “Come on, your carriage awaits, no pun intended” he then declared whereupon they duly escorted him back through the ticket barriers and across the concourse.

“Clear the way here please, coming through!” Chambers called ahead of them as they made their way through the crowds on the concourse where the approach of several armed Security & Police Service officers was more than enough to encourage everyone to move aside and allow them to pass.

As they reached the exit from the concourse to the Taxi Road where the prisoner van was waiting, a familiar vintage silver Daimler Conquest saloon car pulled up immediately behind.

Sturgeon got out of the drivers’ seat, looked across at Gaskill and smiled.

“I should have known you had something to do with this, you old copper!” Gaskill called.

“Brian, Brian, Brian...” Sturgeon responded as he walked over and came face to face with his old nemesis, “I have just two words to say to you.”

“Huh?” Gaskill dismissively replied.

“You’re nicked!” Sturgeon then responded with aplomb and a big smile of satisfaction.

“Got a surprise for you in the back Ted” Jack then remarked as Gaskill was shown to the rear door of the Prisoner Van which as the doors opened, revealed the final fourth member of the gang sat inside.

“Well, I’ll be dammed!” Sturgeon remarked in disbelief, “Bobby Franks, alive and well” at which point Franks began to cough quite heavily, decades of chain smoking since he was a young man having taken its toll on his health, “Okay, just alive then....”

“A pity you killed your brother” Jack remarked as he helped Gaskill into the back of the van with little subtlety, “We could have had the whole gang together otherwise.”

“You’ll never make it stick!” Gaskill continued to defiantly shout, “See you in hell copper!!”

“Ah, shut it!” Jack responded as he unceremoniously slammed the door shut.

“Very subtle” Sturgeon sarcastically complimented him.

“Subtle is my middle name” Jack replied with a wry smile, “Well, it's David, William actually” he then admitted.

“Nah, you look like a Jack to me mate” Sturgeon responded.

“Right, let's get this lot processed and locked up, shall we?” Jack then declared before looking around with a slightly confused expression, “Err, where is my car?” he then asked.

As head of operations for MI5, it fell to Christopher Dent to deal with the issue that had arisen and it was because of this he found himself in a black taxicab, heading for Holborn.

In his hand was an official file with a security seal on it, a file that had been retrieved from the registry archives at Thames House just minutes after he had received an official notification by telephone from Tracy’s office at New Scotland Yard.

This was no ordinary black taxicab he was travelling in either, in fact it was an official MI5 vehicle that, whilst it spent the day plying for trade as a fully licensed Hackney Carriage, was also used specifically as a trusted vehicle with a discreet, vetted and secure driver whenever senior members of the Service needed to be transported in plain sight without drawing attention.

Because of this secure registered status, Dent’s taxi was allowed straight through the wrought iron gates that guarded the former Tram Subway ramp in Kingsway which was now the secure access to the basement parking area of the Transport Division Headquarters building in High Holborn.

As the taxi came to a stop near the arrivals bay for the Custody Suite, Jack was just getting out of the front passenger seat of the prisoner escort van that had brought the two prisoners over from Waterloo.

“Mr Dent” Jack called on seeing the man from MI5 get out of the taxi, the file ominously in his hand, “Why do I get the feeling you are not just popping in for tea and biccies?” he then asked.

“Whatever gave you that idea?” Dent asked even though he knew full well that getting one past Jack was as near to an impossible a task as it was possible to be.

“Formal suit and tie, official files and a Spook Cab” Jack gestured towards the taxi, “Bit of a giveaway really.”

“Okay, you got me” Dent admitted with a wry smile, “Your fun and games over at Waterloo have triggered a Section Twenty-Seven alert.”

“A what?” Jack responded with some confusion whereupon Dent consulted his notes.

“Apparently you have just felt the collar of one Robert Franks, better known as Bobby?” Dent then asked.

“We have indeed” Jack confirmed, “Come and meet him” he then showed Dent over to the prisoner escort van and then opened the rear door.

“Ah” Dent then responded on seeing the two handcuffed prisoners inside, each accompanied by an armed officer on guard.

“May I introduce you to these two scallywags” Jack announced, “The old boy on the left here nursing a splitting headache after being arrested by a coal shovel is one Brian Gaskill, the other younger member of Mensa on the right here is Bobby Franks.”

“Who the hell are you?” Bobby Franks called from inside the van with a swagger and arrogance.

“The man from the Ministry” Dent coolly responded, unimpressed by Franks’ attitude.

“So, what’s your interest in this guy?” Jack then asked.

“Since 1962, our Mr Franks here has been an asset” Dent explained, “I didn’t know about it either” he then admitted, “It was only when his name came up on your systems that our man at New Scotland Yard called it in and the wheels duly started rolling as it were.”

“You are a GRASS!?!?!?” Gaskill responded, lunging across the width of the van towards Franks only to be held back again by the officers guarding him.

“A man has to make a living Brian...” Franks tried to defend himself.

“You are officially a dead man, maybe not today, not even tomorrow but soon” Gaskill warned, pointing a finger directly at him, “Make peace with whatever gods you worship because you are going straight to hell very soon!”

“Don’t tell me you are claiming him?” Jack then asked, sensing where this might be going and facing the possibility that one of his prisoners was in serious danger of walking away from justice.

“On the contrary” Dent responded which was when Franks’ confident look began to wane considerably, “We are throwing him to the wolves, he is all yours.”

“Okay guys let’s show these two to their rooms” Jack then ordered whereupon half a dozen armed officers came to take the two prisoners out of the van and on into the Custody Suite.

“How does it feel now GRASS?” Gaskill was heard to shout almost manically as he and the now devastated looking Franks were led away, “The clock is ticking you traitor!!”

“Thanks Chris” Jack responded as the prisoners disappeared out of sight, “For a moment there I was worried he was going to walk.”

“A little present for you” Dent then handed Jack the file he had brought with him, “Compliments of the Director General, but from a strictly unofficial source if you know what I mean.”

“I think I get your drift...” Jack agreed.

“Everything we have got on the Lower Marsh Street wages snatch, all the redacted evidence plus details of a number of other connected crimes that were hushed up at the time” Dent explained as Jack opened and then flicked through the extensive and well filled file.

“Blimey” Jack responded, “With this evidence, the three amigos in there will never see the outside of a prison cell ever again” he then admitted.

“As for our relationship with Bobby Franks” Dent then confirmed, “Consider him well and truly burned.”

“Mind you, if Gaskill gets his way, that may be more literal...” Jack then admitted.

“From what I have read, Bobby Franks was a snivelling little shit who was thick as a brick and twice as stupid” Dent commented, “I called Sir Richard and asked him about it, turns out Franks’ recruitment as an informant was even before his time would you believe?”

“Really?” Jack responded, clearly amazed, “I am surprised this file isn’t in Latin on carved stone tablets then if it even predates Sir Richard!”

“Quite” Dent agreed, “Anyway, have fun with that lot, throw the book at them.”

“Oh, I intend to believe me” Jack duly confirmed, “Thanks for this” he then indicated the file.

“My pleasure” Dent confirmed as he turned back towards his taxicab and the driver started the engine, “See you around” he then called before getting in the back and closing the door whereupon the cab departed, reversing before heading off back up the ramp and out into the daylight above ground.

Jack turned smartly on his heels and headed back through the doors and on into the Custody Suite Reception where Gaskill was being processed at the desk by the Duty Custody Supervisor.

“I want a brief!!” Gaskill demanded before swivelling his head around sharply to stare intently at Bobby Franks who was stood nearby, waiting his turn to be booked in, “and you!” he pointed angrily. “You keep your grassing trap shut or it will be shut for you, permanently!”

“Get him out of here!” the Duty Custody Supervisor called to the two officers stood either side of Gaskill who duly took the still handcuffed prisoner and escorted him down the adjacent corridor to a cell, the door slamming shut with, in Jack’s opinion a rather satisfying bang.

“Not going to get much useful out of him in an interview” Jack casually remarked, “Now you on the other hand” he then turned to look towards Bobby Franks “are a far more likely proposition.”

“Next!!” the Duty Custody Supervisor called whereupon Franks was escorted up to the desk.

Jack looked on as the formalities commenced.

“Full name please” the Duty Custody Supervisor formally requested.

“Robert James Franks” he confirmed.

“Date of birth?”

“Fourteenth of May 1953” Franks confirmed.

“Place of birth?”

“No idea, sorry” Franks then admitted, “Somewhere in London is all I know.”

“I’ll just put London then” the Duty Custody Supervisor agreed as he entered the details onto the computer before continuing, “Occupation?”

“Criminal?” Franks then tentatively suggested.

“I think unemployed would probably be the more suitable description” Jack responded, “as it seems your little deal with our friends from Thames House just got terminated.”

“Oh dear!” the Duty Custody Supervisor rather sarcastically responded before continuing, “Address?” he then asked.

“No fixed abode...” Franks confirmed with a tone of regret.

“Right then” Jack then declared, “Time for a proper family reunion, come on” he then led the way ahead with an understandably confused looking Barry Franks being escorted by the two officers following closely behind until they reached one of the cell doors whereupon he opened the viewing flap and looked inside before unlocking the door.

“Well, I’ll be damned...” came the voice of the prisoner inside the cell who stood up and stepped forward into the light, revealing it to be Harry Franks, “I thought you were dead?”

“If Gaskill gets his way, I soon will be” Bobby admitted.

“In which case gentlemen” Jack suggested “Perhaps it would be wise for you both to cooperate.”

“All right” Harry agreed, “Bruv?” he then looked at his sibling.

“Yes...” Bobby quietly responded, nodding his head in agreement, “My brother and I, we never killed anyone, it's Gaskill who is the one you want.”

“In which case I think it is time to get this case wrapped up” Jack then remarked, “Come on” he then called to Bobby, closing the door to Harry Franks' cell and then showing him to the vacant cell next door.

Bobby Franks entered the cell and slumped down on the bench seat before rubbing his face with his hands and letting out a sigh.

“Get some rest” Jack then suggested from the cell doorway, “I think we are going to have a lot to talk about later.”

“Aye...” Bobby Franks agreed before the cell door was closed.

Jack made a final check through the viewing flap before securing it and returning to the main Custody Suite Desk.

“Everything all right Sir?” the Custody Suite Supervisor called as Jack returned.

“Nothing that about a week of sleep and someone else to process the paperwork won't cure Alec” Jack admitted as he stifled a yawn and stretched his arms, “But at least the end is in sight.”

Eisley came in through the side door at that point and met Jack by the desk.

“Our guests all tucked up Sir?” Eisley asked.

“A little family reunion seems to have brought the Franks brothers to their senses” Jack confirmed, “Gaskill doesn't have a leg to stand on with the evidence stacking up although I suspect he is going to rant, rave and protest the whole way but he isn't going anywhere.”

“Bomb Squad have just been on the phone” Eisley then remarked, “That little arsenal we stumbled on underneath Waterloo is safely stored out of harms way with the explosives getting treated to a nice big, controlled explosion in the morning.”

“I am glad someone is having fun” Jack admitted.

“There is also a message from your good lady” Eisley then continued, “Megan insists you get some dinner inside you before you do anything else, and she wants you home by half five.”

“Message received and understood” Jack eagerly agreed.

Although it had been two weeks since her final operation, Megan was still a little unsteady on her feet, having to use a walking stick to support herself but was most definitely on the road to recovery.

“Right, here goes” she declared as with a heave, she managed to lift herself out of the front passenger seat of Jack's car unaided for the first time.

“Well done love” Jack responded with a big smile.

“Whoa...” Megan then just caught herself from falling backwards by quickly putting her hand out onto the roof of the car before Jack handed her the walking stick which she gratefully accepted.

“You okay love?” Jack then asked, clearly concerned.

“I might need you to hold me up a bit” Megan then admitted.

“Come on then” Jack then offered his arm to her, “I got you.”

“Thanks, love” Megan responded, taking his arm in hers before they moved off down the road towards the site where the main entrance of Nine Elms Locomotive Depot had once stood decades before, now just one of the gate pillars within the boundary wall remaining, everything else bar a few manhole covers in the pavement beneath their feet and some marks in the walls, the rest having been long since obliterated by redevelopment.

Gathered in a small garden area in front of the former gateway were a number of people including Police and Security Service officers, past and present, dignitaries and friends and family of Sergeant Roberts.

“Ah, glad you made it” Sturgeon called as he walked over to greet Jack and Megan as they approached.

“Wouldn't miss this for the world” Jack confirmed as they headed over to join the others.

“A pity the pub got demolished” Sturgeon then remarked as he looked all around at the stark modern development that now covered the area where the Brooklands Arms and the surrounding streets and buildings once stood, ironically also now in the process of being cleared away for another generation of buildings, “Could have used a decent drink.”

“Is it true that policing in your era relied on the extensive consumption of fine spirits in carefully measured proportions?” Megan then asked.

“A bottle of finest single malt was always kept in the Guvnor's bottom desk drawer, strictly for medicinal purposes of course” Sturgeon admitted.

“I reckon you must have had a fair few drams from there over the years” Alice Roberts remarked.

“Probably a lot more than my Guvnor ever realised” Sturgeon admitted with a smirk.

At that point, Tracy joined them with an elderly woman in an old-style Security Service uniform which indicated her to be a retired officer of the Service.

“I would like you to meet Retired Commander Kathy Collinson” Tracy called.

“Ah yes” Jack recalled, “The Widows & Orphans section co-ordinator, we spoke on the phone a few weeks back.”

“Divisional Commander Jack Regent, his fiancée Megan and retired Detective Inspector Edward Sturgeon” Tracy did the formal introductions “and I believe you have already met George Roberts' widow Alice?” to which Collinson nodded in agreement.

“A pleasure to meet you all” Collinson responded as warm handshakes were exchanged.

“I believe we have you to thank for this?” Jack indicated ahead of them towards the main gathering.

“The least we could do for a fallen colleague, even if it was so many years ago” Collinson confirmed, “Shall we get started?” she then suggested.

“By all means” Jack readily agreed, and they duly proceeded to walk over and join the others gathered around an object that was up against the old Nine Elms shed boundary wall, covered in the flag of the former British Transport Commission Police Force.

“Where on Earth did you find that?” Jack asked as he saw the flag and instantly recognised the emblem emblazoned on it.

“Little souvenir from my attic” Sturgeon admitted, “When I pop my clogs, the Police Museum is going to need a pantehnicon to transport all my stuff back.”

“Sounds a bit like my garden shed” Tracy mused.

“Ladies and gentlemen, if I may have your attention, please?” Collinson then called from the front which was when the conversations died away and everyone turned to face her.

“On the cold and foggy night of the 14th of January 1963, a young Police Officer tragically lost his life in the course of doing his duty” Collinson then began to announce, “Shot by armed robbers in the grounds of Nine Elms Locomotive Shed that once stood behind us where the New Covent Garden market now stands, Sergeant George Roberts, badge number W1815 of Waterloo Station, British Transport Commission Police lost his life doing a job he loved, leaving behind a widow and a daughter.”

Jack looked across at Alice and Janet Roberts, the widow and the daughter standing alongside him.

“Tragically, Sergeant Roberts body was hidden by conspirators in the armed robbery, lying undiscovered until a few weeks ago when he was finally found not far from this spot” Collinson then continued, “It is with regret that it took so long for him to be brought home, to bring closure to such a long outstanding case, but thanks to the efforts of the modern day equivalent, Divisional Commander Jack Regent here and his Transport Division team” she indicated Jack who smiled ever so slightly uncomfortably “that even with so many years having elapsed, the perpetrators were found and brought to justice at last, and Sergeant Roberts can now finally rest in peace.”

“Here, here...” some of the crowd responded in agreement.

“May I please ask the unveiling party to join us?” Collinson then indicated ahead to Alice Roberts, Jack and Sturgeon.

“It's all right, I got her” Tracy confirmed as she made sure that Megan was going to be all right standing with Jack leaving her side for the ceremony.

“I feel terribly underdressed” Alice jokingly admitted as Jack and Sturgeon, both in their formal ceremonial service uniforms, Sturgeons being from long ago escorted her up to the front.

Some reporters from the local and national media, lined up towards the front of the crowd, cameras at the ready to record the moment.

“It gives us great pleasure to dedicate this memorial to a fallen comrade, officer, friend, husband and father” Jack then announced, “He has finally completed his last turn of duty and returned to the station, and we are thankful for his service, his dedication and his life.”

That was the queue for Alice and Sturgeon to lift the flag off and reveal the carved stone memorial beneath, a carefully crafted Portland Stone obelisk, approximately four feet in height with the crest of the British Transport Commission in the form of a brass plaque on the lower part and Sergeant George Roberts name on the upper part, accompanied by the formal wording 'Killed in the line of duty near here at Nine Elms Locomotive Shed, fourteenth of January 1963'.

There were rounds of applause from the crowd as the members of the press took photographs of the unveiling and then the official party posed alongside the memorial for a few moments.

“You know, George never really was the fussy type” Sturgeon admitted as he, Alice and Jack returned to the main group, “He would have found it all rather funny that we and top brass were making all this fuss over him.”

“Yes, he would have at that” Alice admitted with a chuckle as she then looked down at the British Transport Commission Police flag that had been draped on the memorial and was then subsequently presented to her, “Here Ted, you should have this.”

“Quite all right my dear” Ted quickly responded, “You keep it; besides, I have another couple lurking in my attic somewhere I think.”

“Let's hope we never need those for anymore ceremonies like this” Jack remarked.

“It's all right, George was the last missing member of the old BTC gang not accounted for” Ted reassured him, “We are all back home now.”

“Well, I had best get back to the office I am afraid” Tracy then admitted, “Meeting with the Home Secretary later; I have to decide exactly how unpleasant I need to get with him to screw some more money out of the Government coffers.”

“Ah well, I think I can help you there, Ma'am” Sturgeon responded, “When you see him, tell that weasel that old Ted Sturgeon would like to say to him, the twenty seventh of July 1989, and then see how he crumbles.”

“Twenty seventh of July 1989?” Tracy responded to which Ted nodded in confirmation.

“Something else that is, shall we say, nestling in my attic for a rainy day” Ted then only partially explained.

“Thanks, I’ll give it a go” Tracy agreed, “See you all around!” she then declared before leaving the group, heading towards her official car parked nearby.

“You know, there used to be a decent pub around here” Sturgeon then recalled as he looked around at the heavily redeveloped area that surrounded them, “In fact, ironically I think we are standing just about in the middle of the bar right here” he then declared, looking down at his feet.

“It’s funny, I had a dream about being in the bar, everyone in the story was there” Jack admitted, “Oddly including you as well” he then mentioned to Megan.

“Thankfully, we can still raise a toast though” Ted declared as he went over to his Daimler car parked nearby and opened the boot, producing an old-style wicker picnic hamper that he then brought over and placed on the bonnet of Jack’s patrol car before opening it to reveal a number of bottles of fine spirits and a set of crystal cut glass tumblers.

“Okay, I am officially impressed” Jack admitted.

“The bar of the Brooklands Arms is open once more” Ted then announced, “So, what is everyone having?”

“Small Scotch seeing as I am driving” Jack confirmed.

“Not sure what I can have with all the medication I am on” Megan admitted, “I have to take so many pills at the moment, I rattle when I walk.”

“All taken care of my dear” Sturgeon confirmed as he produced another bottle from the hamper, “Elderflower wine, alcohol free” he smiled.

“That will do nicely” Megan responded with a smile.

It took a few moments before Sturgeon had poured everyone present their drinks before holding his own glass up in a toast.

“To absent friends” Sturgeon then formally declared, “George, the boys and girls of the old Waterloo Nick...”

“The guys of the old Nine Elms Loco Shed” Jack added.

“Old friends and colleagues all long since gone” Sturgeon then concluded.

The group clinked their glasses together in the toast before consuming their drinks.

“So many old friends no longer with us” Jack remarked.

“There are still a couple of my old mates from my BTC days around” Sturgeon admitted, “most of them are in the great Cop Shop in the sky now though.”

“A few of mine are gone too” Jack then admitted, “It’s been a hell of a few years.”

“Well, at least my George is now laid to rest” Alice confirmed with a smile.

“He has finally reported for end of duty” Sturgeon confirmed.

“Well, thanks for the drink” Jack then remarked as Sturgeon gathered up the glasses and returned them to the hamper.

“My pleasure” Sturgeon confirmed, “Well, I must be off, can I give anyone a lift anywhere?” he then asked around.

“Well, if you are heading our way” Alice responded, “Any chance of a lift?” she asked.

“By all means” Sturgeon confirmed as he showed Alice and Janet to his car, opening the door to allow them to get in.

“Well Ted, it has been a pleasure” Jack then remarked.

“Always a pleasure to work with a fellow officer” Sturgeon confirmed, shaking Jack's hand “and a pleasure to meet you too young lady” he then addressed Megan, “You are a very brave lass.”

“I don't know about that” Megan responded, slightly abashed.

“No, I mean it” Sturgeon insisted.

“Thank you” Megan then replied.

“Right, we'll be off then” Sturgeon declared, opening his driver's side door, and getting in before starting the engine, “Take care” he then called before driving off.

Jack and Megan watched as the vintage Daimler saloon car disappeared off into the distance as the light began to fade with the setting of the sun.

By then, the rest of the group had dispersed, leaving just the couple in the fading light of early evening.

“What's on your mind, love?” Megan then asked, seeing Jack looking ahead with a thoughtful expression.

“I was just picturing it, how it all was” Jack remarked, “The Brooklands Arms there, the prefab houses down the right-hand side, the old lamppost that was on the corner and the road leading up to the main gate of the loco shed.”

Megan looked across at Jack as he closed his eyes and pictured the scene in his head, transporting himself back to a cold winters evening in early 1963.

As Jack's mind went back, he could picture the scene from long ago in his head...

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Fog rolling in off the nearby River Thames, filtered through the streets of the Nine Elms area as the sound of steam locomotive whistles floated through the evening air from the distant main line between Clapham Junction and Waterloo.

Jack was standing on the corner of the street, looking across the road towards the Brooklands Arms and the main gate of Nine Elms Locomotive Shed beyond.

Dressed in the period uniform of a British Transport Commission Police Chief Inspector, Jack looked across at Megan who was stood alongside him, also in smart contemporary dress and smiled before taking her arm in his and crossing the road.

As they passed the pub entrance on the corner of the street, a figure could be seen standing in the mist, beside the lamppost, the classic silhouette of a Police Officer visible in the gloom.

“Evening Sir, Madam” the officer called as Jack and Megan passed him in the street.

“Evening Sergeant” Jack responded before continuing on their way.

As Jack and Megan disappeared from sight, the Police Officer stepped forward into the misty light cast by the streetlight, revealing it to be Sergeant George Roberts who smiled before adjusting his tunic.

Turning smartly on the heels of his immaculately polished boots, Sergeant Roberts proceeded towards the locomotive shed main gate and amid the drifting fog, disappeared into the night...



*Dedicated to all the officers and staff of the
British Transport Commission Police and British Transport Police,
past, present and future...*

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